

Policy Intent

It is the policy of Cottonwood County to make county-owned/leased vehicles available for county business purposes.

The intent of the policy is not to limit the Sheriff's Department in the normal use of their vehicles for their regular job duties.

Policy Guidelines to Request the Use of County-Owned/Leased Vehicles

Generally, county-owned/leased vehicles should be reserved as soon as the need for their use is determined. Reservations should be made through your appropriate department for the use of the county-owned/leased vehicles.

Whenever possible the person taking the longest trip will have priority. If a longer trip arises, previously scheduled trips cannot be bumped without 48-hour notice. Whenever there is a scheduled trip change, the parties involved must discuss the modified arrangement.

Each department will maintain a travel log of county vehicle usage. All receipts for county-owned/leased vehicle usage, including fuel, oil, etc., must be submitted to the appropriate department upon completion of the trip.

County-Owned/Leased Vehicle Usage

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners will appoint a Travel Coordinator (see definition of Travel Coordinator on Page 4) as a point of contact for employees.

County vehicles are for the exclusive use of employees and other individuals involved in county business. Unauthorized occupants are not allowed nor are vehicles to be used for personal use. Persons other than county employees are allowed as passengers only when it is necessary for conducting county business. Specific notification of passengers must be provided to the Travel Coordinator prior to travel.

Use of a county vehicle to or from an employee's residence is prohibited except under very limited circumstances. A county vehicle may be used by a county employee to travel to or from an employee's residence under the following conditions:

1. If the employee has been assigned the use of a county vehicle for authorized county business away from the work station to which the employee is permanently assigned, and the number of miles traveled or the time needed to conduct the business will be minimized if the employee uses a county vehicle to travel to the employee's residence before or after traveling to the place of county business.
2. Prior approval is attained from the Travel Coordinator.
3. Sheriff's Department squad car

Unauthorized personal use of a county vehicle may be grounds for disciplinary action.

All county-owned/leased vehicles are **Tobacco Free**.

Electronic radar detectors are not permitted in county vehicles.

The county vehicle must be returned to the storage site facility in the same condition in which the vehicle was received, including refueled, except for ordinary wear and use. The driver is required to complete the trip log.

The vehicle shall not be used for any of the following PROHIBITED USES:

- Operation by an unauthorized driver
- Operation by any driver under the influence of intoxicants, drugs, or any other substance known to impair driving ability
- For any illegal purpose
- Operated in any abusive or reckless manner
- Carrying or transporting firearms, intoxicants, drugs, or any other controlled substances
- Towing or pushing anything
- Operated in any race, test or contest
- Operated off-road

Fines resulting from traffic citations involving either moving vehicle or parking violations are the obligation of the driver responsible for the vehicle involved and must be reported to the immediate supervisor verbally the next business day.

Parking and Storage of County Vehicle

Parking of County vehicles shall be the responsibility of the driver.

1. Vehicles shall have the keys removed and remain locked when parked.
2. Vehicles shall be parked in a lot, if available; however, if no other parking is available, vehicles may be parked on the street if not in violation of local ordinance.
3. If circumstances require parking a County vehicle in a garage or parking lot, the parking fee shall be paid by the driver and reimbursed by the County. Receipts required.

Use of Personal Vehicle for County Business

Employees are allowed to use their personal vehicles to conduct business within the county and receive the mileage reimbursement rate as set forth by the County Board. When two or more are riding in one car, only the driver is compensated.

Employees that wish to use their own vehicles for out-of-county travel when a county-owned/leased vehicle is available will be reimbursed at a rate of 10 cents below the reimbursement rate as set forth by the County Board.

The county-owned vehicle stored at the Courthouse, which is typically used by the Assessor's Office, is generally used within the County. Employees are not required to take this vehicle for use outside of Cottonwood County.

In the event the county-owned/leased vehicle is in use, employees will be required to provide their own vehicle and will be paid at the mileage reimbursement rate as set forth by the County Board.

Request for Reimbursement for Use of Personal Vehicle for County Business

When travel is completed, employees are to submit completed travel and expense reports to their Department Head. The report must be approved by the Department Head and forwarded to the County Auditor/Treasurer who will present the report to the County Board for approval and payment.

Travel and expense reports shall be accompanied by the following:

1. Receipt which must include: date of service, itemized description of service, amount paid.
2. No item of expense shall be approved if a receipt is missing.
3. Credit card receipts are not sufficient documentation of expense unless they contain all of the information indicated above.
4. For claiming mileage, document the purpose for travel and total miles traveled to and from the conference, workshop, seminar or meeting site.

Liability Insurance/Drivers License

Employees shall not drive any vehicle, personal or county-owned/leased, on county business without a valid driver's license of the appropriate classification. Driving records and driver's license status of County employees who use vehicles for county business may be checked on an annual basis.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify his/her supervisor if their license has been revoked or if there is any other reason why they cannot drive a vehicle.

Employees are required to have liability insurance in compliance with Minnesota Statute 65B.49 in effect on all personal vehicles used for County purposes or while performing County business. The County may at any time require proof of such insurance.

Safety, Accidents and Theft Reporting

Safety

Employees are expected to operate vehicles in a safe and conscientious manner at all times. **SEAT BELTS ARE TO BE WORN BY ALL OCCUPANTS AT ALL TIMES.** All laws are to be obeyed.

Drivers will immediately report any accident, damage or theft to the law enforcement authority for the jurisdiction where the accident, damage or theft occurred. Drivers will deliver copies of documents, when received, to their immediate supervisor who will notify the Human Resources Office. Drivers will cooperate fully with Cottonwood County, the Cottonwood County Attorney's office, and the County's insurer in the investigation and defense of any claim or lawsuit.

Accidents

In the event of an accident or any damage to a County vehicle, the driver must:

1. Call police and obtain emergency medical care for any injured people.
2. Obtain the following information:
 - a. Names and addresses of all vehicle occupants and any injured people
 - b. Location where injured are taken
 - c. Name and address of other vehicle owner and driver
 - d. Other vehicle license number and description of the other vehicle(s) including make, model, color, etc.
 - e. Names and addresses of all witnesses
 - f. Name of policy agency, police department and accident report number.
3. Complete accident report at County Human Resources Office

Do not admit liability or make any statements concerning the accident except to police.

Theft Reporting

Drivers are required to immediately report the theft of a County vehicle to local law enforcement, immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Office.

Responsibility for Personal Property

Cottonwood County is not responsible for the loss or damage to any personal property of the driver or passengers left in or on a County vehicle, regardless of who is at fault.

Traffic Laws

Drivers of County vehicles are required to observe and obey all traffic laws regarding the operation of a motor vehicle including speed limits.

Drivers of County vehicles are responsible for all fines and penalties imposed for parking or traffic violations with respect to the County vehicle while the County vehicle is in their possession.

Violations

Any employee found in violation of this policy or making false claims shall be subject to corrective action, including discipline, termination of employment, and/or applicable State or Federal laws.

Definition

Travel Coordinator – An individual that is appointed by the Board of Commissioners as a contact person to be used by employees to receive permission of special requests of owned/leased vehicle usage listed in this policy.

The Travel Coordinator is not the contact person to reserve vehicles for use by county employees. They must be reserved through the department that the vehicles are assigned to.