
Vehicle Use, Safety, and Maintenance

602.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Department utilizes motor vehicles for a variety of applications. To maintain a system of accountability and ensure that department-owned vehicles are used and maintained appropriately, regulations relating to the use and maintenance of these vehicles have been established. The term “department-owned” as used in this section also refers to any vehicle leased or rented by the Department.

602.2 POLICY

The Humboldt County Probation Department (HCPD) provides vehicles for official business use. The department will provide service through Humboldt County Motor Pool (HCMP) for department vehicles to ensure they remain operational and maintain their appearance, as resources allow.

602.3 USE OF DEPARTMENT AGENCY VEHICLES

Only authorized members should operate department vehicles. Members who operate department-owned vehicles must comply with all applicable state laws and must possess a valid driver’s license endorsed for the type of vehicle operated.

Additionally, members are responsible for helping maintain department vehicles so they are properly equipped, maintained, refueled, and cleaned.

602.3.1 USE OF SAFETY BELTS

Members shall wear provided safety restraints as stated in the Safety Belts Policy.

602.3.2 KEYS

When not in use, keys for Department vehicles should be stored in designated areas. Members who are assigned a specific vehicle should be issued keys for that vehicle.

Members shall not duplicate keys. The loss of a key shall be promptly reported in writing through the member’s chain of command.

Under no circumstances will probationers be allowed to operate a vehicle or have possession of any vehicle keys.

602.3.3 AUTHORIZED PASSENGERS

Members operating department vehicles shall not permit persons other than County personnel or persons being conveyed in the performance of the member’s duty, or anyone otherwise authorized, to ride as passengers in the vehicle.

602.3.4 ALCOHOL

Members who have consumed alcohol are prohibited from operating any department vehicle. Regardless of assignment, members may not violate state law regarding vehicle operation while intoxicated.

Humboldt County Probation Department

Probation Manual

Vehicle Use, Safety, and Maintenance

602.3.4 PARKING

Except when responding to an emergency or when urgent department-related business requires otherwise, members driving department vehicles should obey all parking regulations at all times.

602.3.5 ACCESSORIES AND/OR MODIFICATIONS

There shall be no modifications, additions, or removal of any equipment or accessories without written permission from the HCMP.

602.4 VEHICLE SECURITY

Department vehicles will be locked and the keys will be secured when not in use. No key should be left in the vehicle except when it is necessary that the vehicle be left running (e.g., equipment charging). Officers who exit a vehicle rapidly in an emergency situation or to engage in a foot pursuit must carefully balance the need to exit the vehicle quickly with the need to secure the vehicle.

Members shall ensure all weapons are secured while the vehicle is unattended.

602.4.1 REMOVAL OF WEAPONS

All firearms, weapons, and control devices shall be removed from a vehicle and properly secured in the department armory or designated storage area prior to the vehicle being released for maintenance, service, or repair.

602.5 ASSIGNMENT OF VEHICLES

Department vehicles may be assigned to individual members at the discretion of the Chief Probation Officer. Assigned vehicles may be changed at any time.

The assignment of vehicles may be suspended when the member is unable to perform the member's regular assignment.

602.5 MAINTENANCE

Members are responsible for the cleanliness (exterior and interior) and overall maintenance of their assigned vehicles. Cleaning and maintenance supplies will be provided by the Department through the HCMP. Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in discipline and loss of vehicle assignment. The following should be performed as outlined below:

- (a) Members shall make daily inspections of their assigned vehicles for service/maintenance requirements and damage.
- (b) It is the member's responsibility to ensure the assigned vehicle is maintained according to the established service and maintenance schedule.
- (c) All scheduled vehicle maintenance and car washes shall be performed as necessary at a facility approved by the HCMP.
- (d) The HCMP shall be notified of problems with the vehicle and approve any major repairs before they are performed.

Humboldt County Probation Department

Probation Manual

Vehicle Use, Safety, and Maintenance

- (e) When leaving the vehicle at the maintenance facility, the member will complete a vehicle repair card, explaining the service or repair.
- (f) Supervisors shall make, at a minimum, monthly inspections of vehicles assigned to members under their command to ensure the vehicles are being maintained in accordance with this policy.

602.5.1 VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

Members shall be responsible for inspecting the interior and exterior of any assigned vehicle before taking the vehicle into service and at the conclusion of their shifts. Any previously unreported damage, mechanical problems, unauthorized contents, or other problems with the vehicle shall be promptly reported to a supervisor and documented as appropriate.

The interior of any vehicle that has been used to transport any person other than a member of this department should be inspected prior to placing another person in the vehicle and again after the person is removed. This is to ensure that unauthorized or personal items have not been left in the vehicle.

When transporting any probationer, the transporting member shall search all areas of the vehicle that are accessible by the probationer before and after that person is transported.

All department-owned vehicles are subject to inspection and/or search at any time by a supervisor. No member assigned to or operating such vehicle shall be entitled to any expectation of privacy with respect to the vehicle or any of its contents, regardless of who owns the contents.

602.5.2 VEHICLE SAFETY REPAIRS

Anyone authorized to drive department vehicles is responsible for inspecting the interior and exterior of any assigned vehicle before placing the vehicle into service and again at the conclusion of the shift. Any previously unreported damage, mechanical problems, unauthorized contents, or other problems with the vehicle shall be promptly reported to a supervisor and documented as appropriate.

Vehicles that are deemed as unsafe shall not be used until necessary repairs are made. The supervisor or the authorized designee shall monitor the maintenance requests and ensure that the necessary repairs are made before the vehicle is placed back into service.

602.6 TOLL ROAD USAGE

Probation vehicles are not routinely exempt from incurring toll road charges.

To avoid unnecessary toll road charges, all members operating department vehicles on a toll road shall adhere to the following:

- (a) Members operating department vehicles for any reason other than in response to an emergency shall pay the appropriate toll charge or utilize the appropriate tollway transponder. Members may submit for reimbursement from the County for any toll fees incurred in the course of official business.

Humboldt County Probation Department

Probation Manual

Vehicle Use, Safety, and Maintenance

- (b) Members passing through a toll plaza or booth during a response to an emergency shall notify, in writing, the appropriate supervisor within five working days explaining the circumstances.

602.7 ACCIDENT, DAMAGE, ABUSE, AND MISUSE

When any department-owned vehicle is involved in a traffic accident, the involved member shall promptly notify a supervisor and the HCMP. The appropriate local law enforcement agency shall be summoned to conduct an investigation. A traffic accident report shall be filed with the agency having jurisdiction. The member shall complete this County's vehicle accident form. All accidents must be reported the Humboldt County Risk Manager within 24 hours.

If the member is incapable of completing the vehicle accident form, a supervisor shall complete the form.

An administrative investigation should be conducted to determine if the member acted within policy.

602.7 ATTIRE AND APPEARANCE

When operating any department vehicle while off-duty, members may dress in a manner appropriate for their intended activity. Whenever a member is in public view or has contact with the public, the member's attire and appearance, regardless of the activity, should be suitable to reflect positively upon the Department.