



## Columbia County Vehicle Use Policy

It is the intent of the County of Columbia that there be a general policy defining the assignment, control, proper use and maintenance of vehicles and equipment that are driven by employees. The intent of this document is to notify each operator of a Columbia County vehicle of the responsibilities that are inherent with the assignment and use of County vehicles and equipment.

### **I. General Policy**

Each Department Head shall be responsible for seeing that any County employee that has occasion to use a Columbia County Vehicle or motorized equipment receive a copy of this policy, and that they sign the Acknowledgement of Receipt and that a copy is forwarded to Human Resource Department for inclusion in the employee's personnel file. One copy of this Vehicle Use Policy shall be placed in the glove compartment of all County vehicles.

### **II. Motor Vehicle Assignments**

Assignment of vehicles, other than from department pool vehicles, will be done by each Department Head, with the approval of the BOS Chairman, for vehicles assigned under section II.1.(a) of the vehicle use policy.

1. Assignments will be designated as one of the following types:
  - a) **Twenty-Four Hour Use Assignment**- authorizes an individual employee to utilize a vehicle for all legitimate County business, as well as for limited personal business within the County of Columbia. Such persons shall be permitted to transport personal guests in County vehicles, if such usage is incidental to and allows them to fulfill the duties of their job assignment/requirements. Vehicles may only be assigned for 24-hour use when the employee and vehicle meet one or more of the following requirements:
    1. The employee's job requires that (s)he be on 24-hour crisis call; or
    2. The employee is only able to respond to the crisis with the use of a specially equipped County vehicle; or

3. Employee receives frequent “call-ins” to respond to emergency situations based on technical skills or supervisory status of the employee; or
  4. County vehicle carries radio or other specialized equipment frequently needed to respond to emergencies.
- b) **Commuter Use Assignment** – authorizes an individual employee to utilize a vehicle for County business and conveyance only between his/her home and work site. Such employees shall be required to comply with current De Minimus Use Rules, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service. A copy of such current rules shall be provided to all employees meeting these requirements by the Columbia County BOS Chairman. Vehicles will be considered for assignment for commuter use when the employee and the vehicle meet one or more of the following requirements.
1. Regular attendance at business functions for the County outside normal work hours; or
  2. The employee’s job requires that (s)he be able to respond to his/her job duties on a timely basis
- c) **Sheriff’s Department Vehicles** – will follow the Standard Operating Procedures as developed by the Columbia County Sheriff on usage and assignment of Patrol Vehicles.
- d) **Department Pool Assignment** – each Department Head, or designee, shall have the ability to assign vehicles, to be operated by employee’s of the County of Columbia during working hours.
2. Acknowledgments – All Columbia County Department Heads shall be responsible to ensure that no employee is allowed to operate a County Vehicle until the employee has:
- a) been provided with a copy of the Columbia County Vehicle Use Policy; and
  - b) acknowledged in writing the assignment designation that (s)he has received from the Columbia County Board of Supervisors Chairman or designee.

### **III. Motor Vehicle Use Guidelines**

Each Department shall keep an accurate log of County-owned vehicles used by Department employees, indicating the employee name, Vehicle Identification Number or license plate, number of vehicles, dates the vehicles are used, report yearly mileage on all vehicles and report the total amount of fuel annually to be reported to the BOS.

#### **Tax Reporting and Liability:**

Any use of assigned fleet vehicles, regardless of assignment type, has a taxable value to the operator, and must be reported consistent with payroll bulletins provided by the State of New York. Any tax liabilities so incurred are the responsibility of the individual vehicle operator. Columbia County maintains and assigns vehicles to assist its employees in carrying out official County business, not as a benefit or condition of employment.

Each employee using a County-owned vehicle for commuting purposes shall also keep a log detailing vehicle usage. Those employees who are required to commute between work and home in a County-owned vehicle use such vehicle for “commuting purposes”.

The Payroll department SHALL DETERMINE the value of the vehicle and if the operator fits the guidelines set forth in IRS publication 15-B, and the IRS Handbook.

Any employee subject to the IRS “commuting rule” will be subject to federal, state, and FICA withholding taxes.

1. Department heads are responsible to ensure that their employees operate County vehicles in a proper, courteous and safe manner.
2. No person who operates a County vehicle shall drink alcoholic beverages or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages before or while operating a County vehicle.
3. No person who operates a County vehicle shall be under the influence of a controlled substance while operating a County vehicle.
4. Seat belts must be worn by driver and passenger(s) at all times while operating a County vehicle.

5. No person using prescribed or over the counter drugs that effect driving ability shall drive a County vehicle.
6. The use of a personal radios or tape recorders that impairs normal hearing for the safe operation of a vehicle is strictly prohibited.
7. All County employees assigned vehicles on a 24-hour or commuter use basis shall take prudent care in securing the vehicle and selecting parking location when leaving the vehicle overnight.
8. Should an employee who is assigned a County vehicle on a 24-hour or commuter use basis be absent for more than two (2) days, the vehicle shall be secured in a safe place with arrangements made with employees department to pick up the vehicle during the employee's absence, should it be needed.
9. An operator of a County vehicle, (except for emergency services vehicles, and in such cases as permits to perform the employee's job task), shall not leave the vehicle unattended without stopping the vehicle, locking the ignition and removing the keys.
10. All persons who operate County Vehicles must have a valid license that allows them to operate the vehicle which they are using.
11. A person who operates a County vehicle is responsible for compliance with the Vehicle and Traffic Laws of the jurisdiction the vehicle is being operated in and for the satisfaction of all moving and parking violations. If the employee is charged with any violations, or if property damage or injury has occurred, the employee shall contact the Department Head/who intern will notify the Chairman of the BOS immediately so steps can be taken to insure proper representation of the employee at any hearings held as a result of such charges. In such cases, the employee shall make no statements or admissions prior to consultation with the County Attorney.
12. There shall be NO smoking in any County vehicle.

#### **IV. DWI/DWAI Policy.**

1. Present Employees
  - a. Any employee of Columbia County who, as part of his or her job, operates a County-owned motor vehicle or operates his or her own vehicle on official county

business will lose the privilege of using County-owned motor vehicles or using their vehicle on County business upon the conviction of either Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving with the Ability Impaired (DWAI). This loss of privilege will occur regardless of whether the incident that gives rise to the conviction occurred during the employee's workday or during the employee's personal time.

- b. Any employee of Columbia County upon a refusal to submit to a chemical test to determine BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) or any other chemical test upon the arrest of such employee for DWI or DWAI regardless of whether the incident that gives rise to the arrest occurred during the employee's workday or employee's personal time, if such refusal in accordance with State Law causes the employee's license to immediately be suspended prior to any conviction, will lose the privilege to operate a County Owned vehicle as set forth in section III, Sub 10. Any employee who under this section refuses a chemical test and, who has his or her right to operate a vehicle in N.Y. State will immediately notify his or her Department Head of the loss of privilege.

## 2. New Employees

- a. No department will hire anyone for a position which involves the operation of a County-owned motor vehicle or in which the prospective employee will drive his or her own vehicle on County business who has been convicted of DWI or DWAI within the past two (2) years.
- b. No department will hire anyone in a position which involves the operation of a County-owned motor vehicle or in which the prospective employee will drive his or her own vehicle on County business who has been convicted of DWI Felony within the past five (5) years.
- c. Any employee arrested for either DWI or DWAI while operating a County-owned vehicle or operating any vehicle while on County business must immediately notify, in writing the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and their respective Department Head of the arrest. Upon conviction of the above, such employee will be subject to termination as determined by the County Government Committee of the Board of Supervisors.

## **V. Accident Reporting**

- a. A police report must be filed for all accidents involving County vehicles regardless of the seriousness or fault, except those instances involving minor accidents on County property.
- b. The Chairman of the Board of Supervisor's or his/her designee shall be notified in such event as to the nature of the accident and to the extent of damage.
- c. **WARNING** – If an accident occurs while the employee is using a County vehicle outside of the scope of his/her assignment designation, in violation of any of the rules and regulations set forth in the Columbia County Vehicles Policy, such employee shall be held personally liable for any damage to property or injury to any person as a result of such use of the vehicle.

## **VI. Motor Vehicle Maintenance**

- a. All County motor vehicles should receive proper vehicle maintenance.
- b. All County motor vehicles should have a schedule of maintenance for the vehicle.
- c. User departments and assignees are responsible for complying with the schedule of maintenance provided by the County for said vehicle.
- d. Gas and oil for all County vehicles shall be obtained from County sources. Employees will be reimbursed for gas or oil purchased from private garages, only when the vehicle has been authorized for an official trip outside the County, or in case of emergency subject to departmental procedure.
- e. If an employee notices, while operating a County vehicle that it is in need of repair, (s)he is responsible for reporting this to his/her Department Supervisor immediately. If a vehicle is deemed unsafe, the employee shall not operate vehicle, and shall immediately notify the Department head.