



HERNANDO COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners

Policy Title: <p style="text-align: center;">Vehicle Usage</p>	Effective Date:	August 1, 2003
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Policy Statement

The Vehicle Usage Policy is created to establish guidelines for the use of vehicles owned or leased by the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners. All employees within the departments and divisions under the Board of County Commissioners and other individuals that use a vehicle which is owned or leased by the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners are subject to this policy.

It is the policy of the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners that County vehicles will be used exclusively for carrying out County functions. Accordingly, County vehicles will be used by County employees solely for the purpose of an employee performing public duty, or other essential functions, unless otherwise specified in this policy. County vehicles are not to be used for personal purposes other than community or de minimum personal use, while en route to or from work. All county vehicles will remain on County premises when they are not being used for business purposes, unless otherwise addressed through the provisions of this policy.

Procedure

A. Authorized Drivers

1. Operation of County vehicles is limited to Hernando County employees, approved county volunteers or employees of authorized agencies, only. Persons who drive County vehicles must have a valid State of Florida driver's license and be insurable by the County's automobile insurance carrier. Operators with a suspended or revoked driver's license are prohibited from operating a County vehicle under any circumstances.

B. Authorized Passengers

1. Persons who are not employees or volunteers of the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners or authorized agencies will not be permitted to ride in County vehicles unless employee (driver) obtains approval from their Department head. The Chairman must approve the County Administrator or County Attorney's request for unauthorized passengers. The only exceptions shall be in the case of a recognized emergency or when essential to, or associated with, the performance of official responsibilities.
2. Passengers who are not county employees may be required to sign a waiver of liability form before riding in a county vehicle.
3. No person shall be allowed to ride on running boards, fenders, hoods, tailgates, beds, or other locations on a vehicle not designed or approved by the vehicle manufacturer for passenger seating or in violation of State and Federal laws.

C. Taxation of Fringe Benefit Income

1. The Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986, as amended from time to time, provides for the taxation of fringe benefits, particularly provisions relating to the taxation and record keeping of employer-related vehicles.
2. The County is required to include the value of an employee's personal or commuting use of a County vehicle on the employee's W-2 form, as taxable income, in order to make appropriate withholdings.
3. When an employee is permitted or authorized to use a County vehicle for commuting purposes, the employee's personal use will be valued pursuant to current IRS Regulations. (Please see auto allowance policy for further information).

D. No Idling Allowed

1. When drivers arrive at job sites, they should turn off their vehicles as soon as possible to eliminate idling time and reduce excess use of fuel.
2. Vehicles should not be restarted until passengers are ready to depart or the work is ready to resume.

3. Exceptions include conditions that would compromise passenger safety or work requirements, such as:
 - a. Extreme weather that will affect the health of the employees
 - b. Idling in traffic
 - c. The job requires the truck to be running a Power-Take-Off (PTO)
 - d. Fire and Rescue Apparatus operating at emergency scenes or training assignments
 - e. Public Safety vehicles required to maintain minimum levels of climate control for human or animal health, or temperature sensitive medications.
4. Limit idling time during early morning warm-up to 1-3 minutes in warm weather and 3-5 minutes in cold weather (40 degrees and below).
5. All service delivery vehicles should turn off their engines while making deliveries to a facility.

E. Use of County Vehicles

1. Drivers are expected to observe all traffic regulations and to operate the vehicle in a safe manner including, but not limited to, wearing a seatbelt.
2. Employees will not operate the vehicle in such a way as to cause public criticism or nuisance. This includes not leaving the vehicle running or sitting in a roadway/blocking traffic while not in use.
3. Alcoholic beverages may not be carried or transported in any County vehicle in any fashion. Employees are prohibited from operating any county vehicle after consumption of alcohol. Employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
4. When cargo, materials, or tools are being transported, the vehicle operator is responsible for assuring that all items are properly secured.
5. All employees will perform a "walk-around" of the vehicle to see if there are any visible problems prior to it being driven each day.
6. As practicable, the employee shall check to make certain that all vehicle safety equipment including headlights, turn signals, brake lights, and windshield washers are functioning properly.
7. Any vehicle damage beyond normal wear and tear or that includes defects affecting the safe operation of the vehicle must be documented and reported to the employee's supervisor.
8. Employees must comply with any preventative maintenance programs.

F. Take-Home County Vehicle

1. The use of take-home vehicles is limited to pre-approved compelling work-related business need. Upon research and validation of justification through the departmental chain of command, Department Directors must submit a recommendation for approval to the County Administrator or designee for review and authorization.
2. Take-home vehicles are limited to employees that reside within the County except in rare needs-based situations as approved by the County Administrator.
3. It is the responsibility of the employee(s) to consider all aspects of the Vehicle Usage Policy prior to requesting or accepting such approval to utilize a take home County vehicle. Use of a take home vehicle is a financial benefit to the employee, not a right. Abuse of this benefit will not be tolerated.
4. Unattended take home vehicles shall always be legally parked and locked, except in emergency circumstances. Employees shall not leave sensitive information or public documents (other than reference material) in the vehicle while off duty.
5. The operations of a take home vehicle to and from work does not constitute work time and the employee is considered off the clock until they arrive at a bona-fide work assignment. Exception would be emergency vehicles that are responding directly to emergency incident or after-hours response to perform duties as assigned by the department.
6. Workers compensation benefits are not generally available for employees traveling to or from work with a take-home vehicle. Florida Statute 440.092 states, *"An injury suffered while going to or coming from work is not an injury arising out of and in the course of employment whether or not the employer provided transportation if such means of transportation was available for the exclusive personal use by the employee, unless the employee was engaged in a special errand or mission for the employer"*.

G. Revocation of Take-Home Vehicle Authorization

The County has sole discretion as to the approval of, modification of, and revocation of take-home vehicles. Examples of reasons why include, but are not limited to:

1. It is no longer in the department or County's best interest to continue the take-home vehicle use; or
2. For failure to comply with the provisions of this policy; or
3. For a change in job assignment, duties, or responsibilities such that a take home vehicle is no longer justified; or
4. In the event that the employee has had (2) accidents in a County vehicle within an eighteen-month period and found to be at fault/avoidable;

5. Any driving violations or tickets that rises to the level that it is in the best interest to suspend privileges pending investigation or revoke take-home vehicle authorization; or
6. As a result of disciplinary action.