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SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURES

Vehicle Operation

SOP 10-19

1. All drivers must possess a valid driver license appropriate for the class of vehicle being operated.
2. Supervisors shall verify that drivers are capable and qualified on each type of vehicle before allowing the vehicle to be operated unsupervised.
3. All drivers are subject to periodic driver record checks to ensure each driver continues to possess a valid driver license.
4. Drivers operating Motor Fleet Vehicles are required to review and adhere to Motor Fleet Management - Vehicle Guidance.
5. Smoking is prohibited in state-owned vehicles.
6. Drivers shall not consume or use alcohol, drugs or any other substance or medication that could impair their ability to safely operate a vehicle.
7. Drivers must observe all traffic laws and must report all traffic citations to their supervisor. This included citations that may cause suspension or loss of driving privileges.
8. Drivers shall perform a pre-operational check of their vehicle. Reference the vehicle's operator's manual as necessary for safe operation and maintenance of the vehicle.
9. No vehicle shall be operated in an unsafe condition.
10. Drivers and passengers are required to wear seat belts. The driver must ensure all passengers are wearing seat belts prior to operation of the vehicle.
11. The use of electronic devices must be kept to a minimum during vehicle operation. Drivers must comply with North Carolina General Statute 20-137.4a – Unlawful Use of Mobile Telephone for Text Messaging or Electronic Mail.
12. Loads shall be secure and shall not exceed manufacturer's specifications and/or the legal limits for the vehicle.
13. All loose items (laptops, tablets, papers, books, tools, radios, briefcases, fire extinguisher, trash, etc.) within the vehicle shall be secured so as not to contribute to an injury in the event of a crash.
14. Plan to minimize/eliminate the need for backing. Utilize a spotter when backing is required. If no spotter is available, operator must physically check behind the vehicle before backing using the GOAL (Get Out and Look) method before backing.
15. Choose safest location possible to park vehicles. Avoid parking in another vehicle's blind spot.
16. Driver must check for overhead power lines prior to working under or near power lines.
17. Keep all windows and mirrors clean.
18. Keep headlights, taillights, and license plate clean.
19. Remove key from unattended vehicles.
20. If vehicles are left running unattended to power warning lights or other tools/equipment, the driver must do the following for:
 - a. Manual Transmission Vehicles – Put vehicle in neutral, engage parking brake and place wheel chocks in front and back on the same tire.
 - b. Automatic Transmission Vehicles – Put vehicle in "Park" with the parking or emergency brake firmly engaged.

21. Vehicles shall be backed into parking spaces whenever practicable.
22. Drivers must keep vehicles clean with all trash removed daily.
23. Vehicles shall be maintained in accordance with manufacturer's specifications/recommendations. Modifications to the vehicle must have prior approval from the Equipment Unit.
24. Drive defensively, observe speed limits, and obey all traffic laws when operating vehicles.
25. Defensive Driving Tips:
 - Recognize potential hazards by scanning the road ahead and checking your rearview and side mirrors
 - Adjust your side mirrors to minimize blind spots.
 - Expect the Public to make mistakes
 - Avoid distractions such as cell phone use and other items which take your hands off the steering wheel, your eyes off the road, and your mind off of your driving.
 - Do not tailgate by allowing sufficient space between the vehicle in front of you to ensure enough stopping distance. Increase this distance for rain or snow.
 - Avoid conflict with Aggressive Drivers.
 - Remember that Tractor/Trailers have larger blind spots, require bigger turning radius, and require greater stopping distance.

Related SOP's	
General SOPs Chapter 10	