

## **9.1 Vehicle Operation Policy**

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### **Policy**

Certain positions require employees to operate vehicles to conduct Lake County business. The County expects those employees that are required to operate a County-owned vehicle or a personal vehicle in service to Lake County do so safely, attentively, responsibly, in compliance with County regulations and all traffic laws and in such a way that meets the standards outlined in the Lake County Driving Agreement.

### **Purpose**

To define employee responsibilities regarding maintenance and care of vehicles, insurance requirements, licensure requirements and safe operation of County-owned vehicles and personal vehicles operated in service to the County.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

Employees are required to possess and carry an appropriate and valid driver's license with full privileges and of a suitable class while operating a County-owned vehicle or a personal vehicle in service to Lake County. All employees shall review and sign the Lake County Driving Agreement.

Driving a County-owned vehicle or a personal vehicle in service to Lake County without an active, valid and appropriate driver's license shall constitute a violation of this policy and may be the basis for discipline.

An employee shall immediately inform their supervisor of the loss of a driver's license that affects their ability to perform assigned work. Failure to report a loss of a driver's license may constitute a violation of this policy. Supervisors shall consult with Human Resources if an employee is not permitted to drive for work purposes and if driving is an essential function of their position.

Each employee driving a County-owned vehicle shall adhere to the following. Employees who drive a personal vehicle in service to Lake County shall adhere to the following except for those pertaining specifically to County-owned vehicles:

1. **Pre-Trip Inspections** – Employees who drive County-owned vehicles shall inspect the vehicle which they are about to drive in accordance with established work rules and vehicle type. Specialized or heavy machinery owned by Lake County may have additional pre-use checks required prior to operation.
  - a. If there is evidence of accident damage, the employee shall report it to their supervisor before leaving.
  - b. If the vehicle is found to be unsafe, the employee shall report it to their supervisor and request another vehicle.

- c. Vehicles having steering, braking or any other serious defects shall not be driven. They shall be towed to the garage and repaired before being returned to service.
  - d. Report to supervisor in writing all defects noted during the trip.
  - e. Employees shall ensure that personal vehicles used in service to Lake County shall be in safe working condition.
2. **Lake County Driver's Agreement** – Employees who are assigned the use of a Lake County fleet vehicle or who drive a personal vehicle in service to Lake County shall adhere to terms set forth in the Driving Agreement. No current employee shall be allowed to drive a County-owned vehicle or personal vehicle in service to Lake County without signing the Driving Agreement and providing driver's license information to Risk Management.
3. **Vehicle Operation** – Employees are to operate vehicles in a safe and courteous manner, which reflects favorably on Lake County; Obey all state and local traffic laws; Abide by all operating procedures stated in this policy; Use a vehicle or piece of equipment only for its intended purposes within the operating limitations established by the manufacturer.

Each employee operating a County-owned vehicle shall adhere to these operating rules. Employees who drive a personal vehicle in service to Lake County shall also adhere to these operating rules except for those pertaining specifically to County-owned vehicles:

- A. **Equipment Removal** – Removal of any equipment from a County-owned vehicle without written permission of the Division of Transportation, the Department Head and Risk Management is prohibited.
- B. **Equipment Modification** – Modification of any County-owned vehicle or of any equipment in a vehicle without the written permission of the Division of Transportation, the Department Head and Risk Management is prohibited.
- C. **Controlled Substances** – Operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcoholic beverages, non-prescription narcotics as identified by state statutes or prescribed medication which adversely affects the operator's ability to operate a vehicle safely is prohibited.
- D. **Transporting Controlled Substances, Firearms, etc.** – No alcoholic beverage (whether opened or unopened), narcotics, fire-arm or explosive material may be transported in a County-owned vehicle unless designated as part of the driver's job responsibility.
- E. **Stopping at Stores** – County-owned vehicles shall not be parked in front of or in parking areas associated with taverns or liquor stores unless the employee is on official Lake County business. Restaurants serving liquor are not included in this prohibition. Stopping at convenience stores, food establishments and restrooms must be in concert with official duties requiring travel in a County-owned vehicle and along the normal route of travel for

work activities or in close proximity of the work location when working away from the employee's base location.

- F. Seatbelts** – Wear seat belts at all times while driving. Do not allow passengers to ride in the cargo beds of trucks or in any area not equipped with seat belts.
- G. Personal Use** – Employees who operate a County-owned vehicle shall restrict such use to official Lake County business. Personal use other than as authorized in accordance to Take-Home Vehicles Section of this policy is strictly prohibited.
- H. Smoking in Lake County Vehicles** – Smoking in County-owned vehicles is prohibited.
- I. Security and Theft** – Employees are responsible for the security of the vehicle that they operate. Windows are to be closed and doors locked when the vehicle will be out of sight. Keys shall be removed from the vehicle anytime it is unattended. When possible, all loose County-owned equipment and property shall be secured in the car trunk or locked tool chests. Theft of the vehicle or contents shall be reported to the Sheriff's Office or local police and the employee's supervisor immediately. Supervisors are responsible for completing and forwarding a Property Loss Report to Risk Management along with a copy of the police report. Theft or loss of vehicle keys or license plates is to be reported to Fleet Maintenance.
- J. Traffic Citations** – Employees are personally responsible for all traffic citations issued to them by a law enforcement agency. Lake County will not reimburse employees for the payment of traffic citations nor provide legal representation. All citations issued while driving a County-owned vehicle shall be reported to the employee's supervisor immediately.
- K. Safe Cell Phone, Mobile Device Use and Texting** – Employees are required to comply with all state and local laws regarding the use of cellular phones while driving. Only hands-free use of cell phones is allowed while operating a motor vehicle in the state of Illinois. No texting, instant messaging, emailing or Internet browsing is allowed while operating a motor vehicle. The use of cell phones or mobile devices while operating heavy machinery is strictly prohibited. Employees using hand-free telephones should keep business conversations brief while driving and must stop the vehicle and park in a proper parking area if the conversation becomes involved, traffic is heavy or road conditions are poor.
- L. Distracted Driving** – Safety shall be the first priority while driving for Lake County. In addition to safe cell phone use as defined above, employees

shall follow all posted signs and speed limits, shall not eat while driving and shall take sufficient breaks when driving for extended periods of time.

- M. Authorized Passengers** – Employees shall transport only those persons on official Lake County related business or those persons receiving transportation as a prescribed service. Family members not on official business are not permitted to ride in County-owned vehicles.
- N. Preventive Maintenance Program** – As operators, employees have the responsibility to turn-in their vehicle to Fleet Maintenance at the scheduled time and date for preventive maintenance services. Contact the Division of Transportation for further details.
- O. Cleanliness** – Keep vehicles clean, neat and presentable. Remove all papers and other trash from the vehicle after each period of use. For additional cleaning resources, contact Fleet Maintenance.

#### **Driver's license verification and review of motor vehicle record (MVR)**

A MVR may be obtained by Lake County to ascertain that the employee has an active, valid, appropriate driver's license and to review the employee's driving record. All employee's must provide driver's license information to Lake County. A MVR may be obtained by Risk Management for employees who drive a County-owned vehicle or a personal vehicle in service to Lake County. The MVR information will be reviewed by Risk Management. If there are concerns about driving records, Risk Management will contact the employee's department and give them the relevant information.

#### **Take-Home Vehicles**

Use of an assigned Lake County take-home vehicle is a privilege that may be revoked at any time. Revocation of the privilege is not considered an adverse employment action grievable under Lake County Policies and Procedures.

The decision regarding assignment of County-owned vehicles to employees as allowed to be driven to and from work shall be left to the discretion of the Department Head and is subject to review by the Director of Human Resources and the County Administrator's Office.

#### **Personally Owned Vehicles Used in Service to Lake County**

Personal vehicles operated in service to Lake County may only be operated by the owner of the vehicle. This allows the County to verify, if needed, that proper insurance has been secured on that vehicle.

An employee's personal vehicle liability insurance policy may be primary to any Lake County coverage. Employees who use personally owned vehicles in service to Lake County shall confirm that their personal vehicle insurance policy provides coverage for this use.

Lake County's self-insurance program may provide for excess liability coverage, but does not cover any physical damage to an employee's personal vehicle used in service to Lake County.

For excess liability coverage to apply, the accident must be determined by Risk Management to have occurred during the course and scope of the employee's work duties.

Each driver who operates their personal vehicle in service to Lake County must have proof of insurance meeting Illinois state law requirements. Copies of insurance certificates must be supplied to Risk Management upon request.

**Accident Reporting Procedures**

Any accident involving a County-owned, rented or leased vehicle or personally owned vehicle used in service to the County shall be reported as follows:

- Summon medical care for any injured parties.
- Notify appropriate law enforcement authorities.
- Notify employee's immediate supervisor.
- The supervisor shall notify Risk Management and complete proper paperwork as defined and listed on the Employee Services Portal (ESP).
- The supervisor shall be responsible for initiating the departmental investigation of the accident and completing all required Lake County reports. Reports shall be received by Risk Management within 24 hours after an accident has occurred.

**Driving Courses**

Employees driving County-owned vehicles or driving personal vehicles as a significant requirement of their position shall be required to complete a driving course once every three years or when a review of their driving record indicates a need for retraining.