



Vehicle Use Policy

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Purpose

This policy establishes uniform vehicle use practices and requirements for Stokes County employees. Unless stated otherwise, this policy applies to vehicles owned by the County, vehicles leased or rented by the County, as well as personal vehicles, to ensure safe driving and efficient use of public property and/or resources.

This policy applies to all Stokes County departments, employees, partners, and affiliated agencies who receive pay and benefits from Stokes County Government. Where there is conflict with any department-specific policy, this document will supersede.

Policy

Use of Vehicles for County Business

All vehicle operators must be properly licensed and insured to operate a motor vehicle to conduct business on behalf of Stokes County.

Vehicle operators are responsible for ensuring their vehicle is in good working condition according to the vehicle manual.

County vehicles may be assigned to one or more vehicle operators for their primary use for County business and obligations. At the end of the workday, all County vehicles are to be parked in their assigned parking area unless otherwise authorized by the respective department/agency head.

Vehicle operators assigned County-owned vehicles are expected to maintain the interior and exterior cleanliness of the vehicle.

When fueling vehicles, vehicle operators are expected to select the lowest available fuel grade. Fuel-specific credit cards (WEX Cards) are issued with each vehicle.

Driver's Responsibilities

Vehicle operators are expected to operate all vehicles in a safe and courteous manner. Operators will obey all traffic laws, to always include the wearing of a seat belt.

Violations, citations, fines, and other actions taken by any enforcement agency against a vehicle operator while operating a motor vehicle are the responsibility of the employee and may be cause for disciplinary action by the County.

Employees are required to notify their department/agency head immediately of any change in their driving status, which includes reporting all vehicle accidents that occur while conducting County business. This includes but is not limited to fines, citations, suspensions, and revocations. Failure to notify the department/agency head may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

In the case of an accident involving any level of damage while conducting County business, the employee driving the vehicle shall immediately (or as soon as practically possible) notify their supervisor. When the accident involves another vehicle, involves any property damage or causes injury, the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency should be notified to obtain a full accident report.

The County will not be responsible for any increase in the employees' automobile insurance premium as a result of an accident or fines, as well as any increases as a result of carrying adequate coverage for business use.

Driving after the consumption of alcohol or while under the influence of any controlled substance is prohibited per the Drug-Free and Substance Abuse policy.

The use of tobacco products or E-Cigarettes/vaping products are prohibited in a County-owned vehicle.

Possession, transportation or consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs by anyone in the vehicle is prohibited per the Drug-Free and Substance Abuse policy. The exceptions are emergency and law enforcement

personnel who may transport lawfully confiscated items as required and within the scope and course of their official duties or residents with known or unknown substances.

Open carrying of handguns is strictly prohibited in all county-owned vehicles. The use of concealed handguns must comply with the county's concealed handgun policy. Adherence to these guidelines is required at all times.

Distracted Driving

Stokes County has a vital interest in maintaining a safe, healthy and efficient working environment for its employees. This includes a safe and appropriate environment while traveling on County business. Distracted driving is a serious safety risk, not only to the driver, but also to other occupants in the vehicle, other vehicles on the road and pedestrians. To reduce the risks associated with distracted driving, certain conduct is prohibited while driving a County-owned vehicle or while driving a personal vehicle while on County business, including but not limited to:

- Manually entering multiple letters or text on an electronic device or mobile telephone as a means of communicating with another person.
- Distractions by passengers.
- Distractions caused by eating or drinking while driving.
- Operating laptops, tablets, portable media devices, and GPS devices.
- Reading maps or any type of document, printed or electronic.

Drivers must pull over safely to the side of the road or another safe location before reading messages, returning calls, text messaging, emailing, reading maps for directions, or programming/resetting GPS devices. The provisions of this section do not apply to any of the following while in the performance of their official duties:

- Law Enforcement Officers
- Members of Emergency Management
- Members of the Fire Marshal's office
- Operators of a County ambulance

Use of County Vehicles

County-owned vehicles are to be operated exclusively by employees of Stokes County. No unauthorized individuals are permitted to drive these vehicles under any circumstances.

Per North Carolina General Statute 14-247, personal use of County-owned or leased vehicles is prohibited. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Per North Carolina General Statute 143-341(8)i7a, County vehicles are to be used for official County business only and shall not be used for the convenience of the employee regarding transportation needs or other non-business-related activities.

The County acknowledges that its employees may need at times, to keep personal items and information stored in or on County-owned property. However, due to security and accountability concerns, personal items/ information stored on or in a County-owned vehicle are subject to inspection at any time without

any prior notice. This includes the installation of a GPS device to track the whereabouts of the County-owned vehicle.

When conducting County business in the field, County vehicles may be used to travel to a nearby restaurant for lunch where the cost-benefit in travel time to the work quarters for a personal vehicle would not be in the best interest of the County.

Department/agency heads should notify Human Resources and Purchasing of any operator changes including assignment of take-home vehicles within five (5) business days.

It is the responsibility of the vehicle operator to ensure County-owned vehicles are serviced as needed. This includes notifying the County Garage of any issues needing repair as well as ensuring the vehicle is scheduled for regular maintenance as instructed by Garage personnel.

Use of Personal Vehicles

Employees using a personal vehicle for County business will be reimbursed for mileage pursuant to the Travel Policy. Per IRS Publication 5137: "A standard mileage rate is considered to cover all expenses of operating a vehicle, including insurance, maintenance, tires, oil and so on."

Operators using a personal vehicle for County business should carry adequate personal vehicle liability insurance as required by law. All County officials and employees using a personal vehicle for County-related business are expected to consult with their insurance provider to ensure they are appropriately covered for business use.

Employees using a personal vehicle for County business must ensure that the vehicle is inspected annually, and that the vehicle is in safe operating condition with no pre-existing damage.

The County assumes no responsibility for accidents and damages to privately owned vehicles.

Take-Home Vehicle Use

The County's policy is to only authorize the assignment of a take-home (overnight) vehicle when the best interest of the public is served by providing County employees with transportation according to the criteria listed in this section. The assignment of a County vehicle is neither a privilege nor a right of any County employee. Assignment of a County vehicle will not be made based on employee merit or employee status.

Authorization for continual use of County vehicles for commuting purposes may be granted by the County Manager to specified positions based on the following criteria:

- The position is full-time **AND** requires work in the field, away from a physical office or workplace, more than 75% of the position's total work time **AND** the position starts the day from home directly to the field three (3) or more days per week **AND** special equipment is needed that cannot reasonably be kept in a personal vehicle, **OR**
- The position is full-time **AND** responds to after-hours business calls away from the office or workplace at least one (1) time per week **AND** the position is expected to respond to after-hours business calls within thirty (30) minutes **AND** special equipment is needed that cannot reasonably be kept in a personal vehicle

Employees assigned county-owned take-home vehicles for commuting are considered to be receiving a taxable fringe benefit. The value of the taxable fringe benefit will be calculated based on the IRS guidelines and added to the employee's taxable income. The county payroll department will report the taxable fringe benefit on the employee's W-2 form.

For more detailed information, you can refer to the [IRS Publication 15-B](#) and the [Fringe Benefit Guide](#) . These documents provide comprehensive guidelines on how to handle taxable fringe benefits, including employer-provided vehicles.

Certain take-home vehicles are excluded from the commuting reimbursement requirement. These exceptions are consistent with those as outlined in [IRS Publication 15-B](#). Take-home vehicles for Law Enforcement, Emergency Management and Fire Marshal may qualify as "qualified non-personal use vehicles" under IRS guidelines, which would exempt them from being considered taxable fringe benefits. To qualify, the vehicles must be clearly marked and primarily used for official duties, such as responding to emergencies.

Employees permitted to take a County-owned vehicle home (commute) from their workstation may do so for job-related reasons and not as a compensatory measure.

Employees must be able to reasonably keep the assigned take-home vehicle at their home or at a County approved location after work hours.

Each department/agency head will provide the Human Resources and Purchasing Departments with a list of manager approved County vehicles assigned for take-home (overnight) use and provide updates a vehicle assignments change. The list must include the vehicle number, driver's name, driver's license number, and valid business reasons for take-home use.

If an employee with an assigned take-home vehicle is on a leave of absence for longer than five (5) working days, the County-owned vehicle should be parked at a County-owned facility until the employee resumes the duties assigned to their position.

Occasional Overnight Vehicle Assignment

Occasional overnight usage of County-owned vehicles is permitted with the approval of the department/agency head. Such occasional usage of County vehicles may occur when an employee conducts County business away from the employee's normal place of work, and outside an employee's normally scheduled workday. Other types of occasional overnight usage are permitted when the following conditions exist:

- Inclement weather conditions: When employee is on-call and has primary responsibility to respond.
- Emergency preparedness or seasonal assignment: County-owned vehicles are permitted when an employee is on-call and vehicles are taken home less than four (4) times per quarter on average.

Marking of County-owned Vehicles

All county-owned vehicles will be clearly marked to indicate their ownership and purpose, ensuring transparency and accountability. Exceptions to this requirement include vehicles assigned to law

enforcement officers performing detective duties. Additionally, the use of confidential license plates on county-owned vehicles must be expressly approved by the County Manager.

Maintaining Valid Driver's Licenses

All employees who are required to operate county-owned vehicles or equipment as part of their job responsibilities must maintain a valid driver's license or Commercial Driver's License (CDL), as appropriate for the type of vehicle or equipment operated. Employees must present proof of a valid driver's license or CDL upon hire and provide updates periodically as requested by the department/agency head.

Employees operating vehicles or equipment requiring a CDL must comply with all federal, state, and local regulations, including U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines. This includes mandatory drug and alcohol testing, adherence to hours-of-service rules, and proper vehicle inspections.

It is the responsibility of all employees to immediately notify their supervisor if their driver's license or CDL becomes invalid, suspended, or revoked for any reason. Failure to maintain a valid driver's license or CDL or to comply with applicable regulations may result in reassignment of duties, suspension of driving privileges, or disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Stokes County has the right to conduct routine checks to verify the status of employees' licenses and ensure compliance with this policy.

Reporting Injuries and Accidents

If an employee is injured as a result of an accident while on duty, regardless of the severity of the injury, the employee is required to report the injury at once to his/her immediate supervisor so that proper medical attention can be provided. The injured employee and their direct supervisor are required to complete the county's incident reports with a copy forwarded to Human Resources as soon as possible following incident.

Accidents

In the event of an accident involving a County-owned vehicle, the operator/employee should:

1. Render first aid if qualified to do so and arrange for medical care if necessary;
2. Notify 911 Emergency Services
3. Never move the vehicle or leave the scene of the accident without law enforcement approval
4. Exchange driver's license numbers, insurance information, and vehicle numbers with all parties involved. Obtain the names and addresses of anyone witnessing the accident. Offer no information regarding the responsibility for the accident or what should have been done to avoid the accident. Stay calm. These stipulations are especially important if the accident takes place outside of Stokes County.
5. The operator shall report any accident to his/her supervisor immediately;
6. The Safety Officer shall report the accident to the Accident Review Committee immediately;
7. All claims against the County insurance policies will be forwarded to the County Risk Manager;
8. Operators/Employees shall not permit unauthorized persons to operate or ride in or on a County vehicle.

Vehicle Accidents

When a County employee is involved in a vehicle accident involving a County-owned vehicle, the employee shall:

1. Notify his/her supervisor immediately.
2. The supervisor/director will immediately notify the County Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor of the accident.
3. The employee will complete and submit a Stokes County Vehicle Accident Report to their supervisor/director as soon as possible following the accident. The supervisor/director will forward a copy of the Accident Report to the Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor and the Human Resources department immediately after receipt of the completed form from the employee.

Failure to follow the steps outlined may result in disciplinary action against the employee

Accident Review Board

When an employee is involved in a vehicle accident while operating a County-owned vehicle, he/she shall appear before the Accident Review Board for a determination as to whether the accident was preventable or non-preventable. The Accident Review Board shall be comprised of the current Safety Committee.

Purpose of Accident Review Board

- To establish a fair and impartial review system for all accidents involving motorized equipment and operators with the primary objective being to improve the driving safety of County-owned motorized vehicles.
- To identify problem drivers, unsafe conditions, and pursue remedial steps to reduce damage to County-owned vehicles and prevent injury to County employees.
- To establish the responsibilities for each vehicle accident.

Appearance before the Board

Approximately five (5) working days prior to a regularly scheduled Board meeting, the Board Secretary shall notify all relevant County personnel to appear. Notification shall be directed through the appropriate department/agency heads.

- All personnel shall appear before the Board at its regularly scheduled meeting.
- Any employee unable to appear due to sickness, personal injury, or death to an immediate family member, must notify the Board Secretary twenty-four (24) hours in advance.
- Other than those cases which have been deferred, all vehicle accident cases scheduled shall be heard and action taken, whether the individual is present. Department/agency heads shall be notified of the action taken by the Accident Review Board.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply to ensure clarity and consistent interpretation.

County-Owned Vehicle: Any motor vehicle, equipment, or machinery that is registered, leased, or owned by the county and used for official business purposes.

Marking: Any insignia, decal, logo, or other identifying feature applied to a county-owned vehicle, indicating that it belongs to the county or is used for county business purposes.

Maintenance and Inspection: Routine actions required to ensure the safety and operability of a county-owned vehicle, including scheduled servicing, pre- and post-operation inspections, and addressing repairs promptly.

Employee: Any individual employed by the county, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract workers, as well as interns and volunteers acting on behalf of the county.

County Business: Any county sanctioned activity performed within the scope of an individual's assigned duties.

Policy Approval

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Stokes County Board of County Commissioners on this day ____ of _____ 2025.

Keith Wood, Chairman

Jeff Sanborn, County Manager

Jamie Clark, Human Resources Director