Policy 1411: Vehicle Use Procedures

The following Procedures outline the responsibilities of departments and individuals in complying with the Vehicle Use Policy.

Only authorized persons are permitted to drive a State Operated Vehicle (SOV). In certain limited situations approved by department heads or deans, such as athletic team travel, students may be allowed to drive.

Failure to comply with any of these Procedures may result in disciplinary action, and may result in suspension or termination of SOV operating privileges.

A. Driver Qualifications

1. **All Operators:** Drivers, including infrequent Drivers, must meet these minimum qualifications:

   a. Students: must be at least 20 years of age, have possessed a valid driver’s license for a minimum of two years;
   b. Employees (including student wage employees): must be at least 18 years of age and have possessed a valid driver’s license for a minimum of two years;
   c. It is the responsibility of all Drivers to:
      1. Possess a current driver’s license of the proper class and appropriate endorsement for the type of vehicle to be driven that is recognized as valid by the Commonwealth of Virginia;
      2. Sign the MVR Release form, authorizing the University to review his or her Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) whenever it is deemed necessary;
      3. Maintain an acceptable MVR, as defined in section F below;
      4. Have no medical condition that precludes the safe operation of a motor vehicle;
      5. Read and sign the Vehicle Use Policy and the Vehicle Accident Review Committee Policy;
      6. Adhere at all times to the driving regulations required by law and as stated below; AND
      7. Complete a University Driver Safety Training and a refresher training every two years. New hires must complete training within 60 days of being hired.

   ** Departments will be responsible for cost associated with employees MVR review.

B. Restrictions on Travel

1. Vehicles owned by the Commonwealth of Virginia may not be used to travel outside a 300 mile limit (roundtrip) of George Mason’s Fairfax Campus. Rental vehicles must be used to travel farther than the 300 mile limit.
2. No students (excluding student wage employees) are allowed to operate an SOV outside a 300 mile limit (roundtrip) of George Mason’s Campuses without an employee in the vehicle.

3. No Driver shall drive for more than two hours without a break of at least 30 minutes.

4. Any trip that is longer than 300 miles, or four hours, must have at least two qualified Drivers assigned to drive the SOV.

5. Driver(s) shall not drive to and from the destination between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

6. Although obtaining meals and lodging are reasonable deviations, the trip must be along the most direct route between designated sites and not involve *ad hoc* side trips.

C. Safe Driving Procedure

1. General

   All Drivers must, at all times:
   a. Wear seatbelts and require passengers to wear seatbelts when the vehicle is in motion. (This does not apply to vehicles that are not required by law to have seatbelts, such as school buses).
   b. Only operate cell phones and other electronic devices with a hands-free device. Talking on a non-hands-free device, text messaging and emailing are strictly prohibited when the gear shift is in drive and/or the vehicle is in motion.
   c. Not be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any substance that may impair the ability to safely operate the vehicle (Policy 2219 http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/employee-drug-and-alcohol-policy/).
   d. Shut off the engine, remove the keys, set the emergency brake, and lock the vehicle before leaving an SOV unattended.
   e. No eating or smoking while in an SOV.
   f. Whenever work requirements make it necessary for an SOV to block or obstruct traffic, temporary traffic control should be set up in accordance with the Virginia Work Area Protection Act.
   g. When parked, an SOV should not obstruct access to fire lanes, fire hydrants, fire department connections for buildings, building exits, or handicap parking.
   h. When driving on pedestrian walkways, SOV speed shall not exceed 5 mph if it is safe to do so and shall be reduced if needed to ensure the safety of pedestrians. Right-of-way MUST always be given to pedestrians on walkways.
   i. Position their vehicles so as to avoid the necessity of backing up, when possible. When backing up is necessary, the Driver will check the rear clearance of the vehicle for other vehicles or objects before moving. If there is a passenger in the vehicle, he or she should get out and spot for the Driver.
   j. Note and report any defects or damage that affects the safe operation of the SOV to their supervisor or Motor Pool, or both. It is the supervisor’s or Motor Pool’s responsibility to arrange for such defects or damage to be corrected.
k. Properly maintain and clean the vehicle after each use.
l. Drivers of emergency vehicles may exercise those privileges granted to them under university policies and procedures and by the laws of Virginia. This provision does not relieve the Driver of an emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.

2. **Passengers and Cargo**

When transporting passengers or cargo, Drivers must:

a. Not transport anyone other than Mason employees and students in an SOV, unless the person is being transported in connection with university business, law enforcement matters, or as authorized by a Department Head or Dean.
b. Not allow anyone to ride on or inside any non-passerger compartment including running boards, fenders, hoods, tailgates, or in truck beds.
c. Not permit hitchhikers or pets to ride in any SOV.
d. Ensure that all cargo items are properly secured to prevent shifting or falling from the vehicle.
e. Ensure that the trailer hitch is securely latched and that safety chains and other safety equipment are properly attached and operable when towing a trailer, dolly or other equipment.
f. Mark the end of any load that extends beyond the rear bumper of the vehicle with a red flag or other warning in accordance with Virginia motor vehicle laws.
g. Not operate an SOV when it is so loaded that the Driver’s view is obstructed and/or the load interferes with the Driver’s control of the vehicle.

D. **11- and 15-Passenger Vans**

1. **Driver Qualifications:** In addition to all of the above Driver qualifications, additional training is required when operating a passenger van (http://police.gmu.edu/programs-and-services/van-driver-familiarization-class/). Drivers MUST complete all training prior to transporting passengers with a refresher training every three years for passenger vans.

2. All requests for use must be made through Facilities Management Motor Pool. The George Mason University Police Department is responsible for obtaining Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records, and providing the initial and refresher “Drivers Familiarization” training to the University Community for operating 11- and 15-passenger vans.

3. Drivers are authorized to use 11- and 15-passenger vehicles only when smaller vehicles are not available or not practical, and only for distances of 300 miles or less. Minors that are not students of George Mason University must not be transported in 11- and 15-passenger vans.
E. Accidents

In the event of an accident, the Driver must:

1. Assist anyone injured and call for an ambulance, if needed.
2. While the vehicle is at the accident scene, notify the State Police (911) or, if the accident occurs on campus, George Mason Police (703-993-2810).
3. Notify his or her supervisor and the Office of Risk Management. The failure to make a report of a vehicle accident as required by the Vehicle Use Policy and the laws of the Commonwealth will be handled in accordance with the Commonwealth of Virginia Standards of Conduct and Performance.
4. Document the names, addresses, phone numbers, vehicle license numbers and insurance information of all persons and vehicles involved, including this information from any witnesses. Also document the names, phone numbers, and addresses of anyone injured or claiming to be injured. The Driver must provide this information to his or her supervisor immediately upon return, as well as to the Office of Risk Management as soon as possible following the accident.
5. Complete an “Auto Loss Notice” form and forward to the Office of Risk Management as soon as possible. (Available in the insurance information packet of vehicles owned by the Commonwealth, or from the Office of Risk Management.)
6. Complete an Employers’ First Report of Injury Accident form as soon as possible if an injury to an employee occurs.
7. Not comment on fault or make any statement to anyone except Driver’s immediate supervisor, a representative of the Commonwealth’s Division of Risk Management, a law enforcement officer, or the Office of Risk Management.

F. ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE (For Motor Pool Vehicles)

1. Call the Motor Pool at 703-993-2442 (7am to 6pm) or after hours at 571-237-0422 (24hrs) to coordinate towing and/or repair services after an accident or breakdown.
2. Minor vehicle repair services can be purchased using the gas card for that vehicle. Information for assistance can be found in the Vehicle Packet within the glove compartment of the Motor Pool vehicle.

G. MVR Review

1. **Authorization** – As a condition for authorization to drive an SOV, Drivers and prospective Drivers must provide a current drivers’ license to their supervisor and authorize Mason to obtain and review his or her MVR.
2. **MVR Request** – The Driver’s MVR will be accessed annually by the University. A request will be made as deemed necessary by the Accident Review Committee for
Drivers involved in auto accidents in an SOV (The Department will be responsible for the annual cost and each time an employee is involved in an accident).

3. **Analysis of MVR** – Motor Vehicle Reports will be evaluated based on the criteria below, as a minimum standard. If a MVR is Conditional or Restricted, the University may require the Driver to take additional steps.

   a. **Acceptable** MVR: includes zero to no more than one at-fault accident (excluding a major moving violation) and/or one minor driving violation in the past three years.
      
      **Action**: The department head or designated representative and employee will be notified of the results of the report. No further action is required.

   b. **Conditional** MVR: includes a combination of no more than two at-fault accidents (excluding a major moving violation) or minor driving violations in the past three years.
      
      **Action**: The department head or designated representative will be notified of the results of the report. The employee will be given a verbal notification and counseled by his or her supervisor regarding the conditional status of their MVR. The conditional status of the employee’s MVR may be documented in a counseling memo or a disciplinary action. The documentation will be maintained in the employee’s departmental file or personnel file, as appropriate. The supervisor will order a new Motor Vehicle Report for the employee in six months to re-evaluate the employee’s driving privileges. During this period, the employee may continue to operate an SOV.

   c. **Restricted** MVR: includes a combination of two or more at-fault accidents or two or more minor moving violations in the past three years, or includes a conviction for major driving violations in the past three years:
      
      **Action**: The department head or designated representative will be notified by Human Resources of the results of the report. Driving privileges for Mason will be suspended until the employee’s motor vehicle report reflects an Acceptable or Conditional status. At a minimum, the employee will be issued a written notice stating the reason his or her driving privileges have been suspended. The restricted status of the employee’s MVR may result in disciplinary action if driving a SOV is a condition of the employee’s employment. Documentation will be maintained in the employee’s departmental file or personnel file, as appropriate. Prior to reinstatement of suspended driving privileges, the employee will be required to successfully complete the university Drivers Training.

4. **Disciplinary Procedures** – An employee who drives an SOV for University Business and is placed on Restricted Driving Status may be subject to disciplinary action through Human Resources if driving a SOV is a condition of their employment.

**MVR GRADING GRID**

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***Major violations are:***
- Leaving the scene of an accident
- Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Racing or excessive speed (>20 MPH over speed limit)
- Reckless, homicide or manslaughter involving the use of a motor vehicle
- License suspension or revocation resulting from accidents or moving violations
- Attempting to elude a police officer

**H. Definitions**

*Definitions are as stated in Policy 1411, Vehicle Use.*

**I. Waiver Procedure**

In certain limited circumstances, the Office of Risk Management may approve waivers from the travel restrictions listed in these Procedures. Requests for waivers should be made in writing to the Office of Risk Management. Waivers may be granted after considering the circumstances of each case.

**J. Responsibilities**

**1. All GMU Departments that operate SOVs will follow these procedures:**

   a. Ensure all Drivers complete and submit an MVR Release form to the Office or Risk Management. Departments will be responsible for all cost associated with requesting a Driver’s MVR after Driver’s initial MVR review.
   b. Submit a list of Drivers for their department annually.
   c. Departments must submit a fund and org to be charged for all MVR billing which will be done by HR&P with a department POC for that fund and org.
   d. Require that all Drivers read the Vehicle Use Policy and Procedures and sign an Acknowledgement form before authorizing use of a SOV. A copy of the acknowledgement form will be given to the Driver and the original filed in his or her departmental personnel file.

**2. All GMU Departments that have a fleet of vehicles will:**

   a. Maintain a motor vehicle use log for all SOVs operated by the Department.
   b. Maintain proper maintenance on all vehicles (contact Facilities Management for maintenance and repairs).
3. **Office of Risk Management will:**
   a. Manage the ARC and claims handling.
   b. Submit renewal and maintain records of insurance for all vehicles owned by the Commonwealth, as reported by Departments.
   c. Conduct Driver Safety training and monitor compliance regarding successful completion.
   d. Maintain authorized Drivers database.
   e. Request initial hire and annual MVR screenings of all regular drivers as submitted by departments in conjunction with HR&P.

4. **Human Resources & Payroll will:**
   a. Request MVRs for Drivers as requested by the Office of Risk Management.
   b. Manage the formal disciplinary action process for violations of these Procedures, along with the employee’s supervisor.

5. **University Police Department will:**
   a. Investigate all reported on-campus accidents involving SOV.
   b. Notify ORM of all accidents involving a SOV.
   c. Facilitate the training and familiarization course for 11-15 passenger vans.

6. **Facilities Management will:**
   a. Maintain vehicles owned by the University, as requested by Departments. Departments will be charged for all maintenance requests, which will be billed to departments fund and org.
   b. Annually inspect SOVs owned by the University.
   c. Manage Motor Pool vehicle requests.