

7.00 – USE OF COUNTY PROPERTY

7.01 GENERAL POLICY

Burnet County attempts to provide each employee with adequate tools, equipment, and vehicles for the job being performed and expects each employee to observe safe work practices and safe and courteous operation of vehicles and equipment in compliance with all municipal, county, and state regulations.

7.02 USE OF TOOLS, EQUIPMENT, PROPERTY AND VEHICLES

Employees who are assigned tools or equipment or vehicles by their departments are responsible for them and for their proper use and maintenance.

All county property shall be returned upon termination of employment.

No personal use of any county property, money, materials, supplies, tools, equipment or vehicles is permitted. Violations may result in discharge and possible prosecution.

The use of personal property in the course and scope of employment is at the employee's own risk for loss or damage. Reasonable measures will be taken to safeguard your personal belongings; however, Burnet County assumes no liability for personal property brought into the workplace. Any employee who brings personal property into the workplace assumes the full risk for it should it be lost, stolen, or damaged.

7.03 VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE

All elected officials/employees driving a County-owned vehicle must have a valid Texas Driver's License with a classification which allows for operation of the assigned vehicle(s). If during the course of employment an elected official/employee loses his/her driver's license due to suspension or non-renewal, the elected official/employee shall immediately notify his/her department head/elected official. It shall be the elected official/department head's responsibility to ensure that each of their employees possess a valid Texas Driver's License with the proper classification to operate the employee's assigned vehicle(s). Improper use of a County vehicle shall be subject to disciplinary action. If any employee is excluded from the County's liability insurance coverage due to their driving record, they will become ineligible to drive a County vehicle. An occupational driver's license is not considered a valid driver's license under this section.

Suspension or revocation of the driver's license of an employee who is assigned as a vehicle or equipment operator may result in a demotion or termination.

Burnet County may check employee driving records, at the county's discretion, for all employees who drive for Burnet County business reasons. This includes driving a county owned vehicle or their own car for Burnet County business. Employees who drive for the county must furnish the county with their driver's license number.

7.04 ACCIDENT REPORTING

Any employee operating county equipment or vehicles must report all equipment or vehicular accidents and property damage or liability claims to his/her supervisor and the proper law enforcement agency immediately.

Each vehicular accident, no matter how minor, must be reported to the county in order that an accident report can be filed. Reports should be made to the County Auditor's office. Failure to report accidents may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

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Following all accidents, all drivers will be tested in accordance with our Drug and Alcohol Policy. CDL drivers must follow DOT regulations.

7.05 COUNTY TELEPHONES

No personal long distance telephone calls shall be charged to any county telephones. Personal long distance calls shall be charged to credit cards, charges reversed, or charges made to a third number. Personal calls shall be kept to a minimum.

Effective 10/01/2019, Burnet County will not reimburse employees for use of a personal cellular device. Where job needs demand immediate access to an employee, the county may issue a county-owned cellular telephone to an employee for work-related communications. These phones are intended to be used for business purposes and no personal calls are allowed. If personal cellular calls are made which result in a charge to the county, the employee will reimburse the county within 10 days after notification from the Auditor's Office. Burnet County employees to whom cell phones are issued may be required to keep location services enabled. Abuse of county issued cellular phones can result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination.

7.06 COUNTY VEHICLE USAGES – GENERAL GUIDELINES

All vehicles must be parked at a county facility at the end of each working day unless prior authorization has been granted by their elected official or department head.

Vehicles may be used only for work-related duties and, if authorized, to drive to and from work. Vehicles may be used for no other purpose, except in an emergency, or for trips completely incidental to County employment while driving to and from a County-related job site.

If an elected official/employee uses a County vehicle to commute to and from their primary residence, the fringe benefit use of said vehicle may be included as taxable income of the elected official/employee in accordance with Internal Revenue Commuting Valuation Rules. Marked vehicles used by law enforcement officers used to commute to and from work are considered as qualified non-personal vehicles and the use of such vehicles is not considered taxable income. Unmarked vehicles used by law enforcement officers are also considered as qualified non-personal vehicles and the use of the vehicles by such personnel to commute to and from work is not considered as taxable income. The term "law enforcement officer" means an individual who is employed on either a full-time or part-time basis by a governmental unit that is responsible for the prevention or investigation of crime involving injury to persons or property (including apprehension or detention of persons for such crime), who is authorized by law to carry firearms, execute search warrants, and to make arrests (other than merely a citizen's arrest), and who regularly carries firearms (except when it is not possible to do so because of the requirements of undercover work). Use of either a marked or unmarked vehicle by a person who is not a law enforcement officer would be considered as taxable income.

Only County elected officials/employees, duly commissioned reserve officers authorized by the County Sheriff or Constable, or officers assigned to special operations and/or task force units approved by Commissioners' Court, are authorized to drive a County vehicle. A list of duly commissioned reserve officers authorized by the County Sheriff or Constable to drive a County vehicle shall be maintained by the respective department head/elected official and a copy kept by the Human Resources Office.

A. Personal Use

1. At no time may a County vehicle be used for personal gain, personal business, to drive to a place of secondary or part-time employment not related to County business, or for any other non-County-related use.

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2. Law Enforcement vehicles may be used for special events provided the County is reimbursed at a rate approved annually by Commissioners' Court.
3. County vehicles may not be used as tow vehicles, unless it is for official County business.
- B. Allowed passengers in County vehicles are: a) anyone in the care and custody of a law enforcement official; b) County employees; c) a non-employee on County-related business; and d) any person in need of transport due to an emergency.
- C. In the event of an accident involving a County owned vehicle being used by County elected official/employee for personal reasons, the County elected official/employee will be fully liable for all damage and/or injuries sustained to all parties in the accident.
- D. All drivers of County-owned vehicles, and those using their personal vehicles on County business, shall comply with all applicable State and local laws. It will be the responsibility of the driver to pay any fines imposed for not complying with such laws.
- E. Federal Law prohibits any CDL driver operating any vehicle over 10,000 GWR from texting with fines and penalties, up to including loss of CDL. Burnet County expressly prohibits anyone operating a County owned vehicle from texting with penalties, up to and including loss of employment.

The Commissioners' Court may grant a vehicle allowance to any elected official/employee deemed appropriate. The vehicle allowance will be paid monthly on the elected official/employee's paycheck as a Taxable Fringe Benefit as designated by IRS Fringe Benefit Guidelines.

7.07 UNIFORM POLICY

If a Burnet County employee receives a county uniform, Burnet County will comply with IFS regulations in determining if the benefit is taxable to the employee.

7.08 USE OF COUNTY CASH FUND

According to LGC Sec. 130.902 (c), a change fund may not be used to make loans or advances or to cash checks or warrants of any kind.

Therefore, no checks will be cashed for any reason from any county change drawer.

7.09 USE OF SIGNATURE STAMP

A signature stamp is used when an elected official or department head authorizes an employee to use the stamp on behalf of the person in authority. An employee who receives permission to use a signature stamp on behalf of a person in authority must account for the proper usage of the instrument. To this end, Burnet County requires the employee to personally sign or initial underneath a stamped signature to identify who placed it there. The employee will become the primary contact in case a document has been erroneously stamped. In case of a mistake, the person who stamped the document will be held accountable. Use the signature stamp on the proper documents and only after the person whose signature is on the stamp and has given permission for its use.

Do not use signature stamps on documents that require a personal review or assessment from the individual whose name is on the stamp. Improper use may result in legal ramification and/or disciplinary steps up to and including termination.