

## Off Duty Department Vehicle Use

Supersedes: 08-14-06

Effective: 02-23-11

### POLICY

Boston EMS personnel may be authorized to use a Department vehicle while off-duty for the purposes of commuting to and from work, attending official functions (award ceremonies, funerals, court appearances, training classes, etc.), or as part of on-call responsibilities where a timely response to an incident is required. Department vehicles shall be protected against loss or damage. The employee shall accept full responsibility for fines incurred as a result of any driving, parking, or traffic violation. "Low profile" Department vehicles shall be marked with "Boston EMS" on the front fenders and have blue municipal license plates.

### PERSONNEL AUTHORIZED FOR OFF-DUTY DEPARTMENT VEHICLE USE:

1. Chief of Department
2. Medical Director
3. Superintendent in Chief
4. Superintendent
5. Communications System Engineer
6. On-Call Field Shift Commander

### TEMPORARY USE AUTHORIZATION

Personnel other than those listed above may receive temporary authorization to use a Department vehicle while off duty for the purposes of attending official functions (award ceremonies, funerals, court appearances, training classes), as part of on-call responsibly, or for other specifically identified need. Such temporary authorization must be approved in advance by the Chief of Department or Superintendent in Chief, and written notification will be made to Professional Standards indicating the person authorized to use a Department vehicle, vehicle number, and duration of the authorized period.

### REQUIRED EQUIPMENT FOR OFF DUTY OPERATION

When operating a department vehicle while off-duty, members must be appropriately attired and possess necessary identification and equipment commensurate with their training and certification. Department vehicles shall be equipped, at a minimum, with an oxygen resuscitator, AED or monitor / defibrillator, and a first aid kit / jump kit whenever operated by a Department EMT, Paramedic, or Physician.

### OFF-DUTY ACTIVITIES

When using a Department vehicle during off duty hours within radio range, the member shall at all times monitor the appropriate BEMS dispatch channel. The member shall

notify Dispatch Operations when responding to a medical emergency or stopping to assist at the scene of an incident.

Personnel are encouraged to stop at any incident which requires immediate attention such as vehicle crashes, stalled vehicles in a potentially dangerous location, or when being flagged down by citizens. Personnel should remember that public perception of Boston EMS employees is important and influenced by how and where the public sees Department vehicles being used. Department vehicles are not meant to replace personal vehicles, and drivers should not make incidental stops at locations the public would perceive as inappropriate.

During periods of off-duty operation of a Department vehicle, personnel shall wear conservative clothing, in good condition, suitable for members representing the Department. If not in uniform, personnel shall have in their possession an approved uniform jacket. The jacket should be worn for identification purposes whenever a member in civilian attire stops to perform EMS related activities while operating a Department vehicle.

#### VEHICLE RESPONSIBILITY / LOSS OF PRIVILEGES

Take home vehicle privileges may be terminated by the Chief of Department or designee upon violation of any of the provisions of this policy, the general department vehicle operation policy, or for any other reason as may be determined. Willful negligence on the part of the member in the care or operation of an assigned vehicle or failure to follow these policies will cause the vehicle to be taken away and take-home privileges suspended or permanently revoked. Appropriate disciplinary action for a policy violation may be taken in addition to the loss of the privilege of a take-home vehicle.

Members on disciplinary suspension for any reason shall automatically lose their take-home vehicle privileges during the period of the suspension. Department members out injured or on modified duty may have their take home privileges temporarily suspended.

All Department employees are required to operate vehicles in a safe and lawful manner in accordance with Massachusetts, or other applicable traffic laws. A valid Massachusetts Driver's license is required for anyone operating a Department vehicle. Occupants of Department vehicles shall wear seat and shoulder belts in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

The use of tobacco products or transport of alcohol in a Department vehicle is prohibited. Use of Department vehicles for personal gain, such as delivering goods or services, is prohibited.

#### VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

All Department vehicles, unless approved by the Fleet Services Division, are serviced and repaired at the Fleet Maintenance Division's maintenance facility on Shirley Street. In the case of an emergency of vehicle breakdown beyond the City limits Fleet

Maintenance may authorize other options. Drivers are responsible for the appearance, interior and exterior cleanliness, and general condition of the vehicle.

City of Boston fuel sites should be used whenever possible. Public self-service dispensers may be used when the City sites are not available. The most cost-effective vendor should be used.

#### ALTERATIONS OR MODIFICATIONS

Employees shall not alter, add or remove equipment in or out of any Boston EMS vehicle or affix any signs or political stickers without written permission from the Chief of Department or designee.

#### TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF MASSACHUSETTS

Except under unusual circumstances, Department vehicles may not be driven outside of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts without prior approval from the Chief of Department, Superintendent-in-Chief, or a Superintendent. Once authorized, the Commander of Support Services, Commander of Professional Standards, and the PHC Legal Counsel's office should be notified of the vehicle identification, destination, operator(s) and anticipated departure / return dates.

#### FRINGE BENEFIT

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules provide that in certain circumstances, the personal use of a take home vehicle includes commuting to and from work. Personal use is considered a fringe benefit by the IRS and must be included in the employee's wages and may be subject to income taxes. Employees should consult a tax specialist regarding the potential tax implications of a take home vehicle.

See Related SOP: Vehicle Operation