

Document Code No.: FES 12-1-4-EP

Title: Use of Vehicles for County Business

Affected Agencies: All King County Agencies and Offices

Authorities: KCC 3.04.020A, RCW 46.61.672


Keywords: Vehicle, non-revenue County vehicle, employee-provided vehicle, defensive driving, commercial fuel credit card

Sponsoring Agency: Fleet Services Division

Type of Action: Supersedes FES 12-1-3 EP



King County

Executive signature: 
Date signed and effective: November 17, 2022

I. Purpose

This policy governs the authorized use of vehicles driven by King County employees. Vehicle use shall be managed with priority given to safety, cost effectiveness, fuel conservation, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Applicability and Audience

This policy applies to King County employees driving non-revenue County vehicles and, where noted, employee-provided vehicles to conduct County business in administrative offices and departments supervised by the King County Executive. The audience may include King County offices, departments, officials, employees, boards, commissions, committees, or similar entities as well as contractors and grantees.

II. Definitions

Vehicle: Cars, trucks, vans, motorcycles, on-road equipment, and off-road equipment.

Non-Revenue County Vehicle: A King County owned vehicle that does not generate revenue because of its use.

Idle: Operation of a vehicle's primary propulsion engine while the vehicle is not moving.

Driving: To operate a motor vehicle on a public highway, including while temporarily stationary because of traffic, a traffic control device, or other momentary delays. "Driving" does not include when the vehicle has pulled over to the side of, or off, an active roadway and has stopped in a location where it can safely remain stationary.

Commercial Fuel Credit Card: A credit card issued by the County for the purchase of fuel, emergency vehicle items, and authorized services from retail service stations (i.e., car washes).

III. Policy

A. General Provisions

1. Operators of non-revenue County vehicles must be employed by King County and possess a valid Washington State driver's license.
2. Non-employees may only operate non-revenue County vehicles if approved in advance and in writing by the King County Executive's designee or as specified in an approved interagency agreement.

3. All vehicle operators must comply with all state and federal driving laws, and the King County Vehicle Driver's Operating Manual.
4. Frequent operators of non-revenue County vehicles, or employee-provided vehicles to conduct County business, shall complete a driver improvement course (defensive driving equivalent) every three (3) years administered by the King County Safety and Claims Management Office. Unless more restrictive guidance is in place at the department level, frequent operators shall be defined as driving an average of once per month.
5. Operators of non-revenue County vehicles shall consolidate trips where practical and shall not allow vehicles to idle excessively unless doing so is necessary to maintain the health and safety of the operator, the passengers, or the public.
6. The use of tobacco products in non-revenue County vehicles is prohibited. This includes smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and other tobacco products. Vaping is also prohibited.
7. The use of cell phones or other personal electronic devices (whether personally owned or County provided) while driving any vehicle violates Washington State law (RCW 46.61.672) and is prohibited.
 - a. Exceptions include drivers contacting emergency services, operators of authorized emergency vehicles, and licensed commercial vehicle drivers using the device within the scope of their employment.
 - b. The state law permits minimal use of a finger to activate, deactivate, or initiate a function on a device such as hands-free calling or Global Positioning System (GPS) maps.
8. Non-revenue County vehicles shall only be used to transport employees or other passengers on County business.
9. Except where reasonably necessary to accommodate the operator's meals or other physical needs, non-revenue County vehicles may not be used for personal business even if that personal business will not result in additional cost to King County.
10. Operators of non-revenue County vehicles shall not drive to or park at establishments that may create an appearance of impropriety (e.g., bikini barista stands, taverns, marijuana shops, etc.), unless the employee is there to conduct County business.
11. County employees may at times need to drive a non-revenue County vehicle home while conducting County business, such as attending an evening meeting, and may do so if the employee receives prior authorization in writing from the department director or designee. The administration of occasional overnight use shall comply with Executive Policy FES-12-2-3 and applicable IRS rules.
12. Vehicle parking and moving violation citations are the responsibility of the vehicle operator. Citation fines must be paid promptly. Employees must

report to their supervisor or manager when cited while driving a non-revenue County vehicle or an employee-provided vehicle on County business.

13. Any authorized King County employee acting in good faith, with no reasonable cause to believe the conduct was unlawful, and within the course and scope of their employment with King County as determined by the Chief Civil Deputy, is covered by the County's self-insured program while driving or riding in a non-revenue County vehicle or an employee-provided vehicle.

B. Commercial Fuel Credit Cards

1. Commercial fuel credit cards must be used for the non-revenue County vehicles to which they are issued and no others.
2. King County in-house fueling sites shall be used whenever practical. A list of Fleet Services Division's fueling sites is in the King County Vehicle Driver's Operating Manual.
3. The use of unleaded-plus, premium gasoline, or full service fueling from commercial fuel stations is not authorized.
4. Commercial fuel credit cards may be used to purchase items such as replacement light bulbs, batteries, or snow chains in a declared emergency or with prior approval from Fleet Services Division.
5. Commercial fuel credit cards may be used to purchase discounted car washes at County approved commercial car wash retailers. A list of approved car wash retailers is in the King County Vehicle Driver's Operating Manual.
6. Using commercial fuel credit cards for personal vehicles, or for any uses other than those prescribed above, is prohibited.

IV. Implementation Plan

- A. This policy becomes effective for Executive Branch agencies on the date that it is signed by the Executive. The Fleet Services Division is responsible for implementation of this policy.
- B. Department directors or their designees are responsible for communicating this policy to the management structure within their respective agencies and other appropriate parties.
- C. Department and division directors are required to develop and implement departmental procedures to ensure that:
 1. The directives in this policy are followed by the employees under their supervision.
 2. There is a process for approving employees' use of vehicles to conduct County business that provides for close review and monitoring of such use.

V. Maintenance

- A. This policy will be maintained by the Fleet Services Division, or its successor agency. The Fleet Services Division will maintain the King County Vehicle Driver's Operating Manual with updated information to reflect the directives in this policy.
- B. This policy will automatically expire five (5) years after its effective date. A new, revised, or renewed policy will be initiated by the Fleet Services Division, or its successor agency prior to the expiration date.

VI. Consequences for Noncompliance

Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action for the operator, including but not limited to, the removal of driving privileges or discipline, up to and including termination of employment.