



Procedure 6.21: University/State Vehicle Safety Procedure  
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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Alabama A&M University (AAMU) is firmly committed to the safety of authorized drivers affiliated with AAMU when using a University/State vehicle while conducting University related activities. AAMU will do everything possible to prevent workplace accidents and is committed to providing a safe working environment for all. To further this goal, AAMU has developed a safety procedure.

## **II. PURPOSE**

AAMU advocates safe and responsible driving habits. This includes not only adherence to traffic laws, speed limits, and use of seat belts, but also to limiting distractions while operating a motor vehicle through the use of cellphones and other hand-held electronic devices. This procedure provides safety guidelines for authorized drivers affiliated with AAMU when using a University/State vehicle while conducting University related activities. Adhering to the procedure enables the University to provide its auto insurance coverage for those who drive a University/State vehicle while conducting University business.

## **III. DAMAGES AND/OR LIABILITIES**

Any damages and/or liabilities arising out of the personal use of a University/State vehicle are the sole responsibility of the driver. The University will expect the driver's personal auto insurance to respond in the event of an accident or any other event arising out of such personal use.

## **IV. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Authorized Driver:** A driver who has been approved by the University's insurance and is affiliated with AAMU.
- B. Auto Liability Insurance:** Insurance that provides coverage for the non-University vehicle that is involved in an auto accident with the University Vehicle.
- C. Auto Physical Insurance:** Insurance that provides coverage for damage to a University vehicle.

- D. Driving Under the Influence (DUI) or Driving While Intoxicated (DWI):** The crime of driving a motor vehicle while impaired by alcohol or other drugs (including recreational drugs and those prescribed by physicians), to a level that renders the driver incapable of operating a motor vehicle safely.
- E. Hand-Held Electronic Devices:** Includes but is not limited to, wireless phones, computers, online email, pagers, palm pilots, pda's and any other communication device.
- F. Motor Vehicle Record (MVR):** A report of driving history, as reported from Department of Motor Vehicles. Information on the report may include driver's license information, point history, violations, convictions, and license status on an individual's driving record. Most states report driving records for the past three years, although some states may report five or more years of history.
- G. University/State Vehicle:** A vehicle that is owned, leased or rented for University business.
- H. United States Department of Transportation (USDOT or DOT):** A federal cabinet department of the U.S. government concerned with transportation. It is governed by the United States Secretary of Transportation. The mission is to "Serve the United States by ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible, and convenient transportations system that meets vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people, today and into the future."

## **V. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Departments with vehicles and/or drivers:**

- A. Identify a department vehicle coordinator who will:**
  - i. Be familiar with the Safety Procedure
  - ii. Ensure that the appropriate authorization process takes place for all drivers prior to driving.
  - iii. Instruct drivers to report any damage or needed repairs.
  - iv. Coordinate with the Facilities Department to follow the fuel use card program.
  - v. Coordinate with the Facilities Department to follow the University's vehicle maintenance program.
  - vi. Ensure that department vehicle rentals follow University Auto Rental Procedures as outlined in Procedure 3.4-Travel.
- B. Vehicle Maintenance:** University/State vehicles shall be operated and serviced in a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound manner. At a minimum:
  - i. Departments with University/State vehicles will follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule for each vehicle.
  - ii. All maintenance and repairs performed on University vehicles must be documented and retained for the life of the vehicle.
- C. Specialty vehicles,** such as electric cars and low-speed vehicles should be maintained in accordance with their manufacturer's recommendations.

- D.** Instruct drivers to routinely inspect vehicles before and after trips. Inspections include the following, but is not limited to:
- Brakes
  - Oil/fuel levels
  - Windshield wipers and fluid
  - Tire inflation/tire condition
  - Lights
  - Horn
  - Leaks (coolant or oil on the ground under vehicle)
- E.** Maintain vehicle use logs for records of maintenance, inspection, and driver use so the department knows who had possession of the vehicle at all times. (Vehicle use logs should include a process for reporting damage and/or service issues to the vehicle coordinator.)
- F.** Place insurance ID cards, registration, and accident report kits in each vehicle.
- G.** Remove any unsafe vehicle from service.
- H.** Work with Purchasing Services to surplus, trade in, or acquire new University vehicles.

**University Drivers responsibilities include:**

- A.** All drivers of University/State vehicles are required to become Authorized Drivers **prior to** driving for University business.
- B.** If driving is an essential function of a position being filled, selected job candidates will be subject to a motor vehicle check and, when hired, must receive approval from the University's insurance company **prior to** being authorized to drive.

**VI. MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS (MVR)**

The University will check University Drivers' motor vehicle record (MVR) on a periodic or as needed basis. Drivers of vehicles that fall under the USDOT regulations are subject to more frequent screenings and a more stringent training program.

Any of the following violations within the last two years on your motor vehicle record may render you ineligible to drive a University vehicle for two years from the date of violation:

- DWI
- Driving under the influence
- Negligent homicide
- Operating with a suspended license
- Using a motor vehicle for commission of a felony
- Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
- Operating a motor vehicle without the owner's consent
- Permitting an unlicensed driver to drive
- Reckless or careless and negligent driving
- Hit and Run or leaving the scene of an accident with injury or death resulting, or property damage in excess of \$1,000

- A combined total of three citations in two years of moving violations, at-fault accidents or any other AAMU driving policy violation.

## **VII. TRAINING**

Training may be required if a driver becomes disqualified due to change in driving record.

## **VIII. DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS**

- A.** Generally the minimum age of 21 years old and at least 3 years of driving experience for operating a University owned vehicle.
- B.** Generally the minimum age of 21 years old for operating a 12-15 passenger van (owned, leased or rented) and at least 3 years of driving experience.
- C.** Generally the minimum age of 21 years old for operating a leased or rented vehicle and at least 3 years of driving experience.
- D.** Valid United States driver's license.
- E.** Acceptable MVR (Motor Vehicle Record) check.

## **IX. PROCEDURES TO BECOME AN AUTHORIZED DRIVER**

- A.** Complete the *Driver's Authorization Form-Vehicle Use Agreement Form*.
- B.** Submit the *Driver's Authorization Form-Vehicle Use Agreement Form* to the Facilities Department, which gives AAMU consent to conduct a motor vehicle record check.
- C.** The Authorized Driver applicant and department will be notified via email when motor vehicle record check is completed.
- D.** All Authorized Drivers must agree to notify their department vehicle coordinator if their driver's license is revoked or suspended for any reason.

## **X. DRIVER AND PASSENGER SAFETY**

Drivers generally must be at least 21 years old for operating rented or leased vehicles and 12-15 passenger vans, and in possession of a valid United States driver's license at all times when operating a vehicle for University related use. Special license requirements may need to be met for certain types of driving e.g. CDL.

- A. Safety Requirements**
  - i. Driver must operate vehicles in accordance with applicable local, state and federal laws and University policies.
  - ii. Smoking is prohibited in all University vehicles.
  - iii. The number of passengers permitted in any vehicle may not exceed the number of seat belts. All occupants of the vehicle are required to wear seatbelts.
- B. Cell Phones or Texting While Driving**
  - i. Text messaging, email or any similar form of electronic communication while operating a motor vehicle on university business or on the campus of AAMU or other university property is prohibited.

- ii. Using a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle on university business or on the campus of AAMU or other university property unless such use is through a hands-free device is prohibited.
  - iii. The only exception to the above prohibitions is an emergency call placed to AAMU Department of Public Safety and/or 911 for situations such as fire, traffic accident, road hazard or medical emergency. In such cases, the communication should be as short as reasonably necessary to communicate the nature of the emergency, location, etc.
  - iv. Department of Transportation (DOT) prohibits commercial drivers from using a hand-held mobile telephone while operating a commercial truck or bus. Drivers who violate the restriction will face federal civil penalties of up to \$2,750 for each offense and disqualification from operating a commercial motor vehicle for multiple offenses. Additionally, states will suspend a driver's commercial driver's license (CDL) after two or more serious traffic violations. Commercial truck and bus companies that allow their drivers to use hand-held cell phones while driving will face a maximum penalty of \$11,000.
  - v. If authorized drivers are provided with radios, drivers should park before making a call.
- C.** For long distance trips, if there is more than one authorized driver, such drivers should consider rotating every two hours. No driver should drive more than 10 hours during a 24 hour period. If there are not enough drivers to rotate, an overnight stay should be planned.
- D.** Avoid driving past midnight.
- E.** Avoid conditions that leads to loss of control.
- F.** Avoid driving while sleepy or inattentive.
- G.** Avoid driving too fast for road conditions.
- H.** Avoid engaging in any other activities such as cell phone use that can lead to distraction.
- I.** For 24 hour roadside assistance, if needed, call the number on the vehicle maintenance card.
- J.** If the weather is inclement, stop and stay overnight in a safe place.
- K.** Turn off the vehicle, remove the keys, and lock the vehicle when it is left unattended.
- L.** Avoid distracted driving.

## **XI. 12-15 PASSENGER VAN USE**

Please review the information available on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) website regarding safe operations and special handling considerations for 12-15 passenger van use. The website is:

<http://www.safercar.gov/Vehicle+Shoppers/Passenger+Van+Safety>

### Top Safety Tips for 15-Passenger Vans

- i. **Seat Belts:** All occupants need to wear seat belts at all times.
- ii. **Tire Pressure:** Inspect the tires and check tire pressure before each use.
- iii. **Driver:** A 15-passenger van should only be operated by trained, experienced drivers who operate these vehicles on a regular basis.
- iv. **Attention:** Driver should be well rested and no use of cell phones, limit conversations with other passengers, and limit drive time to ten hours per 24-hour period.

## **XII. TRAILER TOWING**

Towing a trailer adds a significant risk to automobile operations. Important safety information regarding towing vehicles can be found on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website:

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems/equipment/towing/towing.pdf>.

## **XIII. ACCIDENT REPORTING**

- A. Never leave the scene of an accident. For on-campus accident, call the Department of Public Safety at 256-372-5555. If away from campus, call 911.
- B. All off-campus accidents must be reported immediately to the local police department and contact your supervisor immediately after contacting the authorities.
- C. Make no statement that would assume any obligation or admit liability.
- D. Provide the other party with insurance information contained in the vehicle, as well as your name, address and phone number.
- E. Within 24 hours, complete the *Alabama A&M University Auto Accident Report Form*, attached the police report and submit all documents to the Facilities Department.
- F. Rental car accidents must be reported to the rental agency as well as the Facilities Department.
- G. Failing to report an accident to the Facilities Department within 48 hours is a violation of the Safety Procedure and may result in financial penalties to the department.

## **XIV. MOTOR VEHICLE RECORD CRITERIA**

The University reserves the right to temporarily or permanently terminate driving privileges on the basis of an individual's driving record, regardless of when incidents occurred.

- A. Driving privileges for operating vehicles on behalf of the University may be revoked and disciplinary action may result, up to and including termination of employment, due to accident or violation experience, falsification of records, or any failure to comply with these regulations.
- B. If involved in three incidents, a driver may lose their driving privileges. (A singular incident that in the judgment of the University is sufficiently severe may also result in a termination of driving privileges.)

- C. Reinstatement of driving privileges may be granted upon the completion of driver training or evidence that other appropriate measures have been taken and approved by the Facilities Department.

**XV. COMMERCIAL DRIVER’S LICENSE (CDL) DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING**

The Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 requires a use and testing program for controlled substances and alcohol for those employee required to have a commercial driver’s license. Covered drivers include employees performing a safety-sensitive function requiring the operation of a commercial motor vehicle:

- A. Having a gross combination weight rating of 26, 001 or more pounds inclusive of a towed unit with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10, 000 pounds.
- B. Having a gross vehicle weight rating of 26, 001 or more pounds.
- C. Designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver.
- D. Used to transport materials found to be hazardous and required to be placarded under the Hazardous Materials Regulations.

Required tests include pre-employment/pre-duty, reasonable suspicion, random, post-accident, and return to duty.

All applicants for positions covered under this testing program must be notified in writing that passing a drug test is a condition of employment. In addition, the university is required to obtain information on the selected applicant's positive alcohol and drug testing results for the preceding two years. Because this information can be obtained only with the written consent of the applicant, the consent becomes a condition of employment.

An offer of employment must be conditional based upon verification of previous testing results and passing a drug test.

**XVI. VIOLATIONS**

Violations are not considered reimbursable costs. All violations, including parking and speeding tickets, will be the responsibility of the driver, not Alabama A&M University.