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Subject: DRIVING SAFETY: GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES

Purpose: These guidelines have been prepared to assist County department management and employees in being better informed about safety issues related to the operation of a vehicle on County business. These guidelines are general in nature and do not supersede any law, regulation or department policy. Department management may contact the Sheriff’s Crime Prevention Unit for training sessions on personal security that includes information for employees that drive vehicles on County business.

1. Communication: Departments are encouraged to monitor the work schedule and planned activities of employees that are out of the office on County business. It may be prudent to require a periodic check-in by the employee or to contact the employee via pager, radio, or cell phone to assure safety. This becomes especially important if the employee is working alone in a remote location or in areas considered a security risk.
   a) Do not always rely on a pager, radio or cellular phone. There are many areas of the county where these devices cannot get a signal. Obey all laws and department policies about cell phone use while driving.
   b) If it is an area where you know you do not get a cellular phone or radio signal, a reasonable practice would be to call in to your office or supervisor prior to going to the area, and then again after you have left the area and are able to get a signal.
   c) Inform your office of your travel/site visit, estimated time frame of the visit, and of how long you will be in the area and always give the address of the location(s) you are going to.
   d) If you are doing a home client visit, consider asking to use the telephone there to call in on arrival and again when leaving. This also lets the residents know someone in your office knows where you are. However, keep in mind there are many residences in the county where they do not have telephones or may incur a long distance charge – departments may consider issuing, or reimbursing for, a calling card to staff performing home visits.
   e) Before traveling, charge a cell phone fully with the a/c (120 volt) adaptor. Cellular phones should always be carried with a d/c adaptor; most d/c adaptors require 12-volt power from the vehicle battery. In the event the vehicle has a dead battery, the d/c adaptor will do you no good, as it will not be able to provide power from the vehicle electrical system. Refer to your cellular phone manual for details.
   f) If you are calling 9-1-1 from a pay phone or landline phone in an office or business, once your call is answered the address of where you called from is displayed on the dispatcher’s screen. However, this does not apply when calling 9-1-1 from a cellular phone. Cellular 9-1-1 calls are routed to the closest California Highway Patrol office. Therefore, it is very important if you are calling 9-1-1 from a cellular phone that you are able to give an exact location that includes the address, street and city/town you are in. Never hang up on a 9-1-1 dispatcher unless they instruct you to do so.
2. **Vehicle Supplies:** County vehicles are equipped with safety equipment according to the department service mission in accordance with instructions from department management. Generally, a non-emergency County vehicle will not carry a fire extinguisher, road flares, first-aid kit, flashlight or similar supplies. Departments that decide to provide such equipment must assure that the inventory is properly maintained and that staff is trained in the use and maintenance of the supplies. Staff should follow all training instructions and department directives about use and maintenance of materials supplied in vehicles.

3. **Driving Prepared – Some Precautions:**
   **General Driving:** Be sure your vehicle has enough gasoline and do an operational check of the vehicle for tire condition, vehicle damage, broken glass, door locks and brake action. It is prudent to consider carrying a cell phone for emergencies; small flashlight; some cash; list of important phone numbers; sunglasses; and assure the vehicle is up-to-date on its mechanical service requirements. Always carry your driver license and County identification.

   **Distance Travel and/or Remote Locations:** In addition to the general precautions, consider carrying: prescribed medications; snacks; drinking water; consider carrying a hat, a jacket, and sturdy shoes in case of encountering weather changes or the need to walk on rough terrain. A dashboard sunscreen that has a “PLEASE CALL POLICE” on one side of it may be a good accessory to carry.

   **Most Important:** Think ahead – discuss any safety issues or concerns with your safety representative or other management staff. Offer suggestions for improvement to your supervisor.

4. **Vehicle Fire Safety:** *If there is a vehicle fire, what should I do?*
   - Get yourself and all others out of and away from the vehicle. Be aware of traffic and pedestrian activity and warn them away from the vehicle.
   - If there is a fire extinguisher in the vehicle, take it with you as you exit the vehicle. Even if you cannot use the fire extinguisher, it may be useful to emergency responders that arrive on scene.
   - Never put yourself in danger using a fire extinguisher. Fire extinguishers must be appropriate for the type of fire. Only trained persons should try to control a fire. *Do not attempt to use a fire extinguisher unless you have been properly trained to do so.* If you use a fire extinguisher, follow the procedures given during your training and only do so from a safe distance and always have a means to get away.
   - After you are a safe distance from the vehicle, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency telephone number. Tell them the location of the fire and follow the instructions of the dispatcher.
   - Remain away from the vehicle: *do not attempt to get back into a burning vehicle to retrieve personal property.*
   - Do not open the hood or trunk if you suspect a fire under it. Air could rush in, enlarging the fire, leading to injury. The dangers of motor vehicle fires are often overlooked.
   - Each year, these fires kill over 600 people and injure thousands more. Toxic gases and other hazardous substances, and flying debris and explosion, combine to produce serious dangers in motor vehicle fires.
5. Parking your vehicle requires safety precautions:

- Put packages, supplies, briefcase, etc. in the trunk of the car, rather than in the front or back seat, so they are not easily visible to potential thieves when you leave the car.

- Also, remember to take the keys out of the car, and lock it. Most vehicle burglaries occur to unlocked vehicles, and many cars reported stolen are those with the keys left in the ignition.

- If it is daylight when you arrive to work but know you will be leaving work after sundown, it is important to think ahead and to park under a light.

- At night, park as closely as possible to your office or work location, and park in a well-lit open area. This makes it safer when returning to the car and more difficult for someone looking for an easy automobile to break into.

6. What to do in case of a vehicle breakdown:

Printed instructions are included in County vehicle glove boxes and departments may provide other specific instructions. There are several precautions you should take if you have car trouble while on the road. Some general recommendations are:

- If possible, steer to a safe well-lighted and well-traveled area.

- Put on emergency flashers and parking brakes. Call for help according to instructions.

- Raise the hood of the vehicle. Do not attempt mechanical repairs.

- You may have a make a decision on whether or not to stay inside your vehicle based on other factors surrounding your situation, i.e., if your vehicle is disabled on the side of a busy freeway/highway it may be dangerous for you to stay in the vehicle. We tend to drift toward an object seen by our eyes. Thus if another motorist veered toward your vehicle and hit it you could be seriously injured. However, if you take that same scenario and add the fact you are alone and it is after dark and you are in an isolated area, it would be much safer to stay inside your locked vehicle.

- If a pedestrian or motorist stops and offers to help, don’t get out of the car. Roll down the window slightly and ask the person to help by calling the police or tow service for you if you have not done so. However, it is not even necessary to roll down the window slightly. If you feel uncomfortable you can always talk through the glass—we are all capable of talking loud. (Note: be aware that power windows may roll all the way down without stopping in some cars when you press the window button)

- It is also important to not judge someone based on his or her appearance. Someone who is dressed nice may not seem threatening to you but remember that serial killer Ted Bundy used his manner of dress and his charm to get women to trust him. So the bottom line is to NOT get out of your vehicle or roll your window more than an inch or so.

- Do not attempt any type of mechanical repairs including changing a flat tire or putting water in an overheated radiator—this should be left to those qualified and trained to do so.

- If available, place a “Please call Police” sunshade placard in the window facing traffic.
7. Car-Jacking and Automobile Theft
Always keep doors locked unless you or others require access to the vehicle. Everyone is vulnerable to car-jacking. Car-jacking is the taking from you, by force, of your vehicle while you are in control of it. It can occur when entering, driving, or exiting your vehicle. The car-jacker usually targets unlocked vehicles with unsuspecting drivers. Here are some tips to help you prevent a car-jacking from happening to you. But remember, if you are confronted by a car-jacker and escape is not possible, give up the car. Don’t risk your life.

Key Sense: Always lock your car and pocket the keys. The thief knows all of your favorite hiding places and many more. Never put personal or vehicle identification on your key tag, and if parked by a valet, remove the car keys from the house/business keys.

Parking: The majority of vehicles stolen are from parking lots. Park in well-lighted lots and away from dense shrubbery or other objects that offer concealment. Parking near building entrances and in clear view of passing pedestrians is a good deterrent. If you need to leave the vehicle for a long period of time, a secured or patrolled lot is your best defense. Park with wheels sharply turned left or right at curbs, making it hard for the thief to tow it away. Never leave valuables, cameras, or purses in plain view inside vehicle; they are a target for burglars and thieves alike.

Entering The Vehicle: Depending on where you parked your vehicle, it may be dangerous to take the extra time to walk around your entire vehicle to check it, doing so could make you a possible target. If you are in a secluded lot it is best to walk up to your vehicle from behind it and at a slight angle. This allows you see underneath it and also to quickly scan the front and back seats. Pay particular attention to the floorboards. If you have tinted windows or an SUV or those vehicles with larger cargo areas, this will be harder to do at a quick glance.

8. Safety while driving – some basic reminders:
Always wear your seatbelt. It may very well save your life in an accident, and it is California law. Check that passengers and children/infants are secured in their seats – it is your responsibility to assure their safety. Keep informed of changes to child safety restraint laws in California.

• A cell phone is an important communication device. It becomes a safety issue if used while driving and causes distraction or used contrary to the law. Keep abreast of current laws that govern cell phone use while driving and obey all laws and department policies that govern cell phone use.

• Plan your route in advance, try to anticipate possible problem areas, and be aware of your surroundings at all times. Keep car in good repair and full of gas — avoid fueling at night or when alone.

• Do not daydream at stop lights, but scan the area for suspicious people. Leave room to maneuver between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. Do not open doors/windows to strangers.

• Keep purse/wallets out of view and never on the seat next to you. Avoid curb lanes where pedestrians are within reach of your vehicle. Keep your doors locked while driving.

• Be aware that criminals sometimes stage an accident or use other tactics including posing as a police officer to get you to stop and/or to get you out of your car. Dark, unfamiliar or isolated spots are not safe to stop and exit the vehicle for any reason. If at all possible, drive to a lighted safe place and use your cell phone to notify authorities for assistance.