



COUNTY OF LEHIGH
OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

LEHIGH COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
17 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET
ALLENTOWN, PA 18101-2400
(610) 782-3082 FAX: (610) 820-3335

TO: Final Report Distribution
FROM: Thomas Slonaker, County Controller
DATE: February 27, 2009
RE: Sheriff Compliance to Vehicle Policy

The controller's office has completed an audit of compliance to the county vehicle policy for the period July 2007 to June 2008. Our audit report number 09-10 is attached.

Attachment

AUDITS/SHERIFF COMPLIANCE TO VEHICLE POLICY



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January 16, 2009

Ronald W. Rossi, Sheriff
Sheriff's Office
Lehigh County Courthouse
455 Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18101-1614

We have recently completed an audit of compliance to the county vehicle policy. A separate report has been issued addressing the specific questions raised. During the audit, two management issues were noted that require your corrective action.

Daily Detail Recordkeeping

Condition: The vehicle reports prepared by the Sheriff lack any description of the business use of the vehicle. The Sheriff notes "Official Business" rather than a daily log. Daily travel logs are necessary to provide adequate documentation as to business use.

Recommendations: The Sheriff should keep a daily detail log for mileage and destination(s) using the county form "Monthly Vehicle Report". Daily beginning and ending odometer readings, specific trip descriptions, including commuting mileage, should be clearly recorded by the Sheriff. If others use the vehicle for Sheriff Office duties, the operator should be indicated.

EZPASS Traffic Violations

Condition: Vehicles assigned to the Sheriff Office have received five traffic violations in 2007 and 2008 for failure to display the EZPASS transponder when passing through a toll plaza. None of the violations were attributable to the Sheriff's assigned vehicle. These fines were paid by Lehigh County against vehicle policy regulation. The vehicle policy states, "Employees shall be responsible for all traffic violations including parking tickets."

Recommendation: Cease the practice of paying for employee traffic violations. Reconsider the need for EZPASS on Sheriff Office vehicles. The transponders are portable and can be subject to misuse.

This report is intended for the information and use of the Lehigh County Board of Commissioners and other affected county offices. However this report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited.

We wish to thank the Sheriff for his complete cooperation.


Thomas Slonaker
County Controller

February 27, 2009
Allentown, Pennsylvania

xc: Board of Commissioners
Donald T. Cunningham, Jr., County Executive
Brian L. Kahler, Fiscal Officer
Thomas S. Muller, Director of Administration



RONALD W. ROSSI
SHERIFF

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County of Lehigh

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Lehigh County Controller's Office
 Government Center, Allentown, Pa.

02/27/09

Dear Mr. FALK,

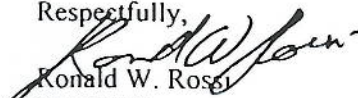
This correspondence is being prepared as a result of the an audit relative to my use of a Sheriff's Office fleet vehicle. There were a few issues that were brought up as a result of this audit.

Rather than waste any more time regarding my use of a Sheriff's Office vehicle during off duty hours, I will continue to use the vehicle during duty hours for duty related trips and document the use of this vehicle with daily starting and ending mileage and notes on what the vehicle is used for and by whom. Also, the vehicle has been marked with official county emblems.

The audit raised an issue of the use of EZ Pass and EZ violations that have occurred over the last two years. May I first state that I have never used EZ Pass while in this vehicle. As far as the five EZ violations that have occurred during 2007 and 2008 not all violations that were forwarded to our office were attributed to our vehicles. One specifically was returned as a non Sheriff's Office vehicle. Five violations over 2 years, while still being a violation, seems an extremely small number when you think of the fact that we average approximately 100 trips per month with prisoners which relates to in excess of 2400 trips over 2 years. I believe that is an extremely low number of violations. I would also add that the violations are questionable because we have and use the transponders and if for an unknown reason it doesn't register or is low on funds it is still counted as a violation but should not be. If all our vehicles are registered with the PA Turnpike Commission and it is shown that a vehicle on this list is in violation, the Turnpike Commission will simply charge that account and dismiss the violation.

EZ Pass transponders are moved from vehicle to vehicle due to the limited number available. A request for additional units had previously been made. This would have allowed them to be secured to each vehicle but the request was turned down due to not having the usage to justify more Transponders. We are therefore required to move them between vehicles. EZ Pass while not being a necessity is a time saver and a safety issue by not having to sit in toll lines with prisoners in the back seat. Not having to stop to pay a toll is much safer when transporting the different types of prisoners such as murderers and drug dealers we transport all over the state. In my opinion EZ Pass usage should be continued and additional transponders should be acquired and fixed into each vehicle.

Respectfully,


 Ronald W. Rossi
 SHERIFF