

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: ASSIGNED VEHICLE PROGRAM

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I. Purpose

To establish guidelines for the use of Covington Police Department vehicles by employees of the Covington Police Department. All officers shall recognize that a vehicle assigned under this Program is a privilege granted by the Covington Police Department for the promotion of community support, organizational efficiency, vehicle maintenance and officer morale.

II. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to assign vehicles to officers for their on-duty and off-duty use in order to:

- Maintain high visibility throughout the city
- Promote the security of the citizens of Covington by greater visibility and presence of police vehicles on the streets, roadways and neighborhoods
- Act as a deterrent to crime by limiting the opportunity of criminals to commit criminal acts by the presence of more police vehicles
- To provide quicker response to certain types of calls, thereby increasing the opportunity to apprehend criminals
- To reduce maintenance costs for police vehicles and increase the life expectancy of each vehicle
- To provide for a rapid and direct response of off-duty personnel when called to duty because of an emergency situation
- To more effectively manage department resources
- To provide an additional incentive for employees to maintain employment with the Covington Police Department through maintenance of this "Assigned Vehicle Program".

III. Assignment

The assignment and use of police vehicles to individual officers will be recommended by the Division Captains through the chain of command for final approval by the Chief of Police. It is mandatory that all City vehicles be operated strictly in accordance with the law with safety considerations always being a matter of primary concern to the operator. Vehicle abuse or misuse will result in immediate termination of off duty privileges. In order for the Department to continue the Assigned Vehicle Program, it is vital that public

support be solicited. Exercising good judgment and care by officers is critical for the success of this program.

IV. Procedures

- A. It is the policy of the Covington Police Department that the following criteria be met before an officer is permanently issued a department vehicle.
 - 1. The issuance of a personally assigned vehicle is contingent upon availability and departmental needs, as determined by the Chief of Police.
 - 2. An assigned vehicle is a privilege that may be extended to each officer that meets these criteria. It is not a right or entitlement; nor, is it the subject for a grievance.
 - 3. Officers may have a vehicle permanently assigned with the approval of the Chief of Police provided the officers have successfully completed the FTO Program and is recommended for permanent issuance of a patrol vehicle by the Patrol Commander.
 - 4. Officers assigned to units or positions where unmarked vehicles are utilized will be assigned such unmarked vehicles.

- B. Officers and employees that are issued vehicles on a permanent basis will be held accountable for the care and maintenance of that vehicle. Any damage that is incurred should be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor along with a written report detailing the circumstances. Failure to take proper care of the vehicle may result in disciplinary action to include loss of take-home privileges, suspension or termination.

- C. Officers may have the privilege of having a Take Home Vehicle suspended or revoked for any of the following reasons. This list is not all inclusive and the Chief of Police has the discretion to suspend or revoke these privileges at any time.
 - 1. Violating any provision of this policy or any Departmental policy, rule or regulation, as well City of Covington Policies or Rules pertaining to the use and care of vehicles.
 - 2. In conjunction with departmental discipline.
 - 3. Not keeping the vehicle properly maintained (i.e. fluid levels, air pressure in tires, scheduled maintenance, etc.).
 - 4. Being involved in an at-fault accident.
 - 5. Falsifying any information concerning their actual primary residence.
 - 6. Poor driving habits as evidenced by multiple citizen complaints or a pattern of at-fault crashes.

- D. Officers residing within a thirty-five (35) mile radius of the police station may receive an assigned take-home vehicle.

1. Officers residing within the City Limits of Covington may utilize the vehicle not only to travel to and from work, but also to facilitate personal errands within the City Limits of Covington while off duty.
2. Officers residing outside the City Limits of Covington may operate the vehicle strictly to and from work and/or to and from part-time employment sanctioned through the Covington Police Department.
3. If an officer changes his or her address and such change causes them to move outside the required 35-mile radius, they must notify their supervisor immediately and their take-home privilege will cease. (Also see SOP A195, §2.22).

E. Special Rules and Regulations for Permanently Assigned Vehicles

1. All rules and regulations pertaining to on-duty officers shall apply to off-duty officers while operating an assigned vehicle.
2. Officers, whether operating or riding in a city vehicle, will properly wear a seat belt. All seat belts will be fastened in the manner prescribed by the manufacturer of the vehicle. Personnel will not disconnect any warning devices, remove parts, or in any way tamper with the safety belts of department vehicles so as to render them inoperable. (Note: officers responding to hot calls may disengage the seat belt when they arrive in the area of the call).
3. Officers will not be allowed to transport family members in the police vehicles.
4. Vehicles may be driven outside these designated areas on official business only.
5. Vehicles will not be utilized for carrying heavy or excessive loads and will not have objects protruding from the trunk or windows, with the exception of evidence and found property as necessary.
6. There shall be no extra equipment, lights, radios, gadgets, or other unauthorized instruments installed or placed on the vehicles except upon written approval of the Chief of Police. There will be no unauthorized bumper stickers, devices, decals, special license plates, etc. affixed to the police vehicles without permission of the Chief of Police.
7. Officers shall keep their assigned vehicle clean and in good operating condition. The inside of the vehicle will be kept clean and free of trash or debris.
8. Employees are strictly forbidden from operating a city vehicle while consuming or under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any medication which may impair their driving ability.
9. Only Covington Police personnel shall be authorized to operate departmental vehicles. Civilian personnel may operate departmental vehicles upon approval of a supervisor.
10. All officers assigned vehicles shall exercise good judgment while utilizing them and shall not drive, use or park vehicles in such a manner or in

places that may cause unfavorable comment or reflect discredit upon the Covington Police Department.

11. Vehicle abuse or willful negligence on the part of an employee in the care and operation of the vehicle will result in termination of the assigned vehicle privilege and possible disciplinary action.
 12. All officers shall have in their possession a valid driver's license while operating a police vehicle. Off-duty officers shall also have in their possession their badge, department identification, authorized firearm and portable radio.
 13. During off-duty use, officers may wear civilian clothes which are neat and reflect good taste when using the vehicle to attend training, obtain warrants, service the vehicle, etc. Cut-off jeans, t-shirts, flip flops, sandals, etc. will not be permitted).
 14. When responding to an emergency, officers should have their traffic safety vest available which will help in identifying them as police officers.
 15. During the time when the officer is off-duty and in the assigned vehicle, the officer shall advise the 911 Center prior to responding to any emergency call, assisting any motorist or other citizen needing assistance or conducting any traffic stop for enforcement purposes.
 16. At all times, off-duty officers shall monitor the police radio while driving the vehicle and be available to respond to an emergency if in the area.
 17. If an off-duty officer comes upon the scene of a traffic accident, a motorist requiring aid or an incident requiring law enforcement action, they will stand by or provide aid until an on-duty officer is dispatched and arrives on the scene. Off-duty officers will complete a supplemental report if their observations are germane to an incident. All initial incident reports and follow-up work will be conducted by the on-duty officer.
 18. Unattended vehicles of off-duty officers must be locked at all times.
 19. Under no circumstances will any weapons be left in the vehicle when delivered to the City Shop or other repair facilities for maintenance or service.
 20. When an officer is off on vacation, he/she may leave the assigned vehicle at their residence. If the officer is on extended sick leave, or light duty the assigned vehicle will be left at the police station.
- F. The Rocket and GPS Trackers
1. Each marked police car is equipped with The Rocket, which is a device that services as a mobile hotspot for the laptop computer and the officer's cell phone. The Rocket serves as a GPS Tracker to provide for real time location of the vehicle at all times. The Rocket also provides for extremely fast data transfer when the vehicle pulls in to the parking lot at the police station.
 2. Each unmarked police vehicle is equipped with a GPS Tracker which provides real time locations of the vehicle at all times.

3. All officers should realize that these devices are designed as a management tool and will serve to enhance the officer's technological capabilities.
4. These devices will not be disconnected for any reason, except by a technician working on the device. If at any time the device is not working, the officer should contact the Information Systems Specialist.
5. Tampering with or disconnecting the devices will cause the officer to be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton

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Chief of Police