

## **Vehicle Usage Policy for the Town of Portsmouth**

### **Purpose**

The maintenance of a municipal vehicle fleet is necessary to effectively deliver local governmental services for the Town of Portsmouth. This policy will establish the authorized usage of municipal vehicles and will be implemented by all departments.

### **Basis and Background**

The Town of Portsmouth maintains a vehicle fleet to assist employees in the performance of their duties and in the timely delivery of local government services. This fleet consists of a wide variety of vehicles and equipment. With an estimated replacement value of over 2.6 million dollars, Town officials must be prudent and constantly exercise due care to ensure adequate availability of vehicles and their effective and efficient use.

Most municipal vehicles are highly visible and often subject to public observation and scrutiny. As a result, criticism is sometimes received from the general public concerning improper or unethical use of municipal vehicles. With the Town Council's adoption of a policy on municipal vehicle use, accountability for vehicle usage will increase and Town officials will be better able to demonstrate the appropriate use of municipal vehicles.

### **Responsibilities**

The Town Administrator will conduct an annual evaluation of the long term municipal vehicle assignments to affirm that assignment criteria still apply.

The Finance Director is responsible for ensuring appropriate insurance coverage for operators and passengers during the time that vehicles are used for Town business. Additionally, the Finance Director will recommend cost effective measures that mitigate risks to the Town of Portsmouth.

Each Department Head is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of this policy. Professional discretion must be exercised by a Department Head in the execution of this policy, with written notification to the Town Administrator when necessary.

### **Vehicles to Residences**

Certain Town employees may be afforded the opportunity of taking municipal vehicles to their residences during non-working hours. This opportunity can be provided on an emergency basis depending upon whether certain criteria are met. Criteria to justify this special municipal vehicle usage include the following: scope of work responsibilities and duties, on call status, place of residence, assignment of work responsibilities and duties due to weather conditions and assignment of work duties associated with a particular job or project.

Using the above criteria as a guide, the Town has established various categories which qualify taking municipal vehicles to residences during non-working hours.

#### **Category A**

**Description:** Vehicles assigned to individuals with 24 hour on-call responsibilities. Examples are the following: Fire Chief, Police Chief, Deputy Fire Chiefs, Deputy Police Chief, Director of Public Works, Deputy Director of Public Works, Animal Control Officer and the detective on call. These vehicles are considered to be qualified, nonpersonal-use vehicles and are excluded from fringe benefit income for commuting. The on call detective's vehicle is an unmarked vehicle.

**Authorization:** Town Administrator

**Restrictions:** Permitted for business use and commuting. Incidental stops within a reasonable distance of the route to and from the work site are permitted. Only a Town employee may drive the vehicle. Non-work related passengers, including family members, shall not be transported in Town vehicles.

Exceptions: operation necessary to support repairs and/or servicing or an emergency requiring someone other than a Town employee to drive the vehicle.

### **Category B**

**Description:** Work vehicles. Apart from temporary or emergency assignment (see below) this category of vehicles will not be allowed to travel to and from a residence.

**Authorization:** Department Heads, Town Administrator.

**Restrictions:** Permitted for work only. Vehicles will be picked up and properly dispatched from the appropriate central facility and returned at the end of the assignment/day/shift. Only a Town employee may drive the vehicle. Exceptions: operation necessary to support repairs and/or servicing or an emergency requiring someone other than a Town employee to drive the vehicle. For insurance coverage reasons, Town employees are required to use Town vehicles on Town business when such vehicles are available. An exception to this requirement may be made by the Town Administrator on a case basis. Town employees who use personal vehicles while on Town business and are in an accident will have primary coverage from their personal insurer, not the Town's insurer.

**Emergency Assignment of a Vehicle:** A Department Head may direct assignment of a municipal vehicle during non-working hours for the timely handling of an unforeseeable situation or an emergency. An emergency vehicle assignment may not exceed five working days.

**Temporary Assignment of a Vehicle:** A Department Head may authorize the assignment of a municipal vehicle during non-working hours on a temporary basis for the proper handling of a short-term event. A temporary assignment may not exceed thirty working days.

### **Personal Usage and Job Related Travel**

Personal usage of Town vehicles is prohibited. Non-work related passengers, including family members, shall not be transported in Town vehicles.

In the event that vehicles are taken home overnight or on weekends pursuant to the Emergency or Temporary Assignment sections above, the Town Administrator shall be promptly notified in writing or by email.

There shall be reimbursement for job related travel expenses for the use of an employee's personal automobile *only when no Town vehicle is available* for the employee's job related travel. Town employees who use personal vehicles while on Town business and are in an accident will have primary coverage from their personal insurer, not the Town's insurer.

### **Policy Application for All Town Vehicles:**

Town employees must adhere to all applicable motor vehicle and traffic control laws while operating a municipal vehicle.

Violations of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary action, consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements.

All Town employees who operate municipal vehicles and/or equipment must possess a valid driver's license.

An individual whose license is suspended or expired is not to operate a Town vehicle until the license is restored. An employee whose operator's license is suspended or expired must report this situation to his immediate supervisor. Failure of an employee to inform his supervisor, together with the operation of a Town vehicle without a valid license may result in disciplinary action.

No Town employee shall operate a municipal vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, chemicals or mind-altering substances as defined by RIGL 31-27-2.

A Town employee who is under the care of a medical professional and receiving prescription drugs which might hinder the ability of the employee to safely operate a municipal vehicle shall notify his supervisor immediately to determine appropriate action.

All municipal vehicles shall have mounted state issued municipal government license plates and be clearly identified as a Town vehicle. An exception to these requirements will be permitted for law enforcement usage.

All municipal vehicles shall be operated in strict compliance with assigned instructions and directions provided by supervisory staff.

All instructions shall be consistent with the Town's position that all municipal vehicles must be utilized for the delivery of local government services that directly benefit the Town of Portsmouth. Town vehicles may not be used to promote political causes.

Municipal vehicles may be used to attend work related events such as meetings, educational seminars, professional conventions and other approved events.

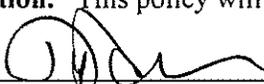
Individual employees will be held personally responsible for any moving motor vehicle violation or parking summons issued while operating a municipal vehicle.

The operator of a vehicle is required to perform certain safety checks on a vehicle before driving it. When assigned a specific vehicle, the Town employee is responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is kept in good repair.

Any Town employee involved in a motor vehicle accident, no matter how minor, must report the incident to his direct supervisor immediately. This reporting shall include the timely completion and submission of all necessary documentation related to the accident. Department Heads will ensure that incident reports are filed and that the Finance Department is notified of accidents involving municipal vehicles for proper reporting to the Town's insurer.

**Receipt of Policy.** Each employee assigned a Town vehicle shall receive a copy of the Policy and is required to sign and date the acknowledgement page which is intended to record receipt of the Policy, understanding of its contents and agreement with the conditions for use. The signature sheet will be kept on file in the Finance Director's office. If the Policy is revised, copies of the revised documents and acknowledgement pages will be re-distributed to each employee assigned a Town vehicle.

**Cancellation.** This policy will remain in force until rescinded.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert G. Driscoll, Town Administrator

6/10/09  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved by the Town Council: 

**Statement of Acknowledgment**

**Town of Portsmouth**

**Vehicle Usage Policy**

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_, have read the attached Vehicle Usage Policy for the Town of Portsmouth and understand and agree to the purpose, rules and regulations provided therein.

The Policy includes four categories of vehicles with applicable restrictions and the policy application which describes the safe and responsible operation of Town vehicles.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return signed form to the Finance Office.