

Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #46

Title: Use of County Owned Vehicles and Emergency Response Driving
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46.1 POLICY

1. To help prevent collisions and to promote a positive example to the public, all Charleston County Coroner's Office employees shall operate their vehicles under control, in a safe and courteous manner and in compliance with all applicable provisions of State Law, County Ordinances and Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy. All personnel executing emergency response driving with blue lights and sirens will comply with this policy and state law regarding emergency response driving. Personnel operating vehicles issued by the Charleston County Coroner's Office are responsible for the operation, maintenance, and appearance of those vehicles. Personnel operating assigned vehicles will exercise due regard for the safety of all persons and demonstrate exemplary driving behavior.

2. Any collision in which a Charleston County vehicle is involved must be reported and documented. Should a county-owned vehicle need to be towed, the towing procedures shall be utilized.

46.2 PROCEDURE

1. All Charleston County Coroner employees who are authorized to drive, or are assigned a county vehicle, will attend, and complete any driver's training that may be required by the Charleston County Government.

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2. To promote efficiency, the Charleston County Coroner's Office has furnished take-home vehicles for certain employees, when available. The vehicle should be driven responsibly, defensively, and in a manner that promotes safety as well as preserves the operating efficiency of the vehicle. Abuse of the vehicle will not be tolerated. An assigned vehicle cannot be swapped or traded for another vehicle without the permission of the Coroner or her designee.

3. All drivers in county-owned vehicles must wear seat belts and abide by SC Code of Law Section 56-5-6520 copied below:

SECTION 56-5-6520.

Mandatory use of seat belt.

The driver and every occupant of a motor vehicle, when it is being operated on the public streets and highways of this State, must wear a fastened safety belt which complies with all provisions of federal law for its use. The driver is charged with the responsibility of requiring each occupant seventeen years of age or younger to wear a safety belt or be secured in a child restraint system as provided in Article 47 of this chapter. However, a driver is not responsible for an occupant seventeen years of age or younger who has a driver's license, special restricted license, or beginner's permit and who is not wearing a seat belt; such occupant is in violation of this article and must be fined in accordance with Section 56-5-6540.

4. Employees authorized to operate a Charleston County vehicle must hold a current and valid South Carolina driver's license. Should an employee's driver's license be suspended or revoked for any reason at any time they must notify the Charleston County Coroner immediately.

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5. Employees of the Coroner's Office will be cognizant of parking regulations at all times and will not park in restricted or handicapped areas or reserved parking spaces.

6. When an employee leaves a vehicle parked and unattended, the ignition will be turned off, the key removed, and all doors locked.

7. Employees who are assigned a take-home vehicle shall live either within the boundaries of Charleston County or within 10 road miles of the county border. Any employee who resides outside this limit or moves outside this limit may not be assigned a take-home vehicle.

8. Personal use of a county-owned vehicle shall only be limited to commuting to and from work, responding for calls for service, and minimal personal use such as a brief personal errand while commuting.

9. Charleston County Coroner's Office employees shall NOT:

- a) Operate a county-owned vehicle while under the influence of alcoholic beverages to any degree; under the influence of street drugs; or under the influence of prescribed medications that are known to impair one's ability to drive, i.e. drowsiness, dizziness, etc.
- b) Use tobacco products (inhaled or oral), e-cigarettes, or nicotine inhalers in county-owned vehicles.
- c) Drive outside of Charleston County unless preapproved by the Coroner or their designee.
- d) Allow another person to operate their assigned vehicle, which includes valet parking attendants.
- e) Leave underage children or pets unattended in a county vehicle.
- f) Allow pets to ride with their head protruding from the vehicle window.
- g) Make anything other than minor adjustments to the vehicle.
- h) Alter the body, general design, appearance, or markings of the vehicle to include: unauthorized stickers, magnets, license plates, and bumper or window stickers.

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- i) Use fuel, oil, lubricants, or other additives in the vehicle other than approved county standards.
- j) Hang items from the rear-view mirror or display personal items on or near the windows.
- k) Use the county vehicle for carrying heavy or excessive loads and will not have objects protruding from the trunk or windows unless required as evidence, property, or otherwise related to a call for service.
- l) Push or tow another vehicle, item, or trailer unless the vehicle is appropriately equipped and authorized for such service.
- m) Jumpstart another vehicle with battery cables unless in an emergency. If jump starting another vehicle, the police radio systems in the unit will be switched off until the jump start is completed. During this period, Deputies will utilize the portable hand-held radio.

46.3 CARE AND MAINTENANCE

1. The employee assigned to a vehicle will be responsible for the appearance of the vehicle to include regular washings. Each employee issued a county-owned vehicle will conduct regular inspections of their vehicle for dents, broken glass, or other visible damage and any noted problems should be reported to the Coroner or her designee. If a vehicle repair is needed, the employee assigned to the vehicle shall immediately make the Coroner or her designee aware of the problem.

2. Preventive Maintenance (PM) shall be done every 5000 miles at the County Fleet Operations Facility. All preventive maintenance shall have an appointment before taking the vehicle to Fleet Operations. No Charleston County Coroner's Office vehicle shall be sent to a private company for any services without prior authorization. Deputies shall schedule their PM through the Fleet maintenance Appointment Request Form located on the Charleston County Employee Intranet.

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3. The employee assigned a vehicle left at the Fleet Operations Shop or an outside repair shop, is responsible for removing all personal and/or assigned portable equipment. Upon notification that the vehicle is ready for return, the vehicle shall be picked up as soon as possible and any spare vehicle returned.

46.4 EMERGENCY RESPONSE DRIVING

1. All authorized emergency vehicles must be equipped with blue lights, front and rear, and a siren. It shall also be equipped with a siren capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from at least five hundred feet and of a type approved by the Coroner's Office. Emergency equipment shall not be used except when a county vehicle is operating in response to an emergency call. Vehicles may not be driven recklessly or in a manner that endangers the safety and lives of others. No vehicle shall be operated at a rate of speed that would cause the driver to lose control of the vehicle.

2. The need for emergency response is at the discretion of the Deputy responding. The Deputy should make this decision with due regard for the safety of his/herself and with regard to other drivers, circumstances of the call, etc. Emergency response driving with blue lights and siren activated is only authorized when necessary to facilitate a timely response and to enhance safety for the Deputy and others.

3. Deputies should use the HALO light equipped in their vehicle during weather phenomena which, may impact safe driving i.e. high winds, heavy rainfall, heavy fog to name a few.

4. Deputy Coroners are authorized to activate the vehicle's emergency lights and siren to protect life or render necessary service. Examples of such scenarios include, but are not limited to the following:

1. At the scene of any incident where the use of emergency lights constitutes a necessary warning for the safety of life such as at the scenes of fires, accidents, disasters, etc.

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2. As a visual signal to warn motorists of imminent dangers typically at the scene of a traffic fatality.
3. Where, because of location, distance to be traveled, or traffic conditions, the Deputy Coroner determines that an emergency response is essential to provide an appropriate response to a call for service. Deputies must utilize lights and sirens when traveling against traffic or through red traffic signals.

46.5 NO AUTHORITY FOR TRAFFIC STOPS

1. Under no circumstances are Deputy Coroners, driving a county vehicle or privately-owned vehicle, ever authorized to make any kind of traffic stop or pursue anyone believed to be violating the law.
2. Anyone who is found to be in violation of the above directives regarding emergency response driving and traffic stops may be disciplined up to and including termination.

46.6 PARKING

1. If a county-owned vehicle is to be parked in a legal parking place for an extended time, it shall be backed in to facilitate 'jump starting' should that be necessary. Situations which require the engine to be operating with the use of emergency equipment are exempt from this requirement.
2. Deputy Coroners on light duty, FMLA, military activation, extended sick leave, administrative leave, or suspension will turn in their issued vehicle and all keys/remotes to the Coroner's designee and remove all personal items. Employees may keep assigned vehicles for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) consecutive days while on annual or sick leave.

46.7 COLLISIONS

1. The Coroner, Chief Deputy, or other supervisor and the SC Highway Patrol should be contacted immediately if a Charleston County Coroner's Office vehicle is involved in a collision. No vehicle should be moved from the incident location until contact is made

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and approval to move vehicles is given by both the Coroner, the Chief Deputy, or South Carolina Highway Patrol, or other law enforcement agencies. Collisions that are the result of irresponsible actions or policy violations may require the employee to reimburse the county for the collision or possibly face termination.

46.8 INSURANCE AND REGISTRATION

All pertinent information relating to insurance, registration, and collisions should be in every county vehicle. If this information cannot be located in the vehicle, it should be reported to the Coroner.

46.9 BREAKDOWNS REQUIRING TOWING

1. The following procedures should be utilized if roadside assistance is needed due to a county vehicle break-down, including lockouts, flat tires (unless changeable without assistance), dead batteries, out-of-fuel situations, and any other factor that prevents safe vehicle operation.
2. The County issued P-card should not be used to purchase any roadside services or fuel within Charleston County.
3. If a breakdown occurs within Charleston County:
 - a) If possible, pull off to side-of-road and seek safe placement of self, passengers, and vehicle.
 - b) If the vehicle is under manufacturer's warranty (3 years or 36000 miles), then call the appropriate Roadside Assistance # listed below and have the vehicle towed to the appropriate dealership (Ford for Ford, GM for GM).
 - c) If the Operator requires a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), you can find the same on the vehicle's Registration Card located inside the glove compartment.
 - d) If the vehicle is not under the manufacturer's warranty, then call **843-202-1700**, Consolidated Dispatch, and request to have the vehicle towed to the ***Fleet Maintenance Facility at 4371 Headquarters Rd.***

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- e) Notify your immediate supervisor.
 - f) Feel free to call Fleet Operations at 202-7910 or 202-7900 (Mon-Fri 7:15-3:15) for assistance and/or advice.
4. If a breakdown occurs outside of Charleston County:
- a) If possible, pull the vehicle off to side-of-road away from traffic and seek safe placement for self, passengers, and vehicle.
 - b) Call the appropriate Roadside Assistance Operator (Ford for Ford, GM for GM, etc) and have the vehicle towed to the nearest appropriate dealership.
 - c) Have the dealership call the ***Fleet Maintenance Facility at 843-202-7910 or 843-202-7900*** during normal working hours (7:15 – 3:15) or the next business day (M-F).
 - d) The appropriate Roadside Assistance number can be called in the event of a lockout, warranty, or non-warranty situation, provide gas, or fix a flat tire.
 - e) When calling for Roadside Assistance, be prepared to provide the Vehicle's Identification Number (VIN #). This number can be found on the Vehicle Registration Card in the glove compartment or located on the driver side lower corner of the windshield on the car's dashboard (viewable from outside of the vehicle).
 - f) If a breakdown occurs during a normal workday (Mon-Fri 7:15-3:15), please contact ***Fleet Maintenance Facility at 843-202-7910 or 843-202-7900*** and advise Fleet personnel of the situation. If on a weekend, then be sure the dealership has Fleet Operations contact numbers.
 - g) Notify your immediate supervisor or designee and apprise him/her of the situation.
 - h) Very seldom, if ever, does Roadside Assistance require payment for the towing service. However, the County's P-card can be used if towing payment is required.