

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Safe and Responsible Driver Policy

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Policy 7.33 be approved as presented in Attachment 1 to Report HR 2024-05 entitled “Safe and Responsible Driver”, effective January 1, 2025.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to present the proposed Safe and Responsible Driver Policy (Attachment 1), which outlines the commitment Oxford County is making to enhance its current occupational health and safety program and to mitigate the risks and liabilities associated with poor driving and negative motor vehicle related events.
- Provides information and guidance to ensure Oxford County staff that drive and operate motor vehicles as part of their work duties understand and comply with defensive driving principles and all regulatory requirements.
- Implement and enhance existing procedures to monitor and manage unsafe driving habits.
- Minimizes the County’s liability and costs associated with motor vehicle related incidents and collisions.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Upon approval of this policy, Human Resources will ensure that staff is aware of the new policy through established communication mechanisms.

Financial Impact

The recommendation contained in this report has no immediate direct financial impact but should positively reduce costs associated with vehicle maintenance and repair, vehicle insurance and potential workers compensation claim costs in the long-term. The County currently budgets for defensive driving training for select operations/employees. With the implementation of this policy, the County will review ongoing training needs with the possibility of enhancing the current training provided to affected employees. Any budget implications for enhanced training will be proposed in future budget years.

Communications


The Strategic Communication and Engagement team will assist Human Resources in ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy. The Extended Management Team will also be provided additional instruction regarding complying with this policy. Oxford County Connections and regularly scheduled staff meetings will be utilized as the primary means of staff communication and education.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
Goal 1.4 – Connected people and places		Goal 3.3 – Attract, retain and engage staff Goal 3.4 – Financial sustainability

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

Motor vehicle incidents are one of the leading causes of workplace injuries/fatalities and unsafe driving practices are a primary cause. When workers drive as part of their work duties, employers have the same obligations to mitigate the hazard just like any other workplace hazard. Employees share in this responsibility and must be committed to driving and operating vehicles and equipment safely for the protection of themselves, their co-workers and the public.

In addition to being a significant workplace hazard, the majority of the County's fleet assets are commercial vehicles requiring the County to have a valid Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration (CVOR) certificate issued by the Province. Poor driving performance can directly impact the validity of the CVOR and could result in the loss or restrictions of the County's privileges to operate commercial motor vehicles which would be detrimental in its ability to deliver public services.

Poor driver performance and increased incidents also directly impacts the County's cost of insurance due to assessed higher risk for financial loss and potential insurance claims.

Comments

Workplace Safety and Defensive Driving

Being a safe and responsible driver requires a combination of knowledge, skill and attitude. Drivers must know the traffic laws and driving practices that make the roadways safe. Breaking these "rules of the road" is a major cause of motor vehicle accidents and can result in a driver being fined, having their drivers licence suspended or revoked. For the most serious traffic infractions, like dangerous driving or driving while impaired, can result in a criminal record and even jail time.

Simply complying with the laws though is not enough, drivers should do more than just obey the laws but care about the safety of other road users. Everyone is responsible for avoiding accidents, even when someone else does something wrong. Drivers can be found responsible if they could have done something to avoid it - this is known as defensive driving.

Defensive driving is the practice of anticipating hazardous situations and minimizing risk, despite adverse conditions or the mistakes of others, to avoid accidents whenever possible while operating a motor vehicle. Defensive drivers do everything reasonable within their skills and abilities to avoid an accident.

The goal of Oxford County's proposed Safe and Responsible Driver Policy is to educate employees and improve their commitment to safe driving practices, raise awareness of the common causes of collisions and to identify and manage poor driving performance with the intent of reducing motor vehicles accidents, injuries and liabilities. This policy focuses on two primary elements:

Speeding

Speeding is dangerous. The research is clear that speeding reduces a driver's reaction time, increases the risk of motor vehicle collisions while also increasing the severity of property damage, injuries and the risk of death when an accident does occur. According to the Ontario

Provincial Police (OPP), there were 404 road fatalities in 2023, a 14% increase from 2022. Of these fatalities, 94 were speeding-related which means approximately 1 in 4 Ontario road deaths were related to speeding. Managing the speed of County vehicle assets is therefore an important aspect of reducing negative outcomes related to unsafe driving habits.

Driver Accountability

Implementing the Driver Incident Accountability Procedure will provide guidance to all County operations in investigating driving events involving County fleet assets and/or property in a fair, equitable manner and to ensure consistent preventative/corrective actions. The completion of an incident preventability review determines if a motor vehicle event was preventable. By determining if the incident was preventable, drivers and equipment operators are held accountable for poor driving performance with a focus on improvement to prevent future incidents. Stressing preventability sets a higher standard for safety and one that acknowledges that preventing driving incidents is a shared responsibility. Drivers and equipment operators are expected to drive defensively and do everything reasonable in the circumstances to avoid motor vehicle accidents.

Safe and Responsible Driver Policy

The proposed policy outlined in Attachment 1 demonstrates the County's continued commitment as an employer to enhance its occupational health and safety program and to ensure staff and the public are safe on Oxford County roads. The primary objectives of the Safe and Responsible Driver Policy are:

- Raising employee awareness of driving related hazards and the defensive driving techniques that should be employed to avoid them.
- Reducing speeding related driving incidents of County fleet asset users by formalizing the monitoring and corrective action measures taken when speeding occurs.
- Create and facilitate a Vehicle and Equipment Incident Review Committee that will complete vehicle and equipment incident preventability reviews of fleet asset driving incidents to ensure a fair and consistent driver accountability procedure. The incident preventability procedure shall ensure vehicle operators are held accountable for poor driving performance while striving for a higher standard of driving safety.
- Minimizing the County's liability and costs associated with motor vehicle related incidents and collisions.

CONCLUSIONS

Oxford County recognizes the importance of having a comprehensive occupational health and safety program. The inclusion of a specific policy with procedures to address issues related to employee speeding and negative driving related incidents is critical to minimize workplace safety risks, the associated liabilities and financial implications.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

Original signed by:

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Departmental Approval:

Original signed by:

Amy Smith
Director of Human Resources

Approved for submission:

Original signed by:

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ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 Safe and Responsible Driver Policy 7.33, November 27, 2024
- Attachment 2 Safe Driving Commitment Form 7.33A, November 27, 2024
- Attachment 3 Vehicle Equipment Incident Review Form 7.33B, November 27, 2024