



## **EFFINGHAM COUNTY – HUMAN RESOURCES STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**

### **6.11 – VEHICLE ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND SAFETY POLICY**

#### **A. STANDARD**

The Effingham County Board of Commissioners is committed to supporting and promoting the safe, responsible and prudent operation of all county owned, leased or rented vehicles. Because vehicle operations are essential to the services provided by many of the county’s departments, achieving the goal of preventing motor vehicle collisions requires a county-wide commitment to the departmental and individual responsibilities and procedures as set forth in this policy.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. The Effingham County Board of Commissioners does not tolerate any form of retaliation against an employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation.

This policy shall apply to any and all contractors who use or operate county owned, leased or rented vehicles.

#### **B. DEFINITIONS**

1. **ACCIDENT OR COLLISION** – any crash involving the operation of a county vehicle that results in bodily injury or property damage of any kind, regardless of extent. Accident will be given one of the following designations:

**Preventable** – The accident will be defined as preventable when the driver of the county vehicle is found to be negligent after a review of all pertinent information, including the police report.

**Non-Preventable** – The accident will be defined as nonpreventable when it is determined that the driver of the county vehicle did not contribute to cause the accident.

**Unavoidable** – An event resulting from natural forces, from a non-perceivable object, or while the vehicle is properly parked. Incidents are not considered as accidents under this safety policy. Examples include, but are not limited to, damage from hail, lightning, flood, road hazards and vandalism.

2. **AT FAULT COLLISION** – Any motor vehicle accident that results in bodily injury or property damage where the police report indicates that, in the opinion of the investigating



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officer, the prime contributor to the accident was the driver's violation of a specific traffic law or his or her negligent actions or behavior.

3. COUNTY BUSINESS – Activities that are performed on behalf of Effingham County and/or in the course and scope of employment.
4. COUNTY VEHICLE – Any motor vehicle licensed for highway use including trailers and motorcycles owned by Effingham County or leased by Effingham County. This also includes vehicles that are rented from rental car companies by employees traveling on official county business. Vehicles will be classified as one of the following:

Emergency Vehicle – An Emergency Vehicle is defined as one that has Emergency Lights AND Exterior Audible Devices (Sirens) installed for the purpose of expediting response to emergency and/or life threatening situations. Most common types of this vehicle include, but are not limited to, Ambulances, Fire Trucks/Apparatuses, Police Cars, etc.

Passenger Vehicles – A passenger vehicle is defined as one that is not used for the purpose of responding to emergency situations.

5. INFREQUENT DRIVER – Any Effingham County Board of Commissioners employee who is not required to operate a county vehicle as part of his or her work or activities for the county, but who may, on an infrequent basis, operate a county vehicle. An employee who occasionally rents a vehicle from a rental car agency to travel on county business is considered an infrequent driver.
6. MAJOR DRIVING VIOLATION – Any moving violation conviction that includes, but is not limited to:
  - Driving under the influence, (DUI)
  - Negligent use of a motor vehicle resulting in death
  - Operating a vehicle with a suspended license
  - Use of a vehicle in commission of a felony
  - Reckless driving
  - Two (2) speeding violations in excess of 15 MPH over the posted speed limit will be considered one (1) major driving violation
  - Hit and Run
  - Knowingly making a false statement to a police officer concerning an accident.



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7. MINOR DRIVING VIOLATION – Any moving violation (excluding major driving violations) that include, but re not limited to the following:

- Speeding over the posted speed limit
- Traffic light or stop sign violation
- Improper lane change
- All other moving violations

8. MVR – A Motor Vehicle Report documents a person’s driving history and is obtained from the Georgia Department of Driver Services or another State’s licensing activity.

9. REGULAR DRIVER – Any Effingham County Board of Commissioners employee who operates a county vehicle on a routine basis is a regular driver. Anyone who operations a passenger van or bus while transporting passengers on county business, or any occasion is also considered a regular driver.

10. ROUTINE, ROUTINELY OR ROUTINE BASIS – Daily, weekly or regularly scheduled as a function of his or her duties.

11. VALID DRIVER’S LICENSE – A driver’s license that is recognized as valid by the Georgia Department of Driver Services and of the proper class for the type of vehicle to be driven. A driver’s license duly issued by a foreign county if recognizes as valid by the Georgia Department of Driver Services.

### **C. FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (DEPARTMENTS)**

**1. All Effingham County Departments that operate one or more county vehicles must do the following:**

- a. Ensure that only employees who meet all of the driver qualifications as defined by this policy are permitted to drive a county vehicle.
- b. Require that all employee drivers read this policy and sign the Vehicle Accident Prevention and Safety Acknowledgement Form before authorizing these individuals to operate a county vehicle. A copy of the completed acknowledgement form will be given to the driver and the original filed in his or her official personnel file.
- c. Ensure that in the event of a collision, drivers notify Law Enforcement promptly



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and before leaving the scene of the collision. Further ensure that the driver expeditiously completes the Incident Report Form and submits the completed and signed form to Human Resources and/or Purchasing Departments within 24 hours of the collision. Complete the appropriate section of the Incident Report Form and seek medical attention if you are injured during the collision.

- j. Take disciplinary action with drivers who fail to comply with the Vehicle Accident Prevention and Safety Policy. See possible actions on pages 10 and 11 under Incident Review and Consequences. Consult with Human Resources prior to issuance.
- k. Anytime that a driver reports a mechanical failure of a county owned or leased vehicle, the supervisor will notify our Fleet Maintenance Shop. The vehicle will be immediately removed from service until repaired.
- l. If it is determined that the collision was preventable, it may be determined that the employee driving the vehicle may receive disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **2. Human Resources**

- a. Notify Insurance and Risk Management of workers' compensation claims involving county vehicle accidents.
- b. Consult with departments on possible disciplinary actions.
- c. Obtain authorization (a completed MVR Request and Release Form) from job applicants for positions that require a regular driver or from a current employee who will be assigned new responsibilities requiring the routine use of a county vehicle. If the job applicant or employee possesses an out of state license, require that he or she provide a copy of their current MVR for review.
- d. In January of each year, submit a list of all regular drivers to the Department of Driver Services for an annual MVR review. Regular drivers will include those employees of contractors that use County owned vehicles and equipment.

### **B. Driver Qualifications**

1. Any employee who is permitted to operate a county vehicle (including infrequent drivers) must meet all of the following driver qualifications:



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- a. Be at least 18 years of age and possess a valid driver's license for a minimum of one year.
  - b. Possess a current driver's license that is recognized as valid by the Georgia Department of Driver Services and of the proper class for the type of vehicle to be driven.
  - c. Have no medical condition that precludes the safe operation of a motor vehicle.
  - d. Read the Vehicle Accident Prevention and Safety Policy, sign the Vehicle Accident Prevention and Safety Acknowledgement Form and adhere at all times to the safe driving regulations by law and as outlined below.
2. In addition to the qualifications above, any employee who is required to operate a county vehicle on a routine basis must also:
- a. Authorize Effingham County to review his or her Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) whenever it is deemed necessary by the county by signing the MVR Request and Release form.
  - b. Maintain an acceptable MVR, as defined in Section F.
3. Any employee who will drive an emergency vehicle (routine or infrequent basis) must meet all of the above driver qualifications ***and*** comply with the Effingham County Emergency Medical Services Standard Operating Guidelines, Operation of Department Vehicles.
4. Drivers of Effingham County vehicles requiring a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) must meet all qualifications and complete all training required for this license. Departments may responsible for the related costs.

### **C. Safe Driving Regulations**

1. Effingham County vehicles will only be used for purposes related to county business.
2. No person, other than county employees, will be transported in a county vehicle unless the person is being transported in connection with county business, law enforcement matters, for medical purposes, or as authorized by a Department



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Head or Elected Official.

3. When equipment, supplies, etc. are being transported, the driver will ensure that all items are properly secured to prevent shifting or falling from the vehicle.
4. To the extent possible, only employees of Effingham County should drive county vehicles. In certain situations, such as Emergency Situations, a designee may be appointed to drive. Within reason, every attempt possible should be made to ensure the driver is qualified and capable to handle said vehicle.
5. No person will be allowed to ride on or in any vehicle non-passenger compartment including running boards, fenders, hoods, tailgates, or in truck beds.
6. All occupants of a county vehicle are required to wear seatbelts when the vehicle is in motion. (This does not apply to vehicles that are not required by law to have seatbelts, such as passenger buses).
7. Hitchhikers are not permitted to ride in any county vehicle.
8. Cell phones, blackberries, smart-phones, and other electronic devices must be operated with a hands-free device. Talking on a cellular phone that is not hands free, text messaging and emailing are strictly prohibited when the vehicle is in drive and/or in motion. This policy also applies to vehicles rented for approved travel.
9. Drivers of emergency vehicles may exercise those privileges granted to them under county policies and procedures and by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. This provision does not relieve the driver of an emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.
10. No person will operate or allow to be operated any county vehicle by a person who is under the influence of any alcoholic beverage, narcotic drug, hallucinogen, or any substance that may impair the ability of the driver to safely operate the vehicle.
11. Regular and infrequent drivers are required to notify their supervisor within forty eight (48) hours of any conviction for a driving violation which results in a restricted or suspended driver's license.
12. A driver whose vehicle is towing a trailer, dolly or other equipment will ensure



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that the trailer hitch is securely latched and that safety chains and other safety equipment are properly attached and operable.

13. Any county vehicle having a load that extends beyond the rear bumper of the vehicle will have the end of the load marked with a red flag or other warning device in accordance with Georgia motor vehicle laws.
14. No driver will operate a county vehicle when it is so loaded that the driver's view is obstructed and/or the load interferes with the driver's control of the vehicle.
15. Before a driver leaves a county vehicle unattended, the driver must shut off the engine, remove the keys, set the emergency brake, and lock the vehicle. Exception to this would be if an emergency vehicle must stay running for the operation of installed equipment.
16. Eating food should be avoided while driving a county vehicle.
17. Whenever work requirements make it necessary for a county emergency vehicle to block or obstruct traffic, the driver will activate emergency lights, place warning signs and/or traffic cones to warn motorists of the obstruction.
18. All drivers of county vehicles will, at all times, obey local and state traffic laws.
19. When possible, drivers will position their vehicles so as to avoid the necessity of backing up. When backing up is necessary, the driver will check the rear clearance of the vehicle from other vehicles or objects before moving. If a spotter is available, they should be utilized to ensure the safe backing of the vehicle.
20. Any defects or damage noted by the driver that affects the safe operation of the county vehicle will be reported to the driver's supervisor. It is the supervisor's responsibility to arrange for such defects or damage to be corrected.
21. Properly maintain and clean the vehicle after each use.

### **D. Accident Reporting**

1. Render all possible aid to anyone injured and call for an ambulance, if needed.
2. While the vehicle is at the collision scene, notify the local authorities (911). Make sure you get a Case Report Number (CRN) from the investigating officer. Also



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notify your supervisor.

3. Document the names, addresses, phone numbers, vehicle license plate numbers and insurance information of all persons and vehicles involved, including this information from any witnesses.
4. To the extent possible, document the names, phone numbers, and addresses of anyone injured or claiming to be injured.
5. Take photographs of the collision scene if possible.
6. Each county owned or leased vehicle will carry an insurance information packet. The packet will include an “Incident Report Form” (see Forms, page 13) that the driver must complete and forward to Purchasing Office at 601 North Laurel Street, or fax to 912-754-8413 within 24 hours of the accident. If an injury to an employee occurs, the appropriate section of the Incident Report Form and Physicians Selection form should be completed within 24 hours of the injury. Those can be returned to the Human Resources office at 601 North Laurel Street, or fax to 912-754-8402.
7. If the accident involves a rental vehicle, contact your supervisor or Purchasing and you will be provided with an “Incident Report Form” to complete. If an injury to an employee occurs, the appropriate section of the Incident Report Form and Physicians Selection form should be completed within 24 hours of the injury.
8. Do not comment on fault or make any statement to anyone except an authorized county employee, a law enforcement officer or a representative of Effingham County’s claim adjusting organization.
9. The failure to make a report of a vehicle collision as required by the Effingham County Accident Prevention and Safety Policy and the laws of the State of Georgia will be handled in accordance with the Effingham County Board of Commissioners Standards of Conduct and Performance.

### **E. Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) Review**

1. **Analysis of MVR** – Motor Vehicle Reports will be assessed based on the criteria below, as a minimum standard. In certain circumstances, drivers may be held to higher standards, depending on the nature of the driving, the driver’s report, or concerns about the driver’s ability to drive safely.





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- a. **Acceptable:** MVR includes no more than one at-fault accident or one minor driving violation in the past three years

**Action:** The department head or designated representative and employee will be notified of the results of the report. No further action is required.

- b. **Conditional:** MVR includes a combination of no more than two at-fault accidents or minor driving violations in the past three years.

**Action:** The department head or designated representative will be notified of the results of the report. The employee will be given a verbal notification and counseled by his or her supervisor regarding the conditional status of their MVR and the importance of practicing safe driving habits. The conditional status of the employee's MVR may be documented in a counseling memo or a disciplinary action. The documentation will be maintained in the employee's personnel file. The supervisor will order a new Motor Vehicle Report for the employee in six months to re-evaluate the employee's driving privileges. During this period, the employee may continue to operate a county vehicle.

- c. **Restricted:** MVR includes a combination of three or more at-fault accidents or minor moving violations or includes a conviction for any of the following major driving violations within the past three years:

- Driving under the influence (DUI)
- Negligent use of a motor vehicle resulting in death
- Operating a vehicle with a suspended license
- Use of a vehicle in commission of a felony
- Reckless Driving
- Hit and Run
- Knowingly making a false statement to a police officer concerning an accident.
- Two (2) speeding violations in excess of 15 MPH over the posted speed limit will be considered one (1) major driving violation.

**Action:** The department head or designated representative will be notified of the



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results of the report. Driving privileges for Effingham County will be suspended until the employee's motor vehicle report reflects an Acceptable or Conditional status. At a minimum, the employee will be issued a written notice stating the reason his or her driving privileges have been suspended and counseled by his or her supervisor regarding the importance of practicing safe driving habits. The restricted status of the employee's MVR may be documented in a counseling memo or a disciplinary action. Documentation will be maintained in the employee's personnel file. The supervisor will order a new motor vehicle report for the employee in six months to re-evaluate the employee's driving privileges and to discuss areas of concern.

- 2. Disciplinary Procedures** – An employee placed on Restricted Driving Status will be subject to the Effingham County Human Resources Standards of Practice disciplinary procedures.