



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 5-1:

Policy for Vehicle Use

Approved: Board of Supervisors 9/23/03

Authority: County Administrator

Resolution: 03-1000

Revised Date: 7/27/04

I. Purpose

- A. The purpose of this policy is to define the responsibilities and rules for the use of County vehicles and equipment, and privately owned vehicles used for County business. This policy applies to County officers, employees, and other authorized individuals as specified in this policy. This policy supercedes all previous County vehicle policies and resolutions of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors related to these topics.

An exception to this policy shall be made for the Sheriff's Department as a result of its unique law enforcement function. The Sheriff's Department will develop and enforce its own written policy, a current copy of which shall be on file with the Board of Supervisors. This policy shall guide vehicle utilization of employees of the Sheriff's Department and other County employees engaged in law enforcement activities that are under the direction of the Sheriff

II. Policy

1. Employee Responsibilities

- a. **Responsible Driving:** Each County driver shall drive responsibly, anticipate emergency situations and make every effort to avoid collisions. All employees operating a vehicle on County business represent the County of Sonoma and shall always project a professional and responsible image to the public.
- b. **Following Traffic Laws:** Employees are expected to be knowledgeable of, and follow, all applicable Federal, State and local traffic laws.
- c. **Driver's License:** County employees operating vehicles or equipment on County business must have a valid State of California driver's license.
- d. **Suspended, Revoked or Restricted Driver's License:** County employees who are required to have a valid California driver's license to operate vehicles or equipment on County business shall immediately inform their supervisor in the event their driver's license is suspended, revoked or is otherwise restricted in a way that impacts the employees ability to perform their job.

2. Department Responsibilities

- a. **Enforcement:** Department heads are responsible for enforcing this policy within their Department.
- b. **Driver's License Checks:** Departments shall require DMV drivers license checks for new employees that are required to drive as part of their duties with the County.
- c. **Drivers License Verification:** Departments are responsible for verifying that employees who drive on County business have a valid California driver's license and that the license is the appropriate license for the vehicle(s) they are operating. This departmental obligation does not diminish the employee's obligations pursuant to Sections 1.c. and 1.d. of the policy.

- d. Defensive Driver Training Requirement: Departments shall ensure that all employees that are required to drive County vehicles or personal vehicles on County business participate in Defensive Driver Training within the specified intervals as detailed in the County's Defensive Driver Training Program.
 - e. DOT Driver Records: Departments shall maintain accurate records of employees who are required by Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations to have a commercial driver's license. At a minimum, the record shall include a copy of the employee's driver's license, a copy of the employee's current medical card, and a copy of the most recent DMV Driver Record Information.
 - f. Pull Notice Program: Departments shall enroll and track employees that drive on a regular basis, three or more days a week, or more than 500 miles per month, in the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) "Pull Notice Program".
3. Authorized Use of County Vehicles
- a. Authorization: County owned vehicles shall be driven only by appropriately licensed and authorized County officers or employees or other authorized persons. Authorization shall be by the appropriate department head, County Administrator, or Board of Supervisors.
 - b. Authorized Riders: No person shall be permitted to ride in a County vehicle unless such person is a County officer or employee on official County business, is a person conducting official County business for or with the County, or is a passenger authorized to be in said vehicle by the responsible department head, County Administrator or Board of Supervisors.
 - c. County Business Use Only: County vehicles shall be used for official County business only.
 - d. Volunteers: Volunteers listed with the County's Human Resources Volunteer Coordinator and assigned to a specific program may be authorized by the department head to drive County vehicles in their volunteer status. The Department is responsible to insure that volunteers have the appropriate driver's license for the vehicle they are driving. Volunteers are required to follow all driving rules as outlined in this policy.
 - e. Extra Help Employees: Extra Help and Agency Extra Help employees may be authorized to drive County vehicles with the approval of the department head. The Department is responsible to insure that Extra Help and Agency Extra Help employees have the appropriate driver's license for the vehicle they are driving.
 - f. Independent Contractors: Independent Contractors are not authorized to drive County vehicles even if the vehicle will be used only on official County business. Requests for exceptions shall be approved by County Counsel and conditions for use written into the agreement for services.
 - g. Other Local Agencies: Employees of other local public agencies or (local community based organizations) may be authorized use of County vehicles if there is a written agreement between the County and the agency or organization that states that the use of the County vehicle is authorized by a County Department for a program related to County business and after the agency or organization has met the County's insurance requirements.
4. Operating a County Vehicle
- a. Seat Belts: Seat belts shall be used by the driver and all passengers in a County vehicle or in a private vehicle being used on County business. [CVC 27315 (d)(1), (e)]

- b. Child Safety Seats: All children riding in a County vehicle shall be properly seat belted. Child safety seats shall be used as required by the California Vehicle Code. (CVC 27360 through 27364)
 - c. Vehicle Operation: Drivers shall be familiar with the manner of operation of vehicles that they operate on County business. If drivers are unsure of the operation of their vehicle, they should check the owner's manual in the glove box of the car or contact Fleet Operations for assistance.
 - d. Attentive Driving: Drivers shall remain attentive to driving at all times. Use of hand held cellular phones, eating or drinking, dealing with passengers or other distractions while the vehicle is moving should be avoided. Whenever possible, drivers should pull off the road and stop when having to deal with distractions in the vehicle.
 - e. Smoking: Smoking is prohibited in all vehicles owned, leased or operated by the County, or otherwise under the control of the Board of Supervisors in its role as a district board, per Section 32.5 and 32.7(a)(1) of the Smoking Ordinance of Sonoma County, No. 4752. 1/1994
 - f. Alcohol Drugs and Other Intoxicants: Consumption of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicants that may interfere with the safe operation of County vehicles and equipment or while operating a privately owned vehicle on County business is strictly prohibited.
 - g. Dangerous or Defective Vehicle: Any County owned vehicle, or privately owned vehicle while being used for County business, shall not be operated when in a known dangerous or defective condition.
 - h. Reporting an Unsafe Vehicle: When a County vehicle is found to be in a dangerous or defective condition, it shall be reported to Fleet Operations as soon as is practical.
 - i. Visual Inspections: Employees shall conduct a visual inspection of the County assigned vehicle or pool vehicle for damage prior to use. Any damage or safety problems observed shall be reported to Fleet Operations immediately upon discovery.
 - j. Parking County Vehicles: All vehicles shall be legally and safely parked and locked when unattended.
 - k. Traffic Citations: Any officer or employee who receives a traffic citation other than for illegal parking while operating a County owned vehicle, or while operating a privately owned vehicle on County business, shall report such citation to his/her department head. All traffic or parking citations are the sole responsibility of the driver.
 - l. Returning Pool Vehicles: When returning a pool vehicle to Fleet Operations the vehicle shall to be filled with fuel and the "Dispatch Form" shall be completely filled out to include date and time returned, ending odometer reading and parking space. Pool vehicles must be returned to Fleet Operations promptly.
5. Vehicle Collisions, Incidents or Damage
- a. Safe Driving: It is the responsibility of the driver of County owned vehicles, or privately owned vehicles while being used for County business, to exercise reasonable care to avoid impediments or obstructions in the path of the vehicle which might cause damage to the vehicle, other vehicles or property, or injury to drivers, passengers and pedestrians.
 - b. Collision, Incident or Damage Reporting: All collisions or vehicle damage in a County vehicle, or piece of equipment, or a privately owned vehicle being used on County business, regardless of severity, shall be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor, to the appropriate law

enforcement agency (request an official collision report from the responding officer) and to Fleet Operations. Vehicle collisions involving extensive property damage, personal injury or loss of life, must also be reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) within 10 days of the incident. It is the employee's responsibility to report the incident to the DMV.

- c. **Timely Reporting of Incidents:** Officers and employees involved in any collision or incident in a County owned vehicle, or a privately owned vehicle being used on County business shall make a complete report of such collision or incident to Fleet Operations within one (1) business day. If the officer or employee is unable to make the report because of injury or other incapacity, the appropriate supervisor or manager shall submit a report.
 - d. **Collisions/Incident Report Forms:** Collision/Incident reports shall contain information on other vehicles, drivers, property involved, witnesses, weather conditions, road conditions, and any other pertinent information regarding such collision. Collision/Incident Report Forms are located in the glove compartment on all County vehicles or at Fleet Operations.
6. Take Home Vehicles
- a. **Definition:** A take home assignment would be considered regular or seasonal if an employee normally uses the vehicle to drive to and from their normal work assignment from their primary residence.
 - b. **Authorized Assignment:** Take home vehicle assignments are to be limited to those staff engaged in immediate, first line, emergency response for critical services or when a take home vehicle assignment results in an economy and/or efficiency that is in the best interest of the County.
 - c. **Response for Critical Services:** An "emergency response for a critical services", is defined as a limited first line staff response, which must be provided in order to prevent exposure to danger, chance of injury or destruction of County facilities.
 - d. **First Line Emergency Staff:** Emergency responses will be limited to only those staff that must respond by going directly to the point of an emergency occurrence. All other emergency backup staff will be dispatched through the normal process.
 - e. "In the best interest of the County" is defined as, those vehicle assignments that are cost effective to the County, enhance service to the public, and better provide for public safety and can stand the test of public scrutiny.
 - f. **Department Head Authorization:** Take home vehicle assignments that are determined to be in the best interest of the County shall be based on the judgment of the department head.
 - g. **Reporting:** Department heads are directed to submit a list annually, during budget, to the County Administrator identifying and justifying those assigned take home vehicles that meet the criteria established above. The County Administrator's Office shall review each list for consistency with the Board's Policy.
 - h. **Intermittent Take Home Vehicle:** Intermittent take home vehicle assignments shall be approved by the department head, in writing, on a case by case basis. Intermittent take home vehicle assignment is the overnight garaging of a County vehicle on an intermittent or other than normal basis.

7. Use of Privately Owned Vehicles on County Business

- a. **Responsibility:** Employees are encouraged to use County vehicles when they are available. Factors to be considered when deciding between the appropriate use a County vehicle vs. personal vehicle include: Availability of County vehicles, cost of a County vehicle vs. mileage reimbursement, the appropriateness of the vehicle for the required use and best use of employees' time and operational efficiency. Departments are responsible for determining which option best meets the needs of the County.
- b. **Insurance Requirements:** Employees who drive a privately owned vehicle on County business must maintain automobile insurance that complies with the State of California minimum requirements for bodily injury and property damage. The employee shall insure that their level of insurance is appropriate for use of the vehicle for business.
- c. **Primary Insurance Coverage:** If an employee is involved in a collision or incident in a privately owned vehicle, while on authorized County business, the employee's automobile insurance is primary to any other coverage.
- d. **Deductible Expense:** When an employee is involved in a vehicle collision in their personal vehicle while on County business and it is determined, by the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency, that the employee is not at fault, the County will reimburse any insurance deductible expense up to a maximum of \$500.
- e. **Exclusive Use:** No employee shall travel on County business exclusively in a privately owned vehicle without the written approval of his department head.
- f. **Reimbursement Claims:** When County employees use a privately owned vehicle on County business, they shall be reimbursed at the current published IRS reimbursement rate. Claims for mileage reimbursement shall be submitted on County claim forms and processed in accordance with the County Auditor procedures.
- g. **Motorcycles:** No employee shall operate a motorcycle on County business without specific authorization of the department head.

8. Other Rules

- a. **Vehicle Markings:** All County vehicles, except for those used in special law enforcement or undercover operations, shall have exempt license plates and shall be marked with the vehicle number and County marking visible to the public. No other markings, decals or bumper stickers shall be displayed on County owned vehicles and equipment.
- b. **Departmental Rules:** Departments may adopt internal procedures for allocation and operation of vehicles assigned to the department. Such procedures must be consistent with foregoing rules and regulations established by the Board of Supervisors
- c. **Loss of Drivers License:** If an employee loses their driving privilege for any reason, they could be subject to personnel action as outlined in the County's, "Guidelines to Assist Supervisors in the Management of Employees losing their Drivers License."(Sonoma County Personnel Dept. memo 99-003, January 1999.)

9. General Information

- a. Vehicle Handbook: Every County vehicle shall have a “Vehicle Operators Handbook” in the glove compartment. This handbook is published by Fleet Operations and addresses a number of procedures to be followed by drivers of County vehicles. These procedures include:
 - Vehicle Safety and Driver Accountability
 - Collision or Incident Reporting
 - Mechanical Failure and Breakdown
 - Vehicle Care and Preventive Maintenance
 - Fueling County Vehicles
 - Obtaining and Using a County Pool Vehicle
- b. Handbook Updates: Fleet Operations reviews and updates the handbook regularly to insure that the information is correct and contact numbers are still current. Fleet Operations recommends that each County employee be familiar with the handbook and its contents. If you cannot locate this Handbook please contact Fleet Operations for a current copy.

10. Adverse Action

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. It is up to the discretion of the department head to take appropriate corrective action.