

Effective Date: July 1, 1991

Revised: June 2001

Authorized Uses

County vehicles shall be used only by County officials, employees and authorized volunteers and only for a County purpose. Only County officials, employees or authorized volunteers shall be permitted to operate or use a County vehicle. Employees or authorized volunteers are prohibited from carrying, in a County vehicle, hitchhikers or any other person not authorized by the department head. Volunteers may be authorized to drive County vehicles upon the recommendation of the department head and with the approval of the County Administrator after a review of the volunteer's drivers license record maintained by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Traffic Violations

Traffic laws shall be observed at all times. Fines or penalties levied for violations for which the driver is directly responsible shall be paid by the driver.

Drivers License

All drivers of a County vehicle must have in their possession a valid California Driver's License.

Vehicle Safety

Seat Belts: Except as exempted by law, all County-owned vehicles shall be equipped with seat belts and restraint systems. Private vehicles being used on County business shall also be equipped with seat belts. Except as exempted by law, all persons in a County vehicle or in a private vehicle being used on County business must use seat belts any time the vehicle is in motion. The driver of the vehicle is responsible for ensuring that all occupants of the vehicle are wearing seat belts before the vehicle is put into motion.

Defensive Driving: Employees operating a motor vehicle while on County business are encouraged to follow the defensive driving guidelines outlined below.

Rules of Defensive Driving

- Keep a "cushion of space" between your vehicle and others. The greater the speed, the greater the "cushion of space" should be.

- Be alert to developing situations in the traffic ahead. Look into the rear view mirror frequently – once every five seconds is ideal.
- Use all safety devices provided, including the horn. Be sure the other driver sees you. Being seen is as important as seeing.
- Never demand the right-of-way, even if legally it is yours.
- Avoid interrupting the flow of traffic whenever possible because such interruptions can cause an accident.
- Never allow your attention to be diverted from the primary task driving.
- Drive courteously. A courteous driver will usually not be involved in a hazardous situation.

Abuse of Vehicles

County vehicles shall not be used for activities which may damage the vehicle.

Personal Liability

Employees may be held personally liable for damage to County equipment and other penalties may be assessed if damage occurs to a County vehicle through negligence or illegal activity.

Employees may be held personally liable when, outside the course and scope of their employment, they cause damage to other persons or property while driving a County vehicle.

Personal Property

Personal property such as radios or air conditioners shall not be attached to a County vehicle.

Keys

Keys shall not be left in unattended vehicles, even when parked in secured enclosures.

VEHICLE SAFETY BELT/RESTRAINT SYSTEM

General

Most deaths and injuries involved in vehicular accidents can be prevented by wearing safety belts. Striking steering assemblies, windshields, windshield frames, and instrument panels account for 70 percent of fatalities involved in motor vehicle collisions. Estimates reveal four out of five persons who died when thrown from a vehicle would have lived had they remained in the vehicle at the time of the accident. As used here, the term safety belt includes passive restraints and air bags as well as safety belts.

Objectives

The objectives of this procedure are to:

1. Protect drivers and riders from death or serious injury in the event of a motor vehicle crash.
2. Fix responsibilities for providing, wearing and maintaining vehicular safety belts.

Policy

It is the policy of the County to require the use of safety belts and to assure compliance with applicable provisions of Section 3653 of the General Industry Safety Orders, Section 1596 of the Construction Safety belts and the child passenger restraint systems in vehicles used for County business.

Use of Safety Belts

Safety belts shall be used in conformance with the following:

Rules Regarding the Use of Safety Belts

- Except as exempted by law, all drivers and passengers shall use safety belts when on County business, whether they are in County-owned vehicles or privately owned vehicles.

- Only the number of persons for whom working safety belts are available are allowed in vehicles on County business.
- Operators of motorized equipment shall use seat belts when seat belts are provided on such equipment.
- Persons in wheelchairs and gurneys being transported shall have safety devices securing them to their wheelchairs or gurneys which in turn shall be secured against movement within the transporting vehicle.
- Exceptions to these requirements for use of safety belts include:
 - a) Emergencies where conformance is impractical.
 - b) Children under the age of four years or weighing less than 40 pounds shall be safeguarded in vehicles in accordance with Section below.

Child Passenger Restraint Requirement

No child under the age of ~~four~~ six years or weighing less than ~~40~~ 60 pounds shall be transported on a highway in a County-owned or for County purposes in a privately-owned vehicle without being safeguarded in accordance with the following:

1. A child passenger restraint system (infant or toddler seat) shall normally be used which meets applicable Federal standards and is provided with a label which states “Dynamically Crash Tested”. Departments may obtain child passenger restraint system from the following sources:
 - a) Continuing departmental needs for child safety seats should be met by the purchase of an adequate number of infant and/or toddler seats.
 - b) Occasional departmental needs for child’s safety seats may be met by:
 - 1) Use of a seat provided by the child’s parent or guardian.
 - 2) Prior arrangements for the loan of an infant or toddler seat from the County Children’s Protective Service.
2. In an emergency, a child may be secured by an adult safety belt. Do not use the shoulder belt portion if it lies across the child’s face or neck. Instead, place the shoulder belt portion between the child’s back and the seat. Holding a child in your arms can be particularly dangerous during a crash because your weight is thrown forward and can crush the child even when you are wearing a seat belt.

Safety Belt Requirement for Special Vehicle and Equipment

Safety belts shall be provided for the following County-owned special vehicles and equipment.

All haulage vehicles and earth moving equipment, which have been provided with rollover protection, shall also be provided with safety belts meeting the requirements of Section 1596 of the Construction Safety Orders or Section 3653 of the General Industry Safety Orders, as appropriate. This includes scrapers, loaders, crawler or wheeled tractors, bulldozers, graders, water wagon prime movers, and similar equipment.

Procurement and Maintenance of Safety Belts

Responsibilities for the procurement and maintenance of safety belts are as follows:

County personnel who procure vehicles are responsible for adequate numbers of approved safety belts that come with each vehicle, or are properly added. Using departments are responsible for advising those who procure County vehicles concerning any special requirement for safety belts.