

SECTION 6.3

OPERATION OF JEFFERSON COUNTY VEHICLES

A. Purpose

This policy is to establish uniform guidelines, regulations and procedures for the appropriate use of all County-owned motor vehicles. Adoption of this policy supplements all other non-conflicting motor vehicle policies of the County.

B. Policy

1. For this Policy, a “vehicle” is any motorized vehicle, including an automobile, manufactured primarily for use of public streets, roads, and highways.
2. Jefferson County, Texas is sometimes referred to as “County” in this Policy.
3. “County vehicles” includes all vehicles owned by Jefferson County, Texas and all of its agencies and departments.
4. “Highway” means the entire width between property lines of any road, street, thoroughfare, or bridge in this state not privately owned or controlled, when any part thereof is open to the public for vehicular traffic and over which the state has legislative jurisdiction under its policy power.
5. “Operate” means to be in actual physical control of a motor vehicle or motorized equipment upon a highway.
6. The County provides vehicles to departments and specific employees based upon County business necessity.
7. County vehicles are not assigned nor provided to employees as a job perk. County vehicles are provided in order for the County to efficiently carry out its business for the public and in order that County employees can efficiently carry out their assigned duties during their normal work hours or in conjunction with their assigned standby or callout responsibilities.
8. Any trips or stops made in a County vehicle for reasons other than assigned duties should be kept to a minimum. They should be confined to the employee’s normal assigned area of duty or on a route that a conscientious employee would travel between their workplace and their home if they were assigned a vehicle for standby or callout duties.
9. The County will not defend County employees against claims or lawsuits arising out of a County employee’s personal use, or use during a law enforcement approved secondary employment (except when acting under color of law), of a County vehicle.

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10. The County will not defend County employees against claims or lawsuits arising out of a County employee's private or personal use of a County vehicle when such use is determined by the County to be outside the course and scope of the employee's job.
11. County vehicles shall not be used outside of the county, except when used solely for County business, and only upon prior written approval by a department head.
12. County vehicles must be maintained as specified by the Service Center, Precinct Service Center, or Sheriff Department's Operations Manual.
13. At no time will a County vehicle, including those assigned to a specific employee as an authorized "take-home vehicle," be allowed as a commute vehicle from a home located outside of the County to work, or from work to a home outside of the County.
14. County vehicles not being used for County business shall be kept on County premises within the County's auto pool, or the department's auto pool, except when temporarily stored at a work site or sent out for repairs.
15. Anyone assigned the use of a County vehicle must meet the County's current training and certification standards, as well as all other County policies relating to the use of County vehicles. Employees are directed specifically to the County's current drug and alcohol policies (See Section 6.3 C, "Training And Certification of Jefferson County Vehicle Operators," Section 8, "Drug and Alcohol Policy," and Section 8.1, "Drug and Alcohol Policy for Employees Subject to the Department of Transportation Regulations).
16. At no time shall a County vehicle be used for personal entertainment or vacation.
17. County vehicles shall not be operated by non-County employees, except when driven by an authorized driver.
18. County employees are prohibited from operating County vehicles in any manner that would tend to compromise the public's trust in the integrity, honesty and efficiency of Jefferson County. It cannot be overstressed that County vehicles are not provided to officials or employees to be used for private or personal use. The misuse or abuse of the privilege of operating a County vehicle may result in disciplinary action. Continued misuse of County vehicles by a department may result in the removal of the vehicle from the department's inventory, control and/or reduction in that department's budget.
19. County employees are expected to maintain the highest possible ethical and moral standards, and to operate County vehicles within the laws of the State of Texas, and other rules and regulations as may be set forth by Commissioners' Court. Jefferson County expects that all employees will operate County vehicles and conduct themselves in a manner that will reflect positively upon the County.

20. County law enforcement officers may utilize County vehicles during secondary employment only when authorized pursuant to their department's Automobile Policy or the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Automobile Policy and General Orders regarding use of a County vehicle by all Sheriff's Office personnel if their department does not have a policy regarding use of County vehicles during secondary employment.

C. Training and Certification of Jefferson County Vehicle Operators

1. Risk Acceptability. Any driver who incurs any one of the following violations is not acceptable:

- Three or more accidents (at fault) in the last three years;
- One or more Type A violations in the last five years;
- Two or more Type B violations in the last five years;
- Any combination of accidents and Type C violations, which equal four or more in the last three years;

2. Violations

Type A Violations (includes all felony offenses even if not listed):

- Negligent homicide arising out of the use of a motor vehicle (gross negligence);
- Driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs or alcohol (or any other greater offense involving the use of a motor vehicle while under the influence or intoxicated);
- Using a motor vehicle for the commission of a felony;
- Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle;
- Intoxication assault or intoxication manslaughter involving the use of a motor vehicle.

Type B Violations:

- Operating during a period of suspension or revocation;
- Operating a motor vehicle without owner's authority;
- Hit and run (BI and PD) driving.

Type C Violations:

- Permitting an unlicensed person to drive;
- Reckless driving;
- Speed contest;
- All other moving violations not listed as Type A or B violations.

3. Eligibility. In order to operate a County motor vehicle on a highway, an employee must be designated by the employing department as a driver and must meet the following standards:
 - a. Provide evidence of an appropriate valid Texas driver's license.
 - b. Maintain a satisfactory driving record as evidenced by the Driver Records Division of the Texas Department of Public Safety.
 - c. Fulfillment of the requirements above shall authorize the employee to operate any County vehicle of one-ton carrying capacity or less upon the highways. The Department Head/Elected Official shall determine that the requirements are satisfied.
 - d. To be certified to operate a County motor vehicle in excess of one-ton capacity, the employee must demonstrate proficiency in the operation of the type of vehicle in question. The Department Head/Elected Official shall determine that such proficiency requirements are satisfied.
 - e. A properly certified employee who is involved in an accident in which he is held "at fault" will be required to complete a Defensive Driving Course at their own expense within one month of the accident. Failure to complete the Defensive Driving Course may result in termination of employment. A copy of the certificate of completion should be given to the Department Head/Elected Official and a copy to HR for the personnel file. Habitual or repeated violation of the County policy or the Texas Motor Vehicle Law may result in the suspension or cancellation of driving privileges and disciplinary action up to and including termination.
 - f. While operating a County-owned vehicle, drivers should refrain from using cell phones. If it is necessary to use a cell phone, drivers should position phones where they can easily access them without taking their eyes off the road, take such precautions as hanging up if conditions become hazardous, place calls when the vehicle is not moving or time them to coincide with red lights. Other distractions such as eating, tuning radios, or applying makeup, etc., should also be avoided.

