# SAMPLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

**Vehicle Care and Usage Policy**

NOTE: This document is for internal use only. It does not establish a legal duty or standard of care for civil liability or enlarge an employee’s civil or criminal liability in any way. A violation of this policy may only form the basis for internal discipline by this agency and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

###### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

To establish guidelines regarding the use of department vehicles applicable to all members of the SAMPLE Police Department, including care and inspection, assignment of vehicles, operation and uses, maintenance and repair, authorized operators/passengers, and vehicle records.

###### POLICY

Vehicles play a crucial role in the operational functions of this department and involve a major expenditure for their purchase and maintenance. To receive maximum benefit from these vehicles, the following policy is in effect:

1. A driver of a department vehicle shall have a current driver's license in their immediate possession at all times and comply with any restrictions(s) required by such license.
	1. Any change in license status shall be reported to the driver’s immediate supervisor as soon as practical.
2. Department vehicles will only be driven by authorized personnel, in compliance with all applicable state and local traffic laws, department policies and procedures.
	1. Every officer of this department shall adhere to the procedures applicable to emergency vehicle operation and pursuit driving which have been established by state law and this department.
3. Employees shall not use a department vehicle except for furtherance of department goals and objectives and in the performance of their duties. Unauthorized use, misuse, or abuse of department vehicles is prohibited.
4. All employees will take reasonable care to avoid damaging, misusing, or destroying a department vehicle. No employee will operate any police vehicle either negligently or with a willful or reckless disregard for the safety of persons or property. The willful neglect or reckless disregard of adherence to this policy, or careless use of a department vehicle can be defined as abuse.
	1. Any employees determined to have willfully, carelessly, or negligently abused, misused, or otherwise caused damage to a department vehicle may be held financially responsible, and subject to disciplinary action and/or loss of vehicle assignment.
5. No additional engine parts or any type of equipment will be added to or installed on a department vehicle including, but not limited to window tint, tags, bumper stickers/decals, or any other like item displaying a graphic or word message without prior approval of the Chief of Police.
	1. No vehicle or installed equipment will be modified in any way except by a certified technician with prior approval of the Chief of Police.

###### PROCEDURE

1. Care and Inspection of Vehicles:
	1. Prior to each tour of duty, except in an emergency, the vehicle should be inspected for safety standards and proper operation of emergency equipment. The inspection should include, but is not limited to:
		1. Visual inspection of tires and wheels to determine if tires appear properly inflated and not excessively worn, if the spare tire is present and inflated, and if any wheel is cracked, bent, rim-damaged (without removing the hubcap).
		2. Inspection, by operation, of emergency lights and siren.
		3. Inspection, by operation, of turn signals, brake lights, taillights, headlights, and spotlights.
		4. Inspection, by operation, of foot and/or hand brakes.
		5. Visual inspection of the remainder of vehicle for any damage, dents, scrapes, apparent malfunction, or missing equipment.
		6. Inspection, by operation, for any unusual vibration or sound from the engine, transmission, or other moving part, and for any unusual instrument reading or warning signal.
		7. Inspection of the vehicle's interior and trunk for any unauthorized material, trash, weapon or evidence, damage to equipment and property, and inspection of all equipment to include radar, computer, shotguns/rifles, etc.
	2. During a tour of duty each officer should inspect:
		1. Exterior - anytime a vehicle is left unattended they should inspect the exterior for dents, scrapes, or markings which may have occurred during their absence.
		2. Interior - after transporting any suspect, prisoner or arrestee, the transporting officer will search all areas of the vehicle that are accessible by the person to ensure that unauthorized or personal items have not been left in the vehicle.
	3. Upon ending a tour of duty, each officer should inspect:
2. Exterior of vehicle for any damage.
3. Interior of vehicles for personal property, equipment, and cleanliness.
	* 1. All personal property, trash, etc. should be removed from the vehicle at the end of every tour of duty.
4. All vehicles will be secured, windows up, and properly parked.
	1. Officers will also conduct a weekly inspection of their assigned vehicle. Officers will complete a department Vehicle Inspection Report during weekly inspections. This inspection is designed to document the vehicle, including installed and assigned equipment/supplies is present, functional, and undamaged.
		1. Any previously unreported damage, mechanical problems, unauthorized contents, or other problems with the vehicle should be promptly reported to a supervisor and documented as appropriate.
		2. Once completed, Vehicle Inspection Reports will be submitted to the on-duty supervisor.
	2. Mechanical or operational issues discovered during unit operation should be reported to the on-duty supervisor as soon as practical. The supervisor will determine if the vehicle should be taken out of service pending repairs.
	3. Supervisors shall, at a minimum, conduct monthly inspections of vehicles assigned to officers under their command to ensure the vehicles are being maintained in accordance with this policy.
	4. All department vehicles are subject to inspection and/or search at any time by a supervisor without prior notice, with or without cause. No employee assigned to or operating such vehicle shall be entitled to any expectation of privacy with respect to the vehicle or its contents.
5. Assignment of Vehicles
6. This department provides vehicles for department-related business and may assign patrol and unmarked vehicles based on a determination of operational efficiency, economic impact to the department, requirements for tactical deployments, and other considerations.
7. Officers may be assigned a take-home vehicle, dependent upon eligibility, availability, assignment, or other factors as determined by the Chief of Police or his/her designee. If applicable, refer to Take-Home Vehicles SOP *(#)*.
8. The on-duty supervisor will document officer vehicle assignments in the Daily Shift Report. If an officer changes vehicles during their shift, the new vehicle information will be documented in the report.
9. Officers assigned a vehicle for any purpose other than their normally assigned duties (e.g., transportation to training, court, community event, etc.) shall be documented made in the Daily Shift Report.
10. This subsection does not apply to those who are assigned to transport vehicles to and from the maintenance yard or car wash.
11. Operation of Vehicles:
	1. Department vehicles should be operated in an exemplary manner at all times. Every officer must remember that they are viewed by the community to set an example and that every vehicle movement executed by the officer will be scrutinized by the public; therefore, they must reflect good judgement and driving habits at all times.
	2. It is the responsibility of every officer to operate their assigned vehicle as outlined below:
		1. Officers and passengers will utilize seatbelts when the police vehicle is in operation.
		2. Under normal circumstances, officers should refrain from the following:
			1. Quick starts, rapid acceleration, and sustained high speeds except when responding to an emergency or in pursuit.
			2. Driving at erratic speeds, unnecessarily hard braking, excessive idling, etc., to preserve fuel economy, tires, brakes, etc.
			3. Excessive or extended idling should be limited to K-9 safety, continued activation of emergency lights, or similar circumstances. Leaving vehicles idling for prolonged periods increases the risk of theft, as well as wastes fuel and decreases engine life.
12. If K-9 officers are at the police department for an extended period, the K-9 should accompany the officer inside.
	* + 1. Driving vehicles through or across medians.
			2. Driving vehicles on undeveloped or muddy roads in a manner which may cause vehicle undercarriage damage.
			3. Driving the vehicle through high brush.
		1. Additionally, vehicles should not normally be used for the following purposes:
		2. Jump-start civilian vehicles.
		3. Push any vehicle.
		4. Perform any act which may subject the vehicle to damage or the officer to injury.
		5. Officers should familiarize themselves with the various street and road conditions in their jurisdiction and operate their vehicle accordingly.
	1. Vehicles left unattended should always be locked, and all weapons and equipment secured. This includes vehicles parked and left running at the police department. Keys or key fobs should not be left in the vehicle unless necessary for the vehicle to remain running.
		1. Officers required to exit a vehicle in exigent circumstances should carefully balance exiting the vehicle quickly versus the need to secure the vehicle.
		2. If vehicles are equipped with an anti-theft device, these devices should be activated anytime a vehicle is left unattended with the engine running and/or the keys or key fob left inside. *If equipped, describe activation and de-activation procedures.*
	2. Vehicles will be properly and legally parked except when on official business. In these circumstances, vehicles may be parked in emergency lanes or otherwise, if the emergency flashers are activated.
	3. An officer involved in an accident while operating a department vehicle will immediately notify the on-duty supervisor of the accident. If a department vehicle is unoccupied when struck, or the driver's injury prevents their notification, any employee who becomes aware of the accident will make such notifications immediately.
		1. Any accident on public roadways, or involving another vehicle, or involving injury or property damage will be investigated by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA).
		2. The on-duty supervisor will ensure that all reports, documentation, photographs, etc. are completed as needed, and forwarded through the chain of command.
13. Maintenance and Repair:
	1. Police vehicles should be maintained in top operating efficiency by adherence to a preventive maintenance schedule, and the immediate reporting of any damage or malfunction. In addition, as the appearance of department vehicles reflects upon the image of the department, they should be maintained in a clean and presentable condition.
	2. It is the responsibility of each individual officer to maintain their assigned vehicle(s) as outlined below:
		1. Ensure the cleanliness (exterior and interior) as well as the reporting and scheduling of maintenance.
		2. Vehicles should be refueled prior to releasing the vehicle to another officer.
			1. Fuel will be obtained from the authorized distributor appointed by the city.
			2. Oil/other fluids will be obtained from the City Shop or other authorized locations.
		3. All equipment placed in a department vehicle will be properly arranged, kept clean, and in good working order.
		4. Report any fresh or previously unreported damage or defective equipment to their immediate supervisor as soon as possible. The supervisor will conduct an immediate investigation to determine cause and responsibility.
	3. A preventive and routine maintenance schedule should be followed according to the established service and maintenance schedule from the manufacturer and/or the City Shop or designated service center. All vehicles will be serviced at the City Shop or other authorized locations.
		1. Officers will make daily inspections of their assigned vehicles for service and/or maintenance requirements. Maintenance needs and damage to vehicles will be reported and scheduled for repair as soon as practical, unless otherwise authorized.
		2. Routine service and repair should be coordinated to prevent a vehicle from being out of service during peak work periods, such as weekends and holidays, if possible.
		3. Vehicles placed out of service for repair or maintenance overnight or for more than one shift will be noted in the Daily Shift Report.
		4. The on-duty supervisor may authorize minor repairs (e.g., replacing fuses, lights, flat tires, etc.) after business hours and on holidays and weekends repairs to keep the vehicle in service.
		5. When leaving a vehicle for maintenance, officers will complete a vehicle repair card explaining the service or repair requested and left on the seat or dash.
		6. All weapons will be removed from any vehicle left for maintenance.
	4. Except when necessary, during an extreme emergency, no employee will operate any vehicle which is deemed unsafe. This should not prevent the operation of a vehicle being transferred directly to the repair facility to correct minor malfunctions.
	5. In cases of major mechanical failure which require vehicle towing the on-duty supervisor will have the City’s rotation/contracted wrecker service notified and the vehicle towed to a secure location.
	6. Any major repairs must be approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee before they are performed.
14. Authorized Operators/Passengers:
15. Except in exigent circumstances, vehicles should only be operated by members of this department including Reserve Officers under the direct supervision of a certified officer, or authorized service personnel.
	* 1. No private citizen is to operate any city vehicle unless so authorized under extreme exigent circumstances. Should this occur, the officer will write a statement regarding all the facts of the circumstances and forward the statement to their immediate supervisor.
16. The following people are authorized passengers in department vehicles:
	* 1. SAMPLE Police Department employees.
		2. SAMPLE City employees or other law enforcement officers involved in official business.
		3. Anyone that has received prior approval from the Chief of Police or his/her designee, (e.g., Reserve Officers, Explorers, Citizen Ride-Along).
		4. Anyone required to ride in police vehicles in the normal course of conducting police business.
		5. Whenever a person listed in subsection d. is placed in a department vehicle for transport, the officer will promptly notify Dispatch of the person's identity and the facts surrounding the situation. The time, location, odometer reading and destination shall be given to Dispatch at the beginning and end of the transport.
17. Personal transportation is not permissible except in exigent situations or with the on-duty supervisor's approval.
18. Vehicle Records
19. The Chief of Police or his/her designee will be responsible for maintaining a file for each department vehicle containing the following:
20. Vehicle history (e.g., purchase date, etc.)
21. Vehicle Inspection Reports.
22. Inventory list of equipment assigned to each unit.
23. Copies of repair work.
24. Other pertinent reports or data.

APPROVED: CHIEF OF POLICE DATE

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS ORDER

SIGNATURE OF OFFICER DATE

***DISCLAIMER***

***NOTE****: These documents are being provided to you by the AMIC/MWCF Loss Control Division and are not intended to be legal advice. They do not identify all the issues surrounding a particular topic. Laws and “Best Practices” change and policies must be continually reviewed and updated as needed. Public agencies are encouraged to review their procedures with an expert or an attorney who is knowledgeable about the topic. Reliance on this information is at the sole risk of the user.*