



HOWARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
**GENERAL ORDER ADM-08**  
**OFFICE VEHICLE POLICY**  
EFFECTIVE JANUARY 16, 2018

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This General Order contains the following numbered sections:

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**I. POLICY**

The Howard County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) Vehicle policy provides detailed procedures for the use of all HCSO vehicles to ensure the safety of all members and citizens.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. **Pool Vehicle:** A marked or unmarked general assignment vehicle used for administrative assignments or when assigned vehicle is unavailable due to maintenance.
- B. **Take-Home Vehicle (THV):** A marked or unmarked vehicle assigned to those deputies who live in Howard County or deputies who have been approved for out-of-county take-home privileges by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.
- C. **Prisoner Transport Vehicle:** A special use vehicle specifically designed and equipped for the secure transport of prisoners. Operators may be required to possess a commercial driver's license (CDL) to operate a prisoner transport vehicle.
- D. **Designated Vehicle Parking Area (DVPA):** Safe locations for parked THV. Locations will be determined by the Chief Deputy. Employees must complete the DVPA Authorization Form (HCSO 1801). Authorization and final approval for use of these locations will be granted by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.

**III. VEHICLE ASSIGNMENT**

- A. The HCSO Fleet Coordinator shall be responsible for the following:
  - 1. Coordinating the acquisition, assignment, and maintenance of HCSO vehicles;
  - 2. Compiling take-home vehicle statistics on a monthly and annual basis and forwarded to the Chief Deputy for review.
- B. Take-home vehicles will be assigned to eligible members as vehicle availability permits and with approval by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.
- C. Deputies must notify the HCSO Fleet Coordinator if there is a change in their home address.

**IV. GENERAL VEHICLE USE**

The Howard County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) requires that all employees operating HCSO vehicles obey all traffic laws. Deputies operating an office vehicle during an emergency response are governed by the **Annotated Code of Maryland, Transportation Article, Section 11-101 to end**. Deputies are not relieved of their responsibility to exercise due care when operating the vehicle in an emergency mode. The following provisions, requirements, and limitations apply to all HCSO vehicles.

- A. Deputies, while operating a HCSO vehicle, will monitor the primary (scanning) radio channel for the area in which they are traveling.
- B. Deputies will NOT use vehicles in the course of any secondary employment unless specific approval is granted by the Sheriff, via the Chain of Command.
- C. At no time shall a HCSO vehicle be driven outside the state of Maryland without authorization from the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.
- D. Deputies on disability leave or leave away from the county for more than seven (7) calendar days may be required to return their vehicle to the Fleet Coordinator. The Fleet Coordinator may temporarily reassign the vehicle or have the deputy park the vehicle at a Designated Vehicle Parking Area (DVPA).
- E. Deputies on suspension will not operate their assigned vehicles and may be required to turn those vehicles into the Fleet Coordinator.
- F. If a HCSO vehicle is taken out of service, the assigned deputy will use a pool vehicle, if available. Pool vehicles will only be used for work during a deputy's normal assigned hours or, if applicable, will be used in accordance with the Take-Home Vehicle Procedures outlined in this policy.
- G. Deputies with assigned vehicles are required to complete HCSO Form 1802 in its entirety on a monthly basis. The form must be submitted to the deputy's Commanding Officer within five (5) days following the end of the reporting month. Following review and approval, Commanders will promptly forward the completed HCSO 1802 to the Fleet Coordinator.
- H. Civilian employees and Security Officer's of the HCSO may be authorized to operate an unmarked vehicle under the following circumstances:
  - 1. When traveling on business for the Office; AND
  - 2. At the discretion of a supervisor.
- I. Deputies with assigned vehicles are required to inspect their vehicle and complete a HCSO 9020 Vehicle Inspection Form on a monthly basis. Their immediate supervisor or designee shall confirm the inspection and sign the 9020 Inspection Form. The form must be submitted to the Fleet Coordinator within five (5) days following the end of the reporting month.
- J. The deputy's immediate supervisor or designee will inspect the deputy's vehicle bimonthly and complete a HCSO 9020 Vehicle Inspection Form. This form must be submitted to the Fleet Coordinator within five (5) days following the end of the reporting month.
- K. A deputy assigned a take-home vehicle who fails to comply with the guidelines and procedures of this policy, or who does not properly maintain his vehicle, may be subject to the suspension or loss of assigned vehicle privileges at the discretion of the Chief Deputy. The use of any HCSO vehicle is a privilege extended to only those members who meet the qualifications and satisfactorily maintain compliance with all policy requirements. Any action taken by the Sheriff, or his designee, regarding vehicle use shall not be considered disciplinary in nature.
- L. Deputies operating HCSO vehicles outside of Howard County shall not engage in routine traffic enforcement.

- M. Deputies operating an HCSO vehicle outside of Howard County shall be observant to situations which require law enforcement intervention. Appropriate responses include stopping to assess the situation and rendering immediate assistance or summoning other services, as appropriate.
- N. The HCSO offers no guarantee of a replacement vehicle for any take-home vehicle that becomes unavailable due to mechanical service needs, accidents, re-assignment, or suspension.
- O. Overtime pay may be requested for that period of time, in excess of one (1) hour, to deputies who are required to work at an incident while in their take-home vehicle in an off-duty status.
- P. A pool vehicle will not be left with less than ½ of a tank of fuel.
- Q. Personnel using pool vehicles parked at the Sheriff's Office upper lot will complete the vehicle sign-out log, signing the vehicle in and out.

#### V. TAKE-HOME VEHICLES

- A. Take-home vehicles (THVs) are assigned to eligible deputies, in order to provide greater law enforcement visibility, increased citizen security, enhanced responsiveness to calls for service, and a more efficient law enforcement service to County residents.
- B. The Sheriff or Chief Deputy have the final approval for take home vehicle assignment. The vehicle assignments will be reviewed when deputies change duty assignments, change home address, or when determined by the Sheriff.
- C. THVs are limited to deputies who reside in Howard County or within **twenty (20) miles** of the County's border. The Sheriff or Chief Deputy may take into consideration the deputy's duty assignment and seniority when assigning THVs.
- D. The Sheriff or Chief Deputy may authorize the assignment of a HCSO vehicle to deputies residing out of County beyond the **twenty (20) mile limit** when it is in the best interest of the office.
- E. Sworn members who reside in Howard County are permitted to use their THV in an off-duty capacity within Howard County. All rules and policy requirements pertaining to vehicle use and operation will apply.
- F. Sworn members who reside outside of Howard County may only operate THVs:
  - 1. Commuting to and from work only, to include authorized overtime assignments;
  - 2. To an officially sanctioned HCSO training assignment;
  - 3. To report for Court appearances;
  - 4. To participate in Office sponsored events (i.e. Police Pace, Polar Plunge, Torch Run, etc.)
- G. Requests to use THVs outside the boundaries of Howard County (school, training seminars, etc.) will be approved by the deputy's commanding officer. Commanders will inform the Chief Deputy of approved requests.
- H. **Out of state deputies must park their vehicles in a Designated Vehicle Parking Area (DVPA).**

#### VI. AUTHORIZED & REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- A. All HCSO vehicles will be equipped with the following:
  - 1. Red/blue emergency lights
  - 2. Siren
  - 3. Police radio (or portable police radio)
  - 4. Spotlight (marked vehicles only)
  - 5. First aid kit

6. One (1) disposable blanket
  7. Functional spare tire, lug wrench and jack
  8. Safety flares
  9. Fire extinguisher – charged
  10. Prisoner Restraints (with the exception of Lieutenants and above):
    - a. Leg Iron
    - b. Waist Chain
    - c. Blue Box
    - d. Padlock
- B. All HCSO vehicles will be inspected by a Supervisor or his designee bi-monthly. This inspection will be conducted using HCSO 9020 Vehicle Inspection Form.
1. If the inspection leads to the discovery of operational deficiencies, the Supervisor, or his designee, will make note on the form #9020 and coordinate maintenance with the Fleet Coordinator. Repaired damage shall be noted on the following HCSO #9020 Vehicle Inspection Form.
  2. Vehicle inspections which indicate severe damage to any part of the vehicle require the completion of a *Howard County Loss/Damage Report* and a written *Incident Report (HCSO 9014)*, to be completed by the member and forwarded to the Supervisor and the Fleet Coordinator.
  3. If vehicle equipment is found to be missing, the supervisor or his designee will contact the Fleet Coordinator/Quartermaster to arrange for replacements.
- C. **MODIFICATIONS AND / OR ADDITIONS TO HCSO VEHICLES ARE PROHIBITED.**
- D. The HCSO assumes no responsibility for personal equipment or property that is lost or stolen while in a HCSO vehicle.

## VII. VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

- A. Preventative Maintenance
1. Central Fleet/SAP will notify the Fleet Coordinator when a Sheriff's vehicle is due for preventative maintenance (PM). Once this notification is received the Fleet Coordinator will submit three (3) potential dates to have the PM performed.
  2. Central Fleet will schedule the vehicle for one of the three (3) dates. It will generate an email to the deputy assigned to the vehicle, the Fleet Coordinator, and the back up fleet liaison, notifying them of the scheduled date. A second email will be sent three (3) days prior to the scheduled date as a reminder.
  3. If the assigned deputy, after receiving notification of the scheduled PM has additional maintenance for the vehicle, the deputy will immediately notify the Fleet Coordinator by email, detailing the needed repair/problem.
  4. The deputy should leave the vehicle at the maintenance shop no later than 0700 hours of the scheduled date. If the vehicle is dropped off after 0700 hours the deputy will contact the shop supervisor, making him aware the vehicle is available.
- B. Mechanical/Maintenance Repairs
1. When a deputy's assigned vehicle has mechanical or other issues that require repair, an email must be sent to the Fleet Coordinator detailing the vehicles problem. The Fleet Coordinator shall submit a work order to Central Fleet requesting the vehicle be scheduled for repair.

2. Central Fleet will generate an email to the deputy assigned to the vehicle, the Fleet Coordinator, and the backup fleet liaison, notifying them of the scheduled date. A second email will be sent three (3) days prior to the scheduled date as a reminder.
3. The deputy should leave the vehicle at the maintenance shop no later than 0700 hours of the scheduled date. If the vehicle is dropped off after 0700 hours, the deputy will contact the shop supervisor, making him aware the vehicle is available.
4. If a minor repair is required, such as a flat tire, windshield wiper, battery or headlight replacement, the deputy may respond to the maintenance shop during normal business hours and request a repair.
5. If a vehicle becomes disabled and cannot be driven to the maintenance shop, the deputy will notify his/her immediate supervisor. HCPD Communications will be contacted to have a tow truck respond to tow the vehicle to the shop.
  - a. During normal business hours, the deputy will notify the maintenance shop supervisor that the vehicle was towed to their location and will notify the Fleet Coordinator.
  - b. During non-business hours, the deputy will notify the Fleet Coordinator by email of the vehicle's mechanical problems and that it was towed to the maintenance shop. The deputy will send the notification before the end of his/her shift.
- C. Members are responsible for their assigned vehicle's cleanliness and equipment. This includes the interior and exterior of the vehicle, ensuring that all fluids are at their proper levels, and that the tire are properly inflated. (Form #9020 Vehicle Inspection Sheet).
- D. Members will obtain and replenish the required equipment (including first aid supplies, flares, fire extinguisher, etc.) that is essential to operational readiness. Members will secure replacement supplies from the Fleet Coordinator/Quartermaster.
- E. During inclement weather, snow and ice will be completely removed from all horizontal surfaces of the vehicle prior to the operation. Both headlights and taillights are to be free of snow and ice.
- F. All vehicles will be fueled using the issued gas cards. Lost or damaged cards should be replaced as soon as possible. In the event an issued gas card is lost or damaged, members will contact the Fleet Coordinator, who will authorize a replacement card.
- G. Vehicles that are being operated out-of-county on official duties will be fueled using the issued PDQ card, which must be approved in advance by a supervisor. Deputies will obtain fuel at a county dispensary whenever possible and prior to out-of-county extended travel that may necessitate a commercial fuel purchase.

#### **VIII. EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO CALLS FOR SERVICE**

A "lights and sirens" response is warranted when a quick response is necessary to prevent injury, render aid, or increase the likelihood of an apprehension. The following procedures apply to deputies responding in an emergency mode:

- A. Deputies are duty bound to operate their emergency vehicle with due care and with regard to pedestrians and other vehicles. An emergency response is justified in, but not limited to, the following felonies in progress:
  1. Homicide
  2. Rape in progress
  3. Robbery in progress
  4. Aggravated assault in progress

5. Breaking and entering in progress
  6. Arson in progress
  7. Suicide attempt in progress
  8. Felony suspect / fugitive, where there is a likelihood of apprehension
  9. Kidnapping in progress
  10. Domestic assault incident in progress
  11. Personal injury collision;
  12. Medical emergency assist call;
  13. Other calls indicative of an emergency response.
- B. If a deputy is first to arrive on the scene of a call involving an emergency response, he will advise Communications of whether or not a slower response will suffice or if additional units are not needed on the scene.
- C. Whenever a deputy with a civilian passenger (i.e., Ride-Along participant), is in the proximity of a serious or life-threatening call, the civilian passenger will be excused at a safe location prior to the deputy's arrival at the scene. The deputy will contact Communications to have another deputy pick up the civilian passenger.

**IX. VEHICLE OPERATION**

- A. **Deputies must carry their HCSO identification card, badge, and firearm when operating a HCSO vehicle.**
- B. Each vehicle will be inspected by the operator, prior to operation, for safety equipment, fluid levels, and damage. Any damage will be noted on a *Form 16 Memorandum* and on a *Howard County Loss/Damage Report* and both documents will be forwarded to the deputy's supervisor. The supervisor will forward copies of both completed forms to the Fleet Coordinator. Damage shall also be noted on their Monthly Inspection Form #9020. If the damage is indicative of a collision, the supervisor will direct or conduct an investigation.
- C. Each vehicle will be inspected for contraband, before and after a prisoner transport.
1. If contraband is recovered, the deputy will obtain an incident report number and will submit the contraband immediately.
  2. The recovering deputy will submit an incident report to his immediate supervisor.
  3. The deputy and supervisor will make all reasonable attempts to locate the source of the contraband and will take any and all action required, based upon that investigation.
- D. HCSO firearms to include rifles will be locked in assigned vehicle. Locked gun cases will be utilized when available.
- E. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL FIREARMS AND OTHER WEAPONS BE KEPT IN VEHICLES OVERNIGHT.**
- F. Prior to leaving a vehicle for service, MDTs (mobile data terminals) must be removed per *General Order OPS-12, MDT Procedures* and all firearms must be removed per *General Order OPS-02, Authorized Weapons*.
- G. All operators and their passengers will utilize seat belts and, if appropriate, safety seats, as required by Maryland State Law.
- H. **THE USE OF ANY TOBACCO PRODUCT IS PROHIBITED IN ALL HCSO VEHICLES.**
- I. CELLULAR DEVICE USAGE
1. Cellular device use while operating an HCSO vehicle (on or off duty) shall only be allowed utilizing a "hands free" option (i.e., speaker phone, headset, Bluetooth).

2. While operating a HCSO vehicle, cellular device conversations shall be kept to a short duration and shall **NOT** interfere with the safe operation of the vehicle or the ability to maintain attentiveness to duty.
  3. While engaged in a priority response or vehicle pursuit, members are prohibited from using cellular devices in any capacity.
  4. Text messaging and/or e-mailing while driving is **ALWAYS PROHIBITED**. This includes reading messages and checking messages at stop signs/lights.
  5. Members using cellular devices while operating an HCSO vehicle shall use good judgment and discretion, constantly keeping in mind deputy and public safety.
  6. Refer to *General Order ADM-11, Telephone Communications* for additional information on cellular device usage.
- J. Animals will not be transported in an HCSO vehicle except with supervisor approval. This does not apply to canine handlers.
- K. An HCSO vehicle will not be utilized to carry excessively large or heavy loads, or objects which protrude from the trunk or windows, except as required in the performance of official duties.
- L. Members and passengers will be appropriately attired when operating an HCSO vehicle, so as not to bring discredit upon the Office. Refer to *General Order ADM-06, Uniform & Grooming* for complete dress code rules and regulations. Family or friends shall not operate any HCSO vehicle.
- M. Members are prohibited from operating their assigned vehicle if they intend to engage or have engaged in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Alcoholic beverages will NOT be transported in HCSO vehicles, except in rare cases when transport is related to official duties.
- N. Deputies operating the prisoner transport vehicle will only utilize emergency equipment under the following circumstances:
1. In order to proceed through congested traffic while responding to an emergency call;
  2. Under no circumstances will the prisoner transport vehicle be operated above the posted speed limit;
  3. Under no circumstances will the prisoner transport vehicle be used to respond to an emergency situation if it is, at the time of the call, engaged in transporting a prisoner.
- O. Deputies shall routinely exercise fuel conservation measures, to include:
1. Carpooling;
  2. Utilizing fuel efficient vehicles when possible;
  3. Minimizing engine idling time;
  4. Maintaining proper tire inflation; AND
  5. Practicing patrol management/planning to decrease daily mileage.

**X. OFFICE COLLISIONS / DAMAGE TO VEHICLES**

- A. HCSO members are responsible for promptly reporting Office collisions or incidents resulting in damage to official vehicles to a supervisor.
- B. Upon receiving notification, the Supervisor will determine if an immediate response to the scene is required and will inform the involved deputy / civilian employee of the course of action based on the following policy:

1. Personal Injury
  - a. Sworn members involved in a personal injury collision will follow normal law enforcement protocol for collision reporting, assisting injured persons, implementing traffic control measures, and protection of the scene.
  - b. Civilian personnel will ensure that the collision is reported and will wait for local police to arrive.
  - c. A supervisor will be contacted and will determine the need to respond to the scene. An *Accident Report (ACRS)* will be completed for all collisions resulting in personal injury by the Howard County Police Department. If a supervisor responds to the scene, he/she will complete a HCSO Incident Report.
  - d. Collisions occurring outside the boundaries of Howard County will be investigated by the allied agency responsible for accident investigation in that jurisdiction.
  - e. The supervisor will notify the Division Commander and the Chief Deputy of all personal injury collisions.
  - f. The HCSO Supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that the following forms are completed and filed by the end of his/her shift (or, in the event that the collision occurs during non-business hours, no later than the end of the first business day after the collision):
    - 1) Howard County Property & Vehicle Damage Report Form (RM-2)
    - 2) Form 16 (*completed by both the Supervisor and the Deputy*)
    - 3) HCSO Incident Report
    - 4) ACRS (if applicable)
  - g. All available collision documentation will be forwarded to the Office of Risk Management and Fleet Coordinator within twenty-four (24) hours of the collision (excluding weekends and holidays).
  - h. The HCSO Supervisor will forward copies of all completed collision related forms and documentation to the Fleet Coordinator.
  - i. In the event that the *Accident Report* and investigation are completed by an allied agency, the HCSO Supervisor will complete an *Incident Report (HCSO 9014)*, documenting the details of the collision.
  - j. For HCSO reporting purposes, the allied agency *Accident Report* will serve as a supplemental report to the HCSO investigation report.
  - k. HCSO supervisors will ensure that photographs are taken, witness statements obtained and, in general, the details of the collision and any resulting injuries are adequately documented, including any auto insurance information that is exchanged.
  - l. In cases of serious or fatal injury, Office collisions will be investigated by an allied agency's advanced accident reconstruction / crash team.
2. Property Damage Collisions
  - a. Sworn members involved in a collision resulting in vehicle property damage will follow law enforcement protocol in reporting the collision, implementing traffic control measures, and protecting the scene if necessary.



- b. Civilian personnel will ensure that the collision is reported and will wait for either HCSO or police personnel to arrive at the scene.
  - c. A supervisor will be contacted and will determine the need to respond to the scene. An *Incident Report (HCSO 9014)* may be used to report minor property damage collisions not requiring an Accident Report.
  - d. Collisions occurring outside the boundaries of Howard County will be investigated by the allied agency responsible for accident investigation in that jurisdiction.
  - e. The HCSO Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the *Howard County Property & Vehicle Damage Report Form* is filed by the end of his / her shift.
  - f. In the event the collision occurs during non-business hours, the Supervisor will file the *Howard County Property & Vehicle Damage Report* no later than the end of the first business day after the collision.
  - g. HCSO supervisors will ensure that photographs are taken and, in general, that the details of the collision are adequately documented, including any auto insurance information that is exchanged.
3. Other Minor Collisions / Damage
- a. Minor property damage collisions (i.e., fixed object or deer collisions) do not require the response of a supervisor to the scene.
  - b. The HCSO Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that an *Incident Report (HCSO 9014)* is submitted, that photographs are taken, and that a *Howard County Property & Vehicle Damage Report* is filed no later than the end of the first business day after the collision.
  - c. Additionally, the Supervisor will ensure that the *Incident Report (HCSO 9014)* is forwarded to the Office of Risk Management within twenty-four (24) hours of the collision (excluding weekends and holidays).
  - d. The HCSO Supervisor will forward copies of all completed collision/damage related forms and documentation to the Fleet Coordinator.
4. Windshield / Window Glass Damage
- a. Damage sustained to an HCSO vehicle windshield or window glass by flying debris will be immediately reported to a supervisor.
  - b. The Supervisor will inspect and document the damage.
  - c. If the Supervisor determines that the damage impairs the vehicle's safe operation, the vehicle will not be drive until the damage is repaired.
  - d. The Supervisor will ensure that a *Howard County Property & Damage Report Form* is completed and promptly submitted to the Fleet Coordinator who will than submit the form to the Office of Risk Management.
- C. Supervisors will forward a copy of all paperwork (to include the *Property & Vehicle Damage Report Form, Form 16, ACRS, HCSO 9014 Incident Report* and photographs) to the Fleet Coordinator within twenty-four (24) hours of the collision or damage.
- D. The Fleet Coordinator is responsible for notifying Central Fleet/SAP and coordinating repairs with the Ridge Road Shop when a collision or vehicle damage occurs. The Fleet Coordinator will submit copies of all paperwork to Central Fleet/SAP.

- E. Supervisors will forward all completed paperwork and investigations thru the chain of command to the Chief Deputy.

**XI. VEHICLE INVENTORY REVIEW**

- A. The Fleet Coordinator will meet with Central Fleet on a periodic basis, and at least annually, to review the vehicle inventory roster and resolve any discrepancies that may arise.
- B. Any discrepancies shall be reported to the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.

**XII. CANCELLATION**

This General Order cancels and replaces *General Order ADM-08, Office Vehicle Policy*, dated December 8, 2011.

Authority:

  
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William J. McMahon  
Sheriff