

**FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: John J. Adair, Auditor to the Board  
Office of Financial and Programs Auditor

DATE: June 19, 2009

SUBJECT: Quarterly Status Report on Operations

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This quarter we began a County-wide review of take home vehicles in 16 agencies. During Fiscal Year 2009, about 522 County vehicles were being taken home daily.

We found that eight County agencies will eliminate a total of 30 take home vehicles for Fiscal Year 2010.

- The Police Department will be eliminating seven take home vehicles;
- The Fire and Rescue Department will eliminate six take home vehicles;
- The Sheriff's Office eliminated one take home vehicle;
- The Facilities Management Department will eliminate nine vehicles being taken home nightly for emergency repair and maintenance call backs;
- The Department of Housing and Community Development will reduce its take home vehicles by three;
- The Department of Public Safety Communications will eliminate two of its three take home vehicles;
- The Wastewater Collection Division of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services will eliminate one take home vehicle; and
- The Office of Emergency Management will eliminate its only take home vehicle.

Reducing the number of take home vehicles by 30, and the reduction of overtime and other costs associated with those vehicles, should result in savings of \$700,000, or more, which would satisfy the take home vehicle cost reductions required by the Board of Supervisors in the Fiscal Year 2010 County budget.

## **REVIEW OF TAKE HOME VEHICLES**

During this quarter, at the request of the Board of Supervisors, we began a County-wide review of take home vehicles. The request was made after questions were raised by the media regarding vehicles taken home by the Fire and Rescue Department.

We are reviewing the 16 Departments and agencies that have take home vehicles to determine the justifications for taking them home. We also are documenting actions being taken by agencies to reduce the number, and associated costs, of vehicles being taken home.

## **OVERVIEW OF AGENCIES WITH TAKE HOME VEHICLES**

The County's Procedural Memorandum 10-01 sets forth the criteria for requesting take home vehicles. Each year, in accordance with Memorandum 10-01, County agencies provide justification and request approval from the County Executive for their take home vehicles. During Fiscal Year 2009, there were about 522 vehicles taken home nightly.

About 90% of these take home vehicles are taken home by employees in public safety agencies, specifically the Police Department, the Fire and Rescue Department and the Sheriff's Office.

As part of the County's Fiscal Year 2010 budget deliberations, both the Police Department, and the Fire and Rescue Department and other agency budgets for take home vehicles, were reduced by \$100,000.

In addition, the Facilities Management Department's Fiscal Year 2010 budget was reduced by \$500,000 by eliminating its nine take home vehicles and the overtime associated with call backs for emergency repairs and maintenance using those vehicles.

Although our review is not completed, thus far we have learned that there should be at least 30 fewer take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2010, and there may be a reduction of more than \$700,000 due to actions that agencies said will be taken involving take home vehicles and related costs.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY TAKE HOME VEHICLES**

For Fiscal Year 2010, both the Police Department and Fire and Rescue Department are taking steps to reduce the number of take home vehicles. The Sheriff's Office also has made a reduction. The use of take home vehicles, and actions taken by the public safety agencies, are discussed below.

## **Police Department**

Police Department officials outlined measures they will be taking to reduce the cost of their take home vehicle program for Fiscal Year 2010.

Police Department staff said that in June 2008 the Department established their implementing policy for the County's Procedural Memorandum 10-01 pertaining to authorized take home vehicles. They said the Police Chief currently has authorized 403 positions as requiring take home vehicles.

The Police Department's policy contains the following categories of take home vehicles:

**On-Call Vehicle** – Any vehicle authorized by the Chief of Police to personnel based upon the criticality of their duty assignment and highly specialized skills and who are designated and compensated in accordance with County policy for being “On-Call” during a specified period or on a rotating basis. Personnel assigned to On-Call status understand that they are the first responder associated with their highly specialized skill or position, and are expected to be en route to a callback assignment within 30 minutes of notification.

**Constant Stand By Vehicle** – Any vehicle authorized by the Chief of Police to personnel based upon their duty assignment and highly specialized skills. Given the limited number of personnel in highly specialized assignments, the Department relies upon a pool of critical personnel to augment on-call staff when needed to meet routine and emergency service demands.

Under this category, authorized commanders are also provided vehicles because of the nature of their assignment and their designated responsibility for critical incident management and response. The Constant Stand By Vehicle category provides sufficient resources required by the Department to effectively respond to service demands.

**Special Exemption Vehicle** – Any vehicle specifically authorized by the Chief of Police to personnel who are designated because of the unique nature of their assignment and/or the purpose and design of the vehicle. Examples include undercover detectives and supervisors, K-9 officers and supervisors who need to transport dogs.

Personnel assigned vehicles under these three classifications may periodically shift between these categories.

As of June 2009, the 403 total vehicles in the three categories consisted of 110 On-Call vehicles, 233 Constant Standby vehicles, and 60 Special Exemption vehicles.

Police Department officials said that for Fiscal Year 2010, they have identified seven positions that are no longer, or will no longer be, considered positions requiring a status

of constant stand by and therefore no longer will be provided with take home vehicles. This will bring the number of take home vehicles to 396.

In addition, they said that at least three positions that required constant standby vehicles will no longer require vehicles at all as part of their job function. They said that those vehicles would be turned in to the Department of Vehicle Services.

Police Department officials also mentioned that the Department had begun replacing its detective and command vehicles, which are part of their non-patrol fleet, with cars that are more economical in terms of fuel costs, and lower in base level price when compared with the Ford Crown Victorias which had been the standard police vehicle for quite some time.

They said they have downsized 48 of 60 command level vehicles with Chevrolet Impalas, Toyota Priuses or Ford Fusions with base prices that are about \$4,500, \$3,500 and \$7,500 lower than the Ford Crown Victorias they replaced. These vehicles also will have lower fuel costs than the Crown Victorias.

The Police Department plans to replace an additional 39 Crown Victorias (12 command and 27 detective vehicles) in the future which would provide additional base level price and fuel savings.

The Police officials calculated that these actions would result in a cost reduction of more than \$100,000 in Fiscal Year 2010.

### **Fire and Rescue Department**

Fire and Rescue staff said that they review take home vehicles periodically, and during Fiscal Year 2009 had stopped allowing 12 fire and hazardous materials investigators to take their vehicles home. They also reduced the number of on-call fire prevention personnel by two positions, which reduced the cost of on-call pay by two positions.

After questions were raised in the media regarding its take home vehicles, Fire and Rescue Department staff took additional actions with regard to their take home vehicle program.

Fire and Rescue Department personnel are updating their implementing policy for take home vehicles, including the addition of a new mileage restriction on take home vehicles to 30 miles outside the County. Also, the form used for reporting call backs of staff using take home vehicles has been revised to ensure their use is documented more accurately.

The new Fire and Rescue Department policy for implementing County Procedural Memorandum 10-01 will add special exemption vehicles to the previously used categories of constant call out and on-call vehicles, as follows:

**Constant Call Out Vehicles** – will be taken home by personnel who have specific emergency call-out supervisory responsibilities. These personnel are on constant call-out twenty four hours per day, seven days a week. Take home vehicles are necessary to maintain an operational level of staff and ensure that senior command and critical staff is available to respond to emergency fire and rescue incidents on a twenty-four hour basis.

**On-Call Vehicles** – will be taken home on a rotating basis but only when employees are on call. While on-call, staff will carry pagers and cell phones and are called into work on an as needed basis. On-call schedules vary by division, based on weather, expected increase in call volume, special events and other contributing factors. When taking vehicles home, these personnel are on-call twenty-four hours per day. This enables the Department to maintain an operational level of technically competent staff available to respond to emergency fire and rescue incidents on a twenty-four hour basis.

**Special Exemption Vehicles** – are assigned to staff subject to call out based on their assigned functions. These individuals are utilized on an as needed basis to handle issues related to their specialties. For example, the fire investigator assigned on accelerant detection canine, an investigator assigned as liaison to the national capitol intelligence center, or the operational medical director may be subject to an immediate recall to duty. Allowing employees to take these vehicles home allows the Department to maintain a surge capacity of technically competent staff available to respond during increased call volume periods.

Department officials said they will reduce the number of take home vehicles by six for Fiscal Year 2010. In Fiscal Year 2009, the Fire and Rescue Department had 42 take home vehicles. In essence:

- Thirty-two of the vehicles were considered Constant Call Out vehicles,
- Six vehicles were On-Call vehicles, rotated among “Duty” staff on a rotating basis for Apparatus, Communications, Logistics, Mechanic, Prevention, and by a Public Information Officer.
- Four vehicles were considered Special Exemption vehicles and were taken home by the internal affairs investigator, medical doctor, Fire accelerant K-9 handler, and counter terrorism officer.

For Fiscal Year 2010, after reviewing the list of people taking home vehicles, the Fire and Rescue Department eliminated six positions that had been on its Constant Call Out list. Eliminated were vehicles for two EMS battalion chiefs, two captains from the training division, the safety battalion chief and the EEO officer.

As a result, there will be 36 take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2010 – 26 constant call out vehicles, 6 on-call vehicles, and 4 special exemption vehicles.

Fire and Rescue Department staff also are taking other steps to reduce vehicle costs. Staff said that the counter terrorism officer had been driving a leased vehicle, which will be turned in and replaced with a vehicle from the County.

Two other leased vehicles also will be turned in. One will be replaced from the County pool; the other will not. In essence, three leased vehicles will be eliminated, and the total number of vehicles in the Fire and Rescue Department fleet will be reduced by one vehicle.

Through these actions -- the reduction of six take home vehicles, the elimination of three leased vehicles, the turning in of one vehicle from its fleet, and other actions to be undertaken -- the Fire and Rescue Department will reduce take home vehicle and related costs in Fiscal Year 2010.

### **Sheriff's Office**

The Sheriff's Office had 35 take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2009, and requested approval for 34 take home vehicles for Fiscal Year 2010, a reduction of 1 vehicle.

The Sheriff's request for Fiscal Year 2010 includes 10 vehicles for command staff, internal affairs, Emergency Preparedness Response Unit, and Communications as well as 24 vehicles for civil enforcement deputy sheriffs and supervisors who serve subpoenas while going to and from work and on nights and weekends.

The Sheriff's office said it eliminated one take home vehicle as the result of a decision not to back fill a Civil Enforcement position that has been vacant due to the assigned deputy being on extended military leave.

### **OTHER AGENCIES WITH TAKE HOME VEHICLES**

Thirteen agencies, other than those dealing with public safety, have take home vehicles. Five of them reduced their take home vehicles by a total of 16 vehicles. The reductions came primarily from the Facilities Management Department (9) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (3). The other four reductions came from the Department of Public Safety Communications (2), the Wastewater Collection Division of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) (1) and the Office of Emergency Management, (1) as discussed below.

### **Facilities Management Department**

The Facilities Management Department, among other things, is responsible for responding to all service requests, on a 24 hour a day basis, for emergency service required in County buildings. In Fiscal Year 2009, for such after hours emergencies, the Department has had 51 vehicles equipped for response, of which, 9 were taken home on a

rotating basis each night. The take home vehicles are equipped to respond to specific emergencies in plumbing, heating and air conditioning, alarms, carpentry, etc. at the County's Government Center, Public Safety Complex, fire and police stations, and other facilities.

However, for Fiscal Year 2010, the Facilities Management Department, as one of its Lines of Business reductions to reduce its budget by 15%, suggested that \$500,000 could be saved in overtime and other costs by eliminating after hours emergency repairs. The majority of the savings would be from eliminating overtime associated with the after hours repairs, but there also would be savings from no longer having nine vehicles taken home each night.

This Lines of Business suggestion was accepted by the Board, and the Department of Management and Budget included a \$500,000 reduction for the elimination of take home vehicles and overtime for emergency repairs in the Facilities Management Department's Fiscal Year 2010 budget. As a result, the Facilities Management Department has advised the Division of Vehicle Services that it will have no take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2010, a reduction of nine vehicles.

#### **Department of Housing and Community Development**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) had 8 take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2009. All of these vehicles were taken home to allow for after hours maintenance and repair of more than 3,000 residential units located on 55 properties throughout the County.

DHCD officials service these units on a 24/7 basis. The officials said there had been more than 1,900 call outs for after hours emergency repairs in Fiscal Year 2009.

DHCD staff said that in Fiscal Year 2009, it had 16 vehicles that it rotated in its take home vehicle program. On any given night, eight of the vehicles would be taken home.

After we met with the DHCD officials, they conducted a review, as they do periodically, of take home vehicles and determined that for Fiscal Year 2010 there would be a reduction of 3 vehicles -- from 8 to 5 -- that are taken home each night. They said that 3 of their 16 vehicles would be taken home consistently, and 2 other vehicles used by employees assigned to be on call would also be taken home each evening from the remaining 13 vehicles for a total of 5 taken home each night.

#### **Department of Public Safety Communications**

The Department of Public Safety Communications is the agency responsible for answering 9-1-1 emergency calls in Fairfax County and dispatching Police and Fire and Rescue units. The Department had 3 take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2009. The

Director's is used for oversight of emergency incidents and for response to the 9-1-1 Center in the event of a facility or system failure, and for representing the County at 9-1-1 industry functions.

After discussions between the Department Director and the Deputy County Executive, they determined that two of the three take home vehicles would not be taken home in Fiscal Year 2010.

### **Department of Public Works And Environmental Services**

The DPWES had five divisions with 16 take home vehicles during Fiscal Year 2009. In Fiscal Year 2010, the number of take home vehicles will be reduced by 1, to 15. The five agencies are discussed below.

#### **Wastewater Collection Division**

The Wastewater Collection Division of DPWES had 8 take home vehicles in Fiscal Year 2009, but requested only 7 take home vehicles in Fiscal year 2010. This was the only DPWES agency to have a reduction in take home vehicles.

The Wastewater Collection take home vehicles are used when responding to citizens' trouble calls pertaining to sanitary sewer backups, pump station failures, and Miss Utility calls for sewer line connections.

The take home vehicles that respond to trouble calls from pumping stations are equipped with mechanical, electrical and electronics testing instruments, and mechanical and electrical repair tools. There are 65 pumping stations located throughout the County.

The vehicles used to respond to sewer backups and to mark sewer lines as mandated by the Underground Utilities Damage Prevention Act are equipped with traffic barrels and flasher lights, traffic cones and flags and various other tools to gain access to the sanitary sewer system.

#### **Maintenance and Stormwater Management Division**

The Maintenance and Stormwater Management Division has three take home vehicles operated by employees who support the DPWES citizen complaint response program and snow removal operations at designated County facilities. In addition they have been assigned first responder duties associated with the County's Emergency Operations Plan for flood response which requires onsite response when predetermined rainfall thresholds are met. The take home vehicles are used by supervisors responding to these emergency incidents.

### **Division of Solid Waste Disposal and Resource Recovery**

The Division of Solid Waste Disposal and Resource Recovery has two take home vehicles. Staff indicated that one is on call on a 24 hour emergency basis for all aspects of the I-66 Transfer Station Complex operations, seven days a week. During inclement weather, this vehicle is responsible for snow removal operations support at the Government Center site and the Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center.

The second vehicle also is on call on a 24 hour emergency basis for all aspects of the I-95 Landfill Complex operations, including the operation of the waste-to-energy plant and the landfill gas-to-energy operations.

Both vehicles are also used in support of emergency management responsibilities during and in the aftermath of emergencies to coordinate debris clearing and management operations.

### **Division of Solid Waste Collection and Recycling**

The Division of Solid Waste Collection and Recycling has two take home vehicles. Staff indicated that one vehicle is on call on a 24 hour emergency basis for all aspects of the Solid Waste field operations. The other vehicle is responsible for responses to refuse collection issues seven days a week, and is involved with environmental cleanups from hydraulic spills.

In addition, during inclement weather, snow or thunderstorm damage, these vehicles are used to check routes for safety prior to dispatching other large collection vehicles on routes. Each vehicle is equipped with tools, emergency lighting, and two way communication via the County radio system

### **Wastewater Treatment Division**

The Wastewater Treatment Division has one take home vehicle. Staff indicated that it is used for emergency management responsibilities during and after plant emergencies (due to power outages, flooding, hazardous chemical spills, wastewater overflows and other plant equipment and process related emergencies) to coordinate treatment plant operations. The vehicle is also used for inspections for odor level assessments, process control coordination and citizen complaints.

### **Office of Emergency Management**

The Office of Emergency Management had one vehicle used for response to the Emergency Operations Center and Incident Scene locations throughout Fairfax County.

After discussions between Office of Emergency Management staff and the Deputy County Executive, they determined that this vehicle would not be taken home in Fiscal Year 2010.

### **Additional Agencies**

Of the remaining County agencies with take home vehicles:

- The Department of Family Services had 2 take home vehicles that staff said were used to provide mandated services to abused and neglected children and adults on an emergency basis, 24 hours a day. The vehicles were also used to provide emergency services to children in Foster Care. Staff said that the vehicles were used for about 1,000 call outs in Fiscal Year 2009.
- The Department of Planning and Zoning had 1 take home vehicle used by the staff of the Zoning Enforcement Branch for enforcement of the County Property Maintenance Code. Staff said that incidents often need immediate attention of a property maintenance official in order to secure structures that are either unsafe or not fit for human habitation. The vehicle is shared by four individuals on a rotating basis to respond to any after hours emergency. Staff said that use of this vehicle expedites the required services for situations such as hoarding, building collapse, fire and flood damages to property.
- The County Attorney and the Park Authority's Director each have a vehicle. These vehicles are a part of the compensation packages of the two individuals. The County Attorney's vehicle was approved by the Board of Supervisors, and the Director of the Park Authority's vehicle was approved by the Park Authority Board.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The County has a take home vehicle Procedural Memorandum that governs how take home vehicles are requested and approved.

Of the 16 agencies with take home vehicles, eight agencies are planning to reduce their take home vehicle numbers by a total of 30 vehicles, a nearly 6% reduction, in Fiscal Year 2010.

Reducing the number of take home vehicles by 30, and the reduction of overtime and other costs associated with those vehicles, should result in savings of \$700,000, or more, which would satisfy the take home vehicle cost reductions required by the Board of Supervisors in the Fiscal Year 2010 County budget.

We will continue our review of take home vehicles during the next quarter.