



# GENERAL ORDER

## GENERAL ORDER 510.01

### DFRS County Vehicle Use

#### BUREAU OF LOGISTICS

Issue Date: November 08, 1994

Revision Date: January 09, 2019

#### 1 APPLICABILITY

2 All Personnel

#### 3 POLICY

4 This policy supplements the Howard County Central Fleet Vehicle Manual (CFVM) by further defining and  
5 elaborating on areas specific to the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services  
6 (Department). For areas not addressed by this policy, the County policy shall be used as the guiding  
7 document.

#### 8 DEFINITIONS

- 9 ➤ **County Vehicle** – Any vehicle, as identified in the Howard County Central Fleet Vehicle Manual,  
10 purchased by the Department or Central Fleet, registered to Howard County, or maintained by  
11 Howard County.
- 12
- 13 ➤ **Assigned Take-Home Vehicle (THV)** – A County Vehicle assigned to an employee of the County in  
14 accordance with the assignment criteria and authorized to be used for commuting. In the  
15 Department, these vehicles are typically outfitted for emergency response. Assignment of these  
16 vehicles shall occur through General Order 100.26: Standby and Emergency Standby Programs or  
17 by written memo from the Fire Chief authorizing the THV or OCHV assignment.
- 18
- 19 ➤ **Assigned Daily Use Vehicle (DUV)** – A County Vehicle that is assigned to a specific position/person  
20 for use during normal business hours. These vehicles may be parked at various Work Locations  
21 and are typically outfitted for emergency response.
- 22
- 23 ➤ **Assigned On-Call Take-Home Vehicle (OCHV)** – A County Vehicle used by an employee who must  
24 report for duty after their normal business hours. Assignment of these vehicles shall occur  
25 through General Order 100.26: Standby and Emergency Standby Programs or by written memo  
26 from the Fire Chief authorizing the THV or OCHV assignment.
- 27
- 28 ➤ **De Minimus** – Insignificant in terms of cost or expense. Used to describe what is considered  
29 acceptable *personal* use of an assigned THV or OCHV when On-Call.
- 30

- 31 ➤ **Emergency Response** – Use of lights and sirens by the driver of an emergency vehicle during  
32 response to an incident where a risk-benefit evaluation clearly indicates the time saved, when  
33 compared to a non-emergency response, will likely impact the incident positively.  
34
- 35 ➤ **Emergency Standby or Standby Program** – An approved On-Call program defined by General  
36 Order and administered by the Department that requires a published on-call schedule outlining  
37 those individuals with emergency response responsibilities outside of normal business hours.  
38
- 39 ➤ **Explicit** – Stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for confusion or doubt. For purposes of this  
40 order, it shall also indicate the direction or authorization is stated in a written document that is  
41 stored as an official Department communication in an appropriate location so that it is reviewable  
42 and obtainable.  
43
- 44 ➤ **Marked Vehicle** – County automobile marked with decals on both front doors and the vehicle  
45 identification number at the bottom of the driver’s side door.  
46
- 47 ➤ **On-Call** – A duty status where an individual is expected to respond to emergency incidents or  
48 handle tasks, including during non-business hours, by virtue of being assigned to a Departmental  
49 Standby Program, Emergency Standby Program, or other defined Departmental need. In all cases,  
50 this assignment shall be specifically defined either by General Order or by written memo from the  
51 Fire Chief.  
52
- 53 ➤ **Pool Vehicle** – A County Vehicle designated for daily use by multiple individuals, but not assigned  
54 to a specific position/person. These vehicles may not be outfitted for emergency response.  
55
- 56 ➤ **Work Location** – The County has several facilities where Departmental personnel may be assigned  
57 or required to report to work. These include, but are not limited to: fire stations, County  
58 maintenance facilities, the Public Safety Training Center, and County office buildings.

## 59 PROCEDURES

### 60 GENERAL:

- 61 • The Fire Chief shall determine the number of vehicles required to meet the Department’s mission.
- 62 • The Fire Chief shall make all assignments of County-owned staff support vehicles to approved  
63 users, including Take Home Vehicles, On-Call Take Home Vehicles, and Daily Use Vehicles, in  
64 conjunction with applicable County and Department policies and procedures.
- 65 • The Department’s Bureau of Logistics (BOL) shall be responsible for the general administration of  
66 the County Vehicle Use Program.
- 67 • The BOL shall compile information and statistics that enables effective management of the  
68 Department’s fleet of vehicles.
- 69 • Requests for new vehicles shall be documented and submitted through the chain of command to  
70 the BOL on a Department Vehicle Justification and Request Form, with an attached memo if  
71 needed for additional explanation of justification and circumstances.  
72

### 73 ELIGIBILITY AND ASSIGNMENT:

- 74 • County Vehicles may be assigned by the Fire Chief to eligible employees and volunteers of the  
75 Department as the need is justified and as resource availability permits.

- 76 • For THV and OCHV vehicles, such assignments shall occur in one of two ways, and each is  
77 independent from the County approval process:
  - 78 ○ By General Order 100.26: Standby and Emergency Standby Programs.
  - 79 ○ By written memo from the Fire Chief authorizing the THV or OCHV assignment, kept on  
80 file by the BOL.
- 81
- 82 • The following criteria shall be considered by the Fire Chief when considering Departmental  
83 assignment:
  - 84 ○ The individual meets criteria required by County policy:
    - 85 ▪ Must have completed and signed County approval as per County policy.
    - 86 ▪ Must have a valid driver's license.
    - 87 ▪ Must be approved by Risk Management.
    - 88 ▪ Must be approved by Human Resources (if new employee).
  - 89 ○ The individual is assigned to an approved Emergency Standby or Standby program as  
90 defined by General Order.
  - 91 ○ The individual is in a critical Departmental position or can fill a critical role that requires  
92 use of an THV, OCHV, or DUV.
  - 93 ○ For THV and OCHV assignments, the individual lives within 25 miles of the County.
    - 94 ▪ Exceptions to this may be obtained and require written Fire Chief and Chief  
95 Administrative Officer (CAO) approval of the exception.
  - 96 ○ Personnel on leave, in a restricted work status, or away from the County for more than 21  
97 days may have their THV or OCHV assignment temporarily be required to turn in their  
98 vehicle to the BOL.
    - 99 ▪ Personnel in a restricted work status or modified duty assignment generally shall  
100 not be assigned THV or OCHV vehicles. By default, personnel assigned a THV or  
101 OCHV that experience a period of work restriction shall consider any previous THV  
102 or OCHV assignment suspended for the duration of their work restriction.  
103 However, exceptions may apply in certain circumstances. Any continued  
104 assignment of a THV or OCHV during these periods of restriction requires explicit  
105 written Fire Chief approval. Such written approval shall be signed by the person  
106 assigned the vehicle and placed in the Logistics Bureau vehicle files.
    - 107 ▪ Personnel in a restricted work status or modified duty assignment may only  
108 operate a County vehicle if their specific work restrictions allow.
  - 109 ○ Must have at least an "standard" or "average" annual performance evaluation at time of  
110 assignment and ongoing throughout the assignment.
- 111 • Failure to adhere to established County and Departmental policies may result in revocation of an  
112 assigned vehicle.
- 113

114 **GUIDELINES:**

- 115 • Personnel operating any Department vehicle are required to comply with Maryland Motor Vehicle  
116 Laws and appropriate County Policies and Procedures.
- 117 • Personnel operating a County Vehicle shall do so in accordance with established County and  
118 Department policies and procedures.
- 119 • Individuals shall not utilize their County Vehicle in the course of any secondary employment or  
120 business not related to Departmental business.
- 121 • Personnel shall not utilize their County Vehicle to visit any establishment that may bring discredit  
122 to the Department or County.

- 123 • Non-County employees are not routinely permitted to ride in an assigned vehicle. A request for  
124 an exception may be made to the Fire Chief, with subsequent approval by the CAO required.  
125 Refer to the Central Fleet policy for instructions on applying for this exception.
- 126 • Off-duty personnel and approved passengers shall be appropriately attired so as not to bring  
127 discredit to the Department or County.
- 128 • The County vehicle shall not be utilized to carry excessively heavy loads, or objects that protrude  
129 from the trunk, hatch, or windows, except as required in the performance of official duties.
- 130 • If a County vehicle is taken out of service, the individual may utilize a Pool Vehicle as available.  
131 Use shall be approved by the on duty BOL manager and documented in the Vehicle Utilization Log.
- 132 • Non-County employees are not permitted to operate a County owned vehicle, except in exigent  
133 circumstances and never with lights or siren. Notification to the Fire Chief shall occur as soon as  
134 possible.
- 135 • Personnel shall not place bumper stickers, decals, banners, or placards on the County vehicle  
136 without prior written permission from the Fire Chief or as per written policy.
- 137 • The work day begins when an employee with an assigned vehicle reaches his/her first Work  
138 Location or assignment as determined by his/her Bureau Chief. It does not automatically begin  
139 when he/she begins to operate a vehicle.
- 140 • There may be times when it is critical to the Department mission for personnel not assigned a  
141 take home vehicle to do so (severe weather events). Permission must be granted by the Fire  
142 Chief. The CAO shall be notified in as soon is feasible.
- 143 • An employee or volunteer that is assigned a take home vehicle that is a non-emergency vehicle or  
144 is unmarked may incur a tax liability as outlined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as  
145 determined by the County. Vehicles may remain unmarked in support of the Department's  
146 mission.
- 147 • Any individual assigned a County Vehicle who does not comply with the guidelines and  
148 procedures of the County or Department's Policy, fails to perform associated duties, or does not  
149 properly maintain their assigned vehicle may be removed from the program at the discretion of  
150 the Fire Chief.
- 151 • Personnel who are off-duty shall only use their assigned vehicles within the borders of Howard  
152 County with the following exceptions:
- 153 ○ Individuals may utilize their assigned vehicle to attend approved events located outside of  
154 the County.
  - 155 ○ No County vehicle may be driven outside of the state of Maryland without approval of the  
156 Fire Chief and written authorization by the CAO or designee prior to the start of travel.
    - 157 ■ Exceptions to this include dispatched responses to mutual aid emergency incidents,  
158 repairs required for fire apparatus, emergencies, and for pre-approved On-Call  
159 personnel. Notification shall be sent to the Fire Chief to be forwarded on to the  
160 CAO and Risk Management as soon as feasible, when appropriate.
  - 161 ○ Individuals assigned a THV or OCHV may commute to and from their residence.
  - 162 ○ For purposes of facilitating a quick response, individuals that are On-Call may utilize an  
163 assigned vehicle for personal reasons within a reasonable distance of the County or in  
164 proximity to their residence, but only occasionally and to a minimal extent (see below).
    - 165 ■ Fire personnel assigned County owned THV or OCHV vehicles, while on scheduled  
166 Stand-By assignments, may use the County owned vehicle for personal De  
167 Minimis/occasional use. The De Minimis use of the vehicle must be within the  
168 general area of the employee's residence or in the County. Based on all facts and  
169 circumstances, a scheduled Standby employee must be able to quickly report upon  
170 notification and must have the assigned vehicle immediately available at all

171 times. Due to this circumstance, all personal De Minimis use while on Standby  
172 assignment will be considered “business use” for purposes of vehicle use reporting,  
173 excluded from wages, and not considered taxable. **In the case of Department**  
174 **Standby personal mileage, the County considers De Minimis to mean**  
175 **insignificant.** Howard County does reserve the right to challenge the personal use  
176 during these scheduled stand-by periods if the personal use appears excessive.

- 177 ■ Careful discretion must be used in all instances when using the vehicle for personal  
178 reasons while On-Call, and efforts shall be made to arrange temporary coverage of  
179 Standby duties as an alternative to using the County vehicle for personal uses that  
180 involve mileage or costs that are not insignificant.

181  
182 **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 183 ● Personnel operating County vehicles shall advise Howard Communications when they encounter  
184 disabled motorists or traffic hazards. They may stop and offer their assistance if the conditions or  
185 situation do not compromise their safety or that of others.
- 186 ● Any public assistance contact that occurs because of County vehicle use (e.g. citizens requesting  
187 fire safety information, motorist assists, providing directions, etc.) may require that an event and  
188 incident be generated in CAD. If generated, the corresponding RMS report shall be completed by  
189 the employee within 36 hours.
- 190 ● A Vehicle Utilization Mileage Log (Central Fleet Policy - Appendix I) or equivalent shall be  
191 completed on an as trip basis.
  - 192 ○ The completed Vehicle Utilization Mileage Log shall be signed and turned into the BOL on  
193 the first work day of the new month using the method established by the Department.
  - 194 ○ All vehicle use and mileage shall be documented in detail.
  - 195 ○ Mileage used to travel between worksites, mileage related to incident response, or  
196 mileage used for explicit business purposes shall be classified as business mileage (see the  
197 Employee Handbook).
  - 198 ○ Mileage to and from one’s home and their daily worksite shall be considered personal  
199 mileage.
  - 200 ○ When responding to an incident, mileage to and from one’s home to an incident scene  
201 shall be considered business mileage.
  - 202 ○ De Minimus personal use of a THV or OCHV during periods of On-Call may be classified as  
203 business mileage, as described in Guidelines above, during periods where the operator is  
204 *obligated* to respond as indicated on a published Emergency Standby Program schedule  
205 and defined in the program description in GO 100.26: Standby and Emergency Standby  
206 Programs. This type of business use must be clearly delineated on the Vehicle Use Log,  
207 documented in its own row on the form with an appropriate comment added.
  - 208 ○ Supervisors, Standby Program Managers, and Emergency Standby Program Managers shall  
209 review the appropriateness of vehicle use with each monthly mileage form submission,  
210 and discuss with program personnel quarterly or as appropriate.
  - 211 ○ All vehicle use shall remain compliant with County and Department policy.
  - 212 ○ Vehicle Use Logs with signatures shall be forwarded by BOL to Central Fleet prior to the  
213 10th of the month, in cases that are required by County policy. Failure to do so could  
214 jeopardize THV or OCHV assignment.
  - 215 ○ Each Vehicle Use log shall be saved electronically as a Department record using the  
216 method established by the Department.

- 219 • Personnel assigned a County vehicle are responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle as follows:
  - 220 ○ Maintain proper engine fluid levels and tire pressure.
  - 221 ○ Maintain vehicle interior and exterior cleanliness.
  - 222 ○ Maintain the equipment assigned to the vehicle.
  - 223 ○ Request routine preventive maintenance when the vehicle is due through the Logistics
  - 224 Section - Fleet Division HELP DESK.
  - 225 ○ Request corrective repairs through the assigned Central Fleet Facility.
  - 226
- 227 • Each vehicle is assigned its own fuel card. This shall be used in conjunction with the employee's
- 228 fuel card to access the fuel system.
- 229 • Each vehicle operator is to review the CFVM and complete the Acknowledgement form.
- 230 • The Department's Fleet Division Supervisor is responsible to ensure that all required approvals
- 231 identified in the CFVM have been obtained prior to assigning a vehicle to an individual.
- 232 • A vehicle inventory shall be completed on acceptance and return of the vehicle, noting any
- 233 deficiencies in equipment.
- 234 • Individuals are responsible for cleaning their vehicle off during inclement weather prior to
- 235 movement of the vehicle.
- 236

237 **RESPONSE/PUBLIC SERVICE CRITERIA:**

- 238 • During the operation of a County vehicle, whether on or off duty, the employee or volunteer shall
- 239 monitor the Department's emergency dispatch radio channel.
- 240 • Emergency Response, use of lights and sirens by the driver of an emergency vehicle during
- 241 response to an incident, shall be limited to situations where a risk-benefit evaluation clearly
- 242 indicates the time saved, when compared to a non-emergent response, will likely impact the
- 243 incident positively.
- 244 • Personnel are required to respond or report to calls or incidents that come to the attention of the
- 245 individual by way of contact with citizens, observed incidents, or through monitoring of a serious
- 246 call within proximity of the individual (e.g. personal injury motor vehicle collision, emergency
- 247 medical incident, or fire). Any incident encountered should be turned over to appropriate
- 248 agencies as soon as practical.
- 249

250 **VEHICLE MARKING:**

- 251 • Required vehicle markings shall not be altered and shall remain clearly visible.
  - 252 ○ The Fire Chief may submit requests for exception to this requirement to the Fleet
  - 253 Administrator, accompanied by sufficient justification.
  - 254

255 **VEHICLE EQUIPMENT:**

- 256 • County Department vehicles may be equipped with the following listed equipment (\* denotes a
- 257 requirement):
  - 258 ○ Flares and/or road cones\*
  - 259 ○ Two (2) ANSI approved safety vests\*
  - 260 ○ County accident report kit\*
  - 261 ○ Wheel chocks (if air brakes)\*
  - 262 ○ 5lb. ABC portable fire extinguisher
  - 263 ○ Medical/trauma kit
  - 264 ○ Automated external defibrillator
  - 265 ○ Fire line tape
  - 266 ○ Map book(s)

- 267 ○ Portable hand light
- 268 ○ DOT ERG
- 269 ○ Ice scraper & snow broom
- 270 ○ Jumper cables
- 271 ○ Mobile data terminal (MDT)
- 272 ○ Z-Mac cards
- 273
- 274 ● Equipment shall be visually inspected monthly. Deficiencies shall be reported when identified.
- 275 ● If the unit has a MDT assigned to it, the operator shall initiate a startup of the MDT prior to
- 276 operating the vehicle.
- 277 ● Personnel shall not attempt to manipulate or disable any of the AVL software and/or hardware.
- 278 ● For all large vehicles and all vehicles equipped with air brakes:
- 279 ○ Wheel chocks shall be carried and deployed when vehicle is parked and the operator is not
- 280 in the driver's seat, regardless of location and whether the vehicle engine is running.
- 281 ○ This includes, but is not limited to: emergency scenes, hospitals, repair facilities, grocery
- 282 stores, and public education events. Wheel chocks shall not be required when the vehicle
- 283 is backed in and parked inside of a fire station.

284 The County CFVM shall be referred to for areas that are not specifically addressed in this General Order.

## 285 REFERENCES

- 286 ● General Order 100.26: Standby and Emergency Standby Programs
- 287 ● Howard County Central Fleet Vehicle Manual
- 288 ● Howard County Policy and Procedure 300.6A: Vehicle Use
- 289 ● Howard County Policy and Procedures 300.6C: Take-Home Vehicles

## 290 SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES

291 2014-07-29:

- 292 ● New titles were added to the eligibility list and language added to better align with the CFVM,
- 293 7/2014, JWD/2564.

294 2018-11-30:

- 295 ● Added language for THVs and maximum distance from the County.
- 296 ● Added language that specifies how the Department assigns and authorizes THVs and OCHVs.
- 297 ● Added language describing "De Minimus" personal use of a County vehicle.
- 298 ● Adjusted language regarding THVs and periods of restricted duty.
- 299 ● Added language regarding what is business use and what is personal use to improve accuracy of
- 300 Vehicle Use Logs.

## 301 FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

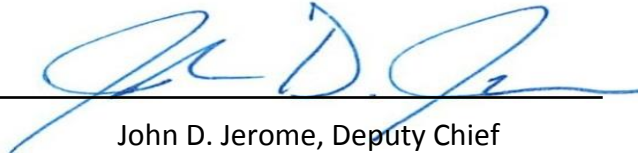
- 302 ● Attachment A: Vehicle Justification and Request Form.
- 303



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Office of the Fire Chief

Author:



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John D. Jerome, Deputy Chief  
Office of the Fire Chief



## Attachment A

### VEHICLE ASSIGNMENT REQUEST and JUSTIFICATION FORM

<b>A. Vehicle Information</b>			
1. Is this a replacement vehicle?	YES	NO	
2. If this request for an individual or pool assignment?	INDIVIDUAL	POOL	
3. If individual, please indicate which type of use?	ASSIGNED	OCTH	ADU
4. Where will the vehicle be parked when not in service?			
5. How many days a week will the vehicle typically be used?			
6. Estimated monthly mileage:	Business	Personal	
<b><i>If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, please provide specific details in the justification section</i></b>			
7. Will this vehicle respond emergency?	YES	NO	
8. Will 4x4 towing capabilities be required?	YES	NO	
9. Will this vehicle be used to carry supplies/equipment?	YES	NO	
10. Will supplies & equipment be left in the vehicle overnight?	YES	NO	
11. Will there be passengers on a regular basis?	YES	NO	
<b>B. Justification</b>			
1. To whom would the proposed vehicle be assigned? What role exists that requires a vehicle assignment?			
2. Please explain how the net effect of not having this vehicle would adversely impact the organization.			
3. Please explain what other transportation alternatives were considered.			
4. Please provide any additional comments or justification.			
<b>C. Bureau of Logistics Review and Recommendation</b>			
1. Is there an available vehicle within the fleet?	YES	NO	
2. Is a vehicle projected to become available as part of the Vehicle Replacement Program within 6 months?	YES	NO	
3. Is the projected use above 10,000 miles annually?	YES	NO	
4. Are there other vehicles within the requesting section, bureau, etc. utilized under 10,000 miles annually?	YES	NO	
5. Has a funding source been identified?	YES	NO	
<b>The Bureau of Logistics DOES _____ DOES NOT _____ support this request</b>			

6. Comment(s) based on the supporting documentation:	
Assistant Chief, Bureau of Logistics (or Designee)	Date

*Assignment of a vehicle by the Fire Chief shall occur by General Order or separate memo.*