Southeast Coast Network

National Park Service
Inventory and Monitoring Division

Standard Operating Procedure 3.1.03

Vehicle Use and Operation—Version 2.1

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Summary

This standard operating procedure (SOP) explains safety guidelines and rules for operation of Southeast Coast Network (SECN) vehicles, and personal vehicles or vehicles rented while in official travel status.

Revision Log

Revision Date	Author	Changes Made	Reason for Change	New Version #
1/17/2013		Citation updated	Protocol publication	1.0
12/1/2016	Editor	Editorial review, update of procedures.	Protocol Publication	2.0
3/1/2021	Wright	Minor edits and template update	Annual review	2.1

Official Use of U.S. Government Motor Vehicles

Official use of a motor vehicle is using a motor vehicle to perform your agency's mission(s), as authorized by your agency. Official use of a government vehicle includes use to:

1. Carry out authorized programs, including program work under contractual arrangements.
2. Assist in major disasters or emergency situations.
3. Perform assignments while on official temporary duty (TDY) travel as documented and approved on a travel authorization. This includes using a government motor vehicle:
    a. Between the official duty station and temporary duty locations.
    b. Between the residence and the common carrier terminal (e.g., airport, train station), and from the common carrier terminal to the residence.
    c. Within the metropolitan area of the official station.
    d. From common carrier terminals at a temporary duty station to a place of business, and between such places if more than one is involved.
    e. From common carrier terminals at a temporary duty station to a place of lodging.
    f. From a place of lodging to a place of business at a temporary duty station where reasonable public transportation is not available or where the use of a government vehicle for such purposes would be advantageous to the government.
    g. From a place of lodging at a temporary duty station, where other reasonable means of transportation are not available, to obtain goods or services necessary to the health and well-being of the employee. This includes travel, of up to 25 miles (40 kilometers [km]), in a government vehicle to obtain medical services, attend religious services, and obtain goods and services at restaurants, barbershops, beauty shops, drugstores, laundries, and dry-cleaning establishments. Alcohol should never be purchased when using an official vehicle, including at a bar, liquor store, or grocery store.

Prior written approval via e-mail from the program manager is required to bring National Park Service (NPS) vehicle(s) home prior to travel.

Limitations for Using NPS Motor Vehicles

1. You may only transport non-official passengers (non-official passengers are people not engaged in the work for which you are using the vehicle) and private property in the following situations:

    a. During an emergency:

        i. As part of an overall Emergency Operations Plan that regional management or the accountable officer has approved and which is designed to facilitate aid before, during, and after a major disaster, or

        ii. When necessary to prevent serious injury, loss of life, or property.

    b. If the regional property manager develops a policy for transporting non-official passengers and private property that the Chief, Division of Contracting and Facilities Management and the Department's Director, Acquisition and Property Management have approved.

2. You may transport people from other federal agencies and non-federal employees when conducting official business when it benefits the government and does not interfere with accomplishing your primary business.

3. Non-federal passengers in service motor vehicles must comply with all NPS policies. Transporting the passengers must:

    a. Be at no additional cost,

    b. Not delay service business, and

    c. Not involve profit-seeking or commercial activities.

4. You must not transport family members, friends, or other people who are not conducting official business in a government vehicle (except as described in 1a above).

5. You may not use NPS motor vehicles for personal errands or shopping unrelated to work (unless you are on official temporary duty travel). You may use an NPS motor vehicle for shopping related to work (e.g., stopping at a drug store if an employee needs sunblock while doing fieldwork).

Requirements for Contractors and Grantees to Use Government Vehicles

- Managers who provide contractors or grantees with government-owned or leased motor vehicles are responsible for ensuring that the contractors/grantees only use the vehicles to perform the work authorized under the contracts and grants (see 43 CFR 12 for more guidance).
- Managers must ensure that contractors and grantees establish and enforce suitable penalties for their employees who willfully use or authorize the use of government motor vehicles for unofficial purposes.
- Contractors and grantees assume any cost or expense for any incidents that occur when use is not related to the performance of the grant or contract.

Volunteer Use of NPS-Owned and -Leased Motor Vehicles

Volunteers may use NPS motor vehicles if they:

1. Receive written authorization from the program manager;
2. Have a valid state driver's license; and
3. Comply with NPS motor vehicle operator requirements (see https://www.nps.gov/policy/RM50Bsection6.pdf).

Penalties for Unauthorized Use

With the director's approval, your supervisor may suspend you without pay if you willfully misuse or authorize someone else to misuse an SECN vehicle

Safe Operation of Motor Vehicles

Operators must take good care of NPS vehicles at all times and may lose the privilege of driving NPS vehicles if they do not take care of them.

1. Vehicle operators must:
    a. Not smoke.
    b. Not text on cell phones while driving. Talking is strongly discouraged, and only allowed on a hands-free device.
    c. Not eat while driving.
    d. Return the vehicle with a full tank of gasoline.

e. Remove all items and trash from the vehicle upon return.

f. Ensure lights are off, doors are locked, and windows are all closed when the vehicle is not in use.

g. Notify office manager of any damage, needed repairs, or service performed upon return.

h. Report all accidents immediately to SECN program manager.

2. Misconduct and improper operation include but are not limited to:

    a. Operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

    b. Willful abuse or misuse of a vehicle.

    c. Driving the vehicle in a willfully negligent or careless manner, including not paying attention and not adjusting driving speed to compensate for visibility, road conditions, and inclement weather.

3. If you damage a vehicle because of misconduct or improper operation, you may be financially responsible for the damage. Assessment of liability is conducted by an outside investigation board at the Interior Region 2 office and not the program manager

Driving Rules for Vehicle Operators to Follow

When driving NPS vehicles, operators must:

1. Carry a valid driver's license from a state, territory, or other governmental entity for the class of vehicle they are operating.
2. Carry a valid NPS personnel identification card.
3. Follow all applicable driving rules (local, state, and federal).
4. Wear a safety belt or other restraint system provided and ensure that all passengers also buckle up.
5. Not operate the vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
6. Not pick up hitchhikers or give rides to strangers.
7. Lock motor vehicles when unattended.
8. Take precautions to protect government property stored in the vehicle. If possible, remove property from the vehicle when you park it overnight. At the very least remove government property from view or cover it so that it cannot be seen. Boat ramps and hotel parking lots are notorious places for vehicle thefts to occur.
9. Ensure safety and emergency repair equipment are in the vehicle and in working condition.
10. When available, park or store the vehicle in a place that protects it from theft or damage.

Trailer Operations/Towing

When towing a trailer, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Complete an examination of the trailer before towing.
2. Check the trailer hitch and electrical connections.
3. Check boat tie-downs.
4. Ensure loose objects are removed from or fastened to the boat.
5. Confirm the driver is comfortable pulling and backing the trailer.
6. Adjust vehicle mirrors to account for the trailer.
7. Verify tires are inflated properly and bearings are greased.
8. Adhere to state Department of Transportation (DOT) trailer speed limits.

Payment for Fuel and Vehicle Services When Traveling

In all circumstances, operators should use the fleet charge card provided by the regional property manager to buy fuel and services from participating service stations. Operators may only use the fleet charge card for the vehicle to which the card is assigned.

Parking and Storage Requirements for Motor Vehicles

Vehicle operators:

- Must follow all federal, state, and local parking laws and regulations.
- Are responsible for citations and paying fines for violations. Repeated offenses may result in disciplinary action.
- When available, must park or store the vehicle in an area that offers reasonable protection from theft or damage.

EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY FORM

I certify that I read and am familiar with SECN Standard Operating Procedure 3.1.03 *Vehicle Use and Operation—Version 2.0*.

I understand that lack of compliance with this SOP may result in disciplinary action.

_____

Name

_____

Date