

Roane County Vehicle Use Policy

Effective July 21, 2025

Purpose: To establish clear guidelines for the safe, lawful, and efficient use of county-owned vehicles by employees under the County Executive's authority for official business, ensuring accountability and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Scope: This policy applies to all county-owned or leased motorized vehicles (automobiles, trucks, etc.) used for official county business. It excludes personal vehicle use (covered by mileage reimbursement policies) and vehicles not under the County Executive's purview (e.g., law enforcement patrol, road maintenance equipment).

Official Use: County vehicles are strictly for official county business, including travel between work sites, meetings, emergency response, and client/animal transport related to county services. Driving is permitted during work hours or approved after-hours/on-call duties. Brief, infrequent, and work-route-aligned stops for meals, fuel, or supplies are allowed. Employees must avoid stops at establishments that could negatively reflect on the County (e.g., bars, smoke shops, vape stores), especially in marked vehicles.

Prohibited Use: Personal use of county vehicles is prohibited except as explicitly authorized, in accordance with TCA § 8-19-501. Only brief, incidental stops directly on the commute route are permitted as outlined above. Any other personal use requires explicit supervisory approval for a compelling work-related reason. Employees should assume personal use is prohibited unless specifically authorized. Note: Commuting in a county vehicle may be a taxable fringe benefit per IRS regulations (Publication 15-B), requiring compliance advised by the Accounting Department.

Take-Home Vehicles (Assigned Vehicles):

- **Eligibility:** Take-home vehicle assignments for commuting or overnight use are exceptions and require explicit authorization. Approved situations include on-call emergency response and after-hours operational efficiency where returning to the office is impractical (with Department Head approval). Mileage reimbursement or temporary vehicle checkout should be considered first.

- **Approval:** All take-home assignments require written approval from the Department Head and the County Executive (or designee), specifying conditions and duration.
- **Permissible Use:** Take-home vehicles are for commuting between home and work, official county business during work hours, and responding to emergencies or on-call duties.
- **Restrictions:** Personal use is limited to brief, incidental stops on the normal commute. The vehicle must remain parked at the employee's residence when not in use. No unauthorized individuals (family, friends, etc.) may drive or ride in the vehicle.
- **Home Storage:** Vehicles must be parked in a secure location (preferably off-street), locked, clean, and well-maintained. County markings must be visible.
- **Review and Revocation:** Assignments are subject to review and revocation due to role changes or ineligibility.
- **Tax Implications:** Commuting in a county vehicle may be a taxable fringe benefit unless IRS exemptions apply.

Driver Eligibility and Responsibilities: Only approved county employees may operate county vehicles. Drivers must:

- Be approved by their supervisor.
- Possess a valid driver's license (CDL if required).
- Immediately report any license suspension or revocation.
- Not drive with a suspended or expired license.
- Maintain a safe driving record (subject to periodic County review).
- Be physically and mentally fit to drive, avoiding operation while impaired by illness, fatigue, or medication.

Safe Driving Practices and Conduct: Drivers must:

- Obey all traffic laws.
- Ensure all occupants wear seat belts.

- Avoid distracted driving (no texting or handheld phone use).
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or impairing medication.
- Smoking, vaping, or the use of tobacco products is strictly prohibited in county vehicles to maintain safety, cleanliness, and health standards. (TCA § 39-17-1803)
- Drive defensively and avoid aggressive or reckless behavior.
- Refrain from any distracting activities while driving.
- Maintain working safety equipment and secure cargo.
- Obtain approval for out-of-county or out-of-state travel.
- Secure and lock unattended vehicles.

Passenger Policy: Only individuals with a legitimate purpose related to county business should ride in county vehicles.

- **Appropriate Passengers:** Generally, include those whose presence directly supports or is necessary for the execution of official county duties. This may include, where applicable, individuals whose presence is reasonably connected to the purpose of the trip, such as family members or caregivers accompanying a patient, students, or other approved ride-alongs as authorized by department procedures.
- **Considerations for Passengers:** The transportation of any individual should be consistent with the efficient and effective conduct of county business and in the best interest of the County.
- **Exceptions:** Exceptions to this policy may be granted in specific circumstances with prior supervisory approval. Any such exceptions must be documented and justified by a legitimate operational need or extenuating circumstance.
 - Supervisors have the discretion to authorize passengers on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that any passengers contribute to the county's objectives and that their presence does not create undue risk or liability.
 - Any deviations from this general guideline must be carefully considered and approved in advance by a supervisor, with due

consideration for safety, liability, and the overall benefit to the County's operations.

Vehicle Care, Maintenance, and Appearance: County vehicles must be treated with care equivalent to or exceeding that of personal vehicles. Neglect or misuse may lead to disciplinary action.

- **Driver Responsibilities:** Conduct pre-use inspections (tires, lights, mirrors, fluids, fuel, safety gear), promptly report issues or damage, use designated fuel cards and follow protocols, keep vehicles clean and free of personal items, and avoid unauthorized modifications.
- **Department Responsibilities:** Schedule and ensure regular maintenance, monitor vehicle condition and readiness, and maintain visible decals and address damage.

Accident and Incident Reporting: All incidents involving county vehicles, regardless of severity, must be reported immediately.

- **Steps to Follow:** Ensure safety (check for injuries, secure the scene, call 911 if needed), notify law enforcement (file a report), exchange information, document the scene (photos if safe), and notify your supervisor and Risk Management before the end of the workday.
- **Additional Requirements:** Post-incident drug/alcohol testing may be required. Traffic citations must be reported (employee responsibility for fines). Vandalism, theft, or tampering must be reported immediately. Failure to report may result in disciplinary action and follow-up training.

Enforcement and Consequences for Misuse: Compliance is mandatory for all employees under the County Executive's authority. Consequences may include disciplinary action (up to termination), loss of driving privileges (if essential to the job), restitution for damages due to gross negligence or misconduct, and referral of criminal violations to law enforcement.

County Executive Oversight: The County Executive (or designee) retains final authority over policy enforcement and reviews serious or repeated violations, ensuring Department Heads enforce compliance.

Supervisor Accountability: Supervisors are responsible for upholding and enforcing this policy. Failure to act on violations may result in supervisory discipline.

Employee Reporting: Employees are encouraged to report misuse to supervisors or Human Resources confidentially and without fear of retaliation.

Policy Administration: This policy will be distributed to all current and new employees who may operate county vehicles. Signed acknowledgment of receipt and understanding is required prior to any vehicle use. Department Heads are responsible for implementation within their departments and may create consistent additional procedures. The County Executive's Office, in coordination with Human Resources and Risk Management, will periodically review and update the policy as needed, with timely communication to employees.

By adhering to this policy and exercising sound judgment, employees contribute to safety, protect public resources, and uphold public trust. Responsible vehicle use is a shared responsibility and a vital aspect of public service.