

Motor Vehicle Driving Policy - Frequently Asked Questions

The intent of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) listing is to clarify questions related to the revised Servicewide driving policy. The intent of the policy is to establish a limit on the amount of time an employee can operate a vehicle during official travel. If the employee is not on official travel, the policy does not apply. If the person(s) is not an NPS employee, and is not driving a Government-furnished or Government-owned vehicle, e.g., contractors or other federal or private-sector employees, the policy does not apply.

This document will not address all situations, so please continue to forward questions to WASO Office of Risk Management as necessary: risk_management@nps.gov.

1. Q: What is considered a “duty day” according to this policy?

A: A “duty day” is the number of hours you are scheduled to work in a particular day as agreed upon by you and your supervisor.

2. Q: Does the policy restrict operations such as snow plowing, law enforcement, or other operational driving activities occurring on duty, but not on official travel?

A: No, the policy does not pertain to day-to-day operational activities. The definition of official travel is: Travel under an official travel authorization from an employee’s official station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency. Activities occurring outside of this definition are not covered by the travel policy. However, the concepts of Operational Leadership should be applied to all operational activities that pose a hazard to employees and controls implemented to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

3. Q: My employee works an alternate work schedule of four 10 hour shifts per week and drives more than two hours to home and work each day. Is this in opposition to the 10-hour driving policy?

A: No, the policy only addresses driving while on official travel. Normal commuting to and from work is not official travel and is not addressed by this policy.

4. Q: In situations where an employee is unable to complete his/her travel within the authorized number of travel days due to a reason beyond his/her control (e.g. inclement weather or restrictions by Government officials), due to a physical handicap or special needs, or other acceptable reasons, may he/she be authorized and reimbursed for an overnight stay?

A: Yes, the DOI/NPS policy states the minimum official travel distance needed to receive reimbursement is 350 miles per day, when an employee is on official travel. However, if the employee determines based on conditions stated above that he/she needs to stay overnight and rest before that 350 miles, the employee is permitted to get a hotel room and seek reimbursement. These situations must be documented on the travel voucher and approved by the employee’s approving official per Federal Travel Regulations, Part 302-4.201-202 and 400-403. Allowances for subsistence and travel apply to both relocation travel and official travel.

5. Q: In order for a park employee to reach a training destination while on official travel, the employee must drive for 12 hours. Would this length of travel violate the policy?
- A: Yes, official travel beyond 10 hours would violate the travel policy. NPS determined 10 hours driving time.
6. Q: If I travel 10 hours by car and arrive to my work destination, am I restricted to working only 2 more hours according to this policy?
- A: No, this policy is concerned about the numbers of hours worked before embarking on travel. After reaching the 10-hour driving limit, the additional amount of time an employee works is an issue concerning an employee and supervisor.
7. Q: If an employee is traveling by common carrier (e.g. air, rail, bus) and is delayed should he/she count the delay time with the flight time to calculate how much more driving he/she will be eligible for?
- A: When calculating total common carrier time, an employee should include time to travel to airport, flight time, wait time at airport, and such factors as the time to collect baggage, and time to rent a car to then determine how many more hours of driving time is allowable to not exceed the 12-hour time limit. However, an employee may exceed the 12-hour limit to drive to local area accommodations.
8. Q: If an employee deems it necessary to exceed the 10-hour driving rule and/or 12-hour time limit for reasons related to the employee's health or safety, but his/her supervisor is off-site or not immediately available, how should this decision be made and officially documented?
- A: In most situations, any exceptions to the 10-hour driving rule will be made prior to an employee engaging in travel and will include a discussion with a supervisor and employee regarding risks associated with this decision. However, in situations where an employee's health or safety is at risk, the employee should make every attempt to contact a supervisor but in failing to do so, make a decision and seek approval as soon as practical.
9. Q: If I have to drive 2 hours from home to get to work to pick up a government vehicle before embarking on official travel, does the 2 hour commute count against the 10-hour driving restriction?
- A: No, this policy only addresses employees' driving time while on official travel. However, supervisors and employees should be aware of employees' long commute times as well as other off duty circumstances that contribute to fatigue when making decisions about the employees' driving time while on official travel.
10. Q: If I plan to drive cross-country for 10 hours, do the breaks I take during this time count against the 10-hour restriction?
- A: No, breaks for resting, stopping for gas, or eating for example, do not count against this 10-hour limit, however these breaks (like working) do count against the 12 hour work limit.