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VEHICLE USE REGULATIONS

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With the cost of vehicles, their operation, and maintenance extremely high as compared to 10 years ago, the public has become more aware and more critical of the methods by which governmental vehicles are being used. As a result, citizens complain more quickly and more frequently when they observe such vehicles being used for what they believe are nongovernmental purposes. This is the case at all levels of government; if officials in your city are receiving complaints, you should realize that this problem is nation-wide in scope.

Because of the increased public awareness of vehicle use, cities generally prohibit any type of personal use of municipally-owned vehicles and permit no passengers except those connected with city business. Most cities, however, allow vehicles to be driven home by a limited number of employees who have to use a vehicle regularly during non-working hours.

Complaints on vehicle uses have increased in those cities which have not reviewed the use of their vehicles and developed regulations controlling this activity. During the process of such a review, cities have found that some employees with city vehicles are using them a very limited amount of time for city business. To improve such situations, city officials have worked out an agreeable arrangement with the employees for use of his or her personal vehicle on a reimbursement basis in accordance with miles driven on city business.

Some cities have developed vehicle use regulations by ordinance, some by resolution, and some by a separate policy document. However, the most effective method is to include vehicle use regulations in your personnel policies. One Tennessee city includes such regulations in their personnel policy as follows:

SECTION XVIII. USE OF CITY VEHICLES

18.01 Control of City-Owned Vehicles. The City Manager or his designated representative may authorize department heads, supervisors and other personnel who, because of the nature of their position or their duties, are of an emergency nature, may take city-owned vehicles to their residence following normal duty hours. Vehicles so assigned may not be used other than for official purposes. Only when it is specifically approved by the department head will passengers other than city employees be allowed to ride in city vehicles. All vehicles taken home must be approved by the City Manager.

18.02 Driver's License Required. Employees driving city vehicles are required to have such driver's license for the vehicles being driven as required by Tennessee state law, irrespective of whether the employee drives the vehicle on regular, occasional, or other basis, and whether or not this requirement is included or omitted in the description of the class title to which the employee was appointed. Violation citations, fines, or other actions taken by any police jurisdiction against any employee while driving a city vehicle in violation of this rule shall be the responsibility of the employee and also may be the cause for disciplinary action.

18.03 Disciplinary Action for Violation. Anyone misusing or abusing city vehicles, carrying anyone other than city personnel unless authorized by these rules, using a city vehicle for other than approved purposes, or taking a vehicle home when not approved by the City Manager, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including dismissal. (From PERSONNEL POLICIES, City of Johnson City)

If you desire assistance with a vehicle use review and developing regulations, contact your MTAS Management Consultant.

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