

Vehicle Use and Field Trip Policies

Department of Biological Science

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Introduction

A field trip includes any of the following activities:

- supervised class activities off-campus (including course field trips but also faculty-supervised travel to meetings for students not presenting a paper or poster)
- student data collection for faculty-mentored research projects, i.e., BIOL499L/599
- student travel to scientific meetings or conferences to present research results (faculty supervisor should be included as a co-author on papers and posters)

The Department of Biological Science owns and maintains several vehicles for use by faculty, staff, and students. These vehicles are primarily available to support teaching-related objectives, but they may also be used for faculty-mentored research. This policy document establishes the rules and regulations concerning use of Department of Biological Science vehicles and provides reference and contact information for use of other state- or privately owned vehicles.

Note that, for some courses, a field trip may begin at a site off campus. In these cases, students are expected to arrange their own travel to and from the site, and to arrive at the arranged start time. Departmental vehicles may not necessarily be used in these situations.

Information and Resources

If you plan to use a vehicle to take a field trip or conduct research, you should review the following linked resources in advance:

- Driving on University Business: <https://hr.fullerton.edu/risk-management/travel/driving-on-campus/>
- Faculty and Staff Guidelines for Academic Field Trips: <https://hr.fullerton.edu/documents/risk-management/AcademicFieldTrips.pdf>
- Guidelines for CSUF Volunteers (i.e., all drivers who are not state-funded University employees): <https://hr.fullerton.edu/risk-management/volunteer-program/csuf-university-volunteer.php>
- **Department of Risk Management forms** related to field trips and driving: <https://hr.fullerton.edu/forms/#divK>

Driver Qualifications

To operate a vehicle owned by the Department of Biological Science, potential users must meet the following requirements:

- have a valid reason to drive on University and Department business
- must be a state-funded University employee (e.g., CSUF faculty, staff, or teaching/graduate assistant for the course requiring driving), OR a person with

Volunteer status *explicitly connected to the specific activity requiring driving*; note that employment by the Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC) does not qualify as ‘University employment’

- must be 18 years of age or older
- have a current valid California or other State’s Driver’s License and maintain a good driving record
- must complete all necessary training and forms (see below). Forms are available on-line or from the Biology department office.

To emphasize, **anyone who is not a state-funded University employee, e.g., most students, must be formally approved as a Volunteer to drive on University business.** The Volunteer authorization must state explicitly that driving is one of the Volunteer’s responsibilities. Furthermore, approval to drive as an employee or Volunteer for one project or activity does not confer blanket driving privileges for other activities. For example, the TA of a course with field trips is not automatically approved to drive in support of faculty research, nor can a graduate student who is permitted to drive to their research sites serve as a driver on course field trips without being an approved Volunteer for that course.

All drivers must complete the following before driving:

- **Request for Drivers License Information** form (INF 254; renew every 4 years)
- Defensive Driver Training - online class 45-60 min taken via your Training portal (contact Department Office; renew every 4 years)
- Travel Authorization (permission to drive in southern California region; renew annually; check with Department Office)
- *If using a private vehicle:* **Authorization to Use Privately Owned Vehicles on State Business** form (STD 261; renew every 4 years)
- *If driving the department van:* Van Safety Training (in-person with EHS trainer as arranged by Department Office; renew every 4 years)

Although not directly related to use of departmental vehicles, students on field trips should know that they must complete 2 additional forms: the **Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk** form and the **Student Code of Conduct Agreement** form. The instructor supervising a course field trip must also complete and submit the **University Field Trip Emergency Participant Roster (Field Trip Participant List)**.

Hierarchy of Users and Uses

We maintain a range of different types of vehicles that reflect their intended use (see current list of vehicles at the end of this document). Our vehicles serve 4 basic purposes: 1) transporting students and faculty and their gear to course- and research-supportive activities; 2) providing access to areas, i.e., off unimproved roads, muddy or snowy conditions, that cannot be safely reached in a conventional vehicle; 3) towing trailers and launching boats; and 4) transporting very large or hazardous/smelly loads of research gear that cannot be carried safely inside a passenger vehicle.

During particular times of year, departmental vehicles can be in heavy demand, creating potential for conflict. The guiding philosophy behind these policies is to provide access to vehicles to as many approved users as possible; this will require patience and effective communication. Faculty advisers should speak with their lab groups regularly to reinforce these policies and ensure that their group members are using the vehicles in a way that reflects both the written policies as well as the spirit of cooperation.

When users need access to vehicles already reserved by other users with lower priority, the user with higher priority may “bump” a lower-priority user from access.

User groups, from highest to lowest priority:

1. Faculty and full-time staff (**C**) – for teaching/laboratory course support purposes (includes TAs or GAs and approved Volunteers driving for course support);
2. Faculty and full-time staff (**F**) – faculty research or staff administrative activities (faculty or full-time staff is driver);
3. Research staff (**S**) – state- or ASC-funded employees or Volunteers supporting faculty research *not related to* a student thesis or independent research project;
4. Graduate students (**G**) – support for student’s M.S. thesis research: must be currently enrolled in BIOL599 (except during summer) and a Volunteer;
5. Undergraduates (**U**) – support for an independent research project: must be currently enrolled in BIOL499L (except during summer) and a Volunteer.

The highest priority groups (C and F) may bump lower-priority users with 48-hours advance notice, although these users should be mindful of the disruption this may cause and try to avoid doing so. For other groups, a higher-priority user may bump a lower-priority one, but must provide at least 2 weeks advance notice before doing so.

Furthermore, when two similar-priority users require a vehicle at the same time, priority should be given to the user whose intended work absolutely requires the use of the capabilities of that vehicle, e.g., a passenger vehicle cannot be used instead. Examples of high-priority uses including towing a trailer or launching a boat, driving off-road or in poor weather conditions, and hauling large or hazardous loads that must be carried outside of the passenger compartment. The duration of the trip and distances driven should also be considered. All users are expected to be flexible, respectful, and collegial in dealing with issues related to overlapping needs, and open to communication. For example, timely communication may allow users to trade vehicles or to ask whether a reservation is still needed.

Which Vehicle Should I Use?

Our departmental vehicles are a valuable, communal resource. Maintenance, repairs, and fuel are paid for by the department’s limited funds. Anyone considering using a departmental vehicle must assess whether that use is necessary, versus using a personal vehicle or renting one (University employees who are considering renting a truck or a 12-

15 passenger van must contact the Department of Risk Management (X7346) before traveling). Using a departmental vehicle when it is not absolutely needed wastes departmental resources, e.g., gas, maintenance costs and prevents access for other users who might truly need it at that time.

Our departmental vehicles are not very fuel-efficient and some are large, low-g geared, and challenging to drive and park on narrow streets. **Every choice by users should take fuel efficiency, safety, and unnecessary wear-and-tear into consideration.** The capabilities of each vehicle, including fuel efficiency, number of seats, and off-road/towing ability, are listed at the end of this document and posted near the vehicle sign-out sheets in MH-377. Drivers are expected to use good judgement when deciding where and when to drive, and take into account their own experience and driving skills, as well as road and weather conditions. Not everyone is comfortable driving a large vehicle with restricted visibility on narrow, high-speed freeway lanes. Driving off-road is discouraged unless absolutely necessary to reach field sites and should only be attempted by experienced drivers. Before driving, individuals should know how to change a tire, check and replace fluids, and diagnose basic vehicle problems. Kits containing vehicle safety and emergency supplies are available in the Stockroom (MH-377) and must be carried on long trips. Drivers must obey all state and local driving laws and regulations.

IMPORTANT: Our departmental vehicles do not have FasTrak and should not be driven in express lanes or on toll roads that require automated payment. The driver is *personally responsible* for any tolls, fees, tickets, or penalties incurred by improper use.

Reserving a Departmental Vehicle

You may not reserve or drive any departmental vehicle prior to completing the appropriate paperwork and receiving clearance to drive from the department.

The following guidelines apply to reserving Department of Biological Science vehicles:

- Users may reserve a departmental vehicle up to 6 months in advance for course-related purposes and up to 2 months in advance for research-related purposes. Vehicles may be in very high demand during short breaks in the academic year, e.g. Intersession, Spring Break, which may require flexibility and effective communication between prospective users to avoid conflicts.
- Reservations should be made only for dates when it is certain the vehicle will be needed and used. Users should not attempt to block out dates of *possible* use because this limits access for other users.
- Vehicles reserved for research by members of a given lab can be signed out for a maximum of 7 consecutive days.
- If a faculty member anticipates a research-related trip exceeding the 7-day limit, or anticipates a need for excessive use within a particular period, they should consult with the Department Chair and other faculty and staff via email well in advance to resolve potential conflicts.
- Student users *must* consult with their faculty advisors before reserving vehicles and must reserve the vehicle in both their names and their faculty sponsor's name.

The driver should write their user category (C, F, S, G, U; see above) and mobile phone number on the reservation sheet so that they can be contacted in case of emergencies or conflicting demands.

- If a user determines that a reservation is no longer needed, the user must remove the reservation immediately. Repeated failures to cancel reservations in advance may result in restrictions on use by the individual and lab group.
- Individual users or lab groups must take care not to monopolize vehicles. *The faculty adviser is responsible for ensuring that use by the entire lab group does not exceed reasonable levels.*
- If unavoidable and irresolvable conflicts arise over perceived abuse of the reservation process or monopolization of vehicles, the users in conflict should consult with the Department Chair for assistance in resolving the conflicts. Factors that may be included in resolving the conflict include the frequency and intensity of past use of vehicles by the individual or lab group, whether a given departmental vehicle was essential for the activity, and past misuse of the process or vehicles.
- Check availability and reserve vehicles on the vehicle clipboards located in the Stockroom (MH 377).

Returning, Cleaning and Storage of Vehicles

- Users will have the vehicle professionally cleaned at a car wash if exposed to salt water, coated in mud, or if the vehicle is excessively dirty, including the interior. At some local gas stations, drivers can use the vehicle gas card to purchase a car wash.
- Users who have launched or recovered boats in the ocean will carefully rinse the undercarriage of the vehicle and wheels with fresh water as soon as possible to ensure complete removal of salt. Fresh water and a hose are available by the Greenhouse at the west entrance.
- Users will return vehicles with at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a tank of gas and will ensure that all parts of the interior of the vehicle is free of trash. If a vehicle can use E85 fuel (e.g., van #282, truck #394), when possible, please fill it with E85 from a station where it is sold. There are several stations that sell E85 near campus.
- Users will report all damages or problems to Dayna Melton via telephone (657-278-2780) immediately when discovered and will alert other users to problems by posting a note on the vehicle clipboard that indicates the nature of the problem and the person who identified and reported it. Users should report any used or missing emergency supplies to Dayna so the kits can be replenished.
- Vehicles should be returned to campus every night except in the case of overnight trips or when it is not feasible to return the vehicle, e.g., use on consecutive days with late-return and early-start times.
- If the vehicle is parked in a lot other than the state-permit spaces on South Campus Drive (near MOD classrooms), users will indicate where the vehicle is parked by including a note on the clipboard.
- The clipboard and keys must be returned to MH-377.

Abuse of Driver Privileges and Consequences

Misuse of departmental vehicles includes:

- Driving without authorization or a valid driver's license appropriate for the type of vehicle being driven
- Driving under the influence of any controlled substance
- Smoking in vehicles
- Engaging in unsafe practices, which include failing to use, and to ensure that others use, seat belts/shoulder harnesses, and driving unsafely for local conditions
- Driving for any purpose other than to conduct the University business for which the driver was explicitly approved
- Neglecting to follow the proper cleaning and storage guidelines provided above
- Misuse of the vehicle reservation process, as described above
- Failure to comply with safety policies during pandemic conditions

If you misuse a university vehicle, you may be personally liable for damage to persons or property, as well as legal expenses. Those who misuse University vehicles are also subject to disciplinary action by the University.

If anyone encounters an instance of misuse of departmental vehicles, they should report the incident to the Department Chair, who may convene an *ad hoc* Vehicle Use Committee to review the matter. Depending upon the infraction, the committee may suspend a user's privileges for up to 3 months or longer.

Use of Departmental Vehicles Outside Southern California

Vehicles may be driven to northern California and out-of-state, but it is expected that most trips will be to neighboring states (<~1,000 miles from Fullerton). The 7-day limit on vehicle reservations will likely preclude trips taken farther out of state. Those intending to take trips of 7 days or longer must consult with the Department Chair well in advance. Travelers must also have approved Travel Authorizations in place before departing.

If you intend to take a department vehicle *outside of the United States*, refer to (and follow) the guidelines provided in the Faculty and Staff Guidelines for Academic Field Trips document linked on p. 1 and be aware of special restrictions for traveling abroad.

Reporting Vehicle Accidents

For any injuries or illness requiring more than first aid, call 911 and act as directed. Notify the University and the emergency contacts for the injured/ill participant(s). If any accident occurs during a field trip, please contact the Department of Risk Management. If you are involved in an accident, do not admit fault or make any promises that the University will pay for any damages or give a written or recorded statement to the other party or their representatives without first consulting the University Counsel or the Director of University Risk Management. If any police authority or highway patrol completes an accident report, request the report number.

If you are involved in **any** accident while driving on university business, regardless of the amount of damage or whether a university vehicle is involved, you must complete and submit a **State Driver Vehicle Accident Report** form (STD 270) within 48 hours to the Department of Risk Management, CP-770. The driver's supervisor must also complete a **State Driver Accident Review** form (STD 274) and submit it to CP-770 within 48 hours.

Vehicle Use and Field Trips during Public Health Emergencies

During a significant and extended outbreak of human disease, the department or university may prohibit travel, including the use of vehicles. When travel is permitted again, additional measures may be put into place to ensure the safety of passengers in vehicles, as well as field trip participants in general. All users are required to follow University rules for travel. Best practices are subject to change, but some general guidelines are outlined below.

Face masks and physical distancing

When pandemic restrictions are in place, every traveler should be fully vaccinated against disease if vaccinations are available. Every person conducting research outdoors must carry a well-fitting cloth or disposable face mask and wear it whenever they expect to be closer than 6 feet from others. Field researchers must wear a mask if they are indoors, including in vehicles, or cannot consistently stay 6 feet apart. An N95 or KN95 mask, instead of a cloth or surgical mask, may be required indoors or when disease transmission is high. Unvaccinated individuals must wear an N95 or KN95 face mask at all times and should avoid traveling in vehicles with vaccinated individuals.

Transportation to field sites

Special considerations must be made for long-distance travel to field sites, depending upon guidance from the university and local and state health departments. During conditions of high disease prevalence and transmission, individuals should not travel in a vehicle with persons who do not normally share a household with them. All individuals must wear a N95 or KN95 mask while in the passenger compartment. Travelers should carry hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and spare face masks in vehicles and use them liberally to keep surfaces clean. Rest and meal stops should be chosen to ensure proper social distancing and good hygiene.

Overnight stays at off-campus research facilities

If camping, individuals should avoid sharing tents unless they are from the same household and/or have been isolating together. Likewise, individuals should not share overnight accommodations (sleeping area, restroom) unless they normally share a household. Individuals must wear a N95 or KN95 mask during extended periods indoors. Most field stations will have their own rules for social distancing and proper hygiene to minimize exposure and disease spread. CSUF visitors are expected to follow the facility's rules, but also still comply with rules for CSUF travelers, if they are more restrictive. Travel plans and living situations should be reviewed and approved well in advance of departure by appropriate campus personnel, including the responsible faculty member.

Interactions with the public

Access to public spaces, such as beaches and parks, may be restricted by local or federal ordinances, and these restrictions must be respected. If working in public spaces, face masks should be worn and a minimum distance of at least 6 feet from others maintained. Distancing could be encouraged by setting up a temporary perimeter around the work site, e.g., using traffic cones and flagging tapes. Travelers should avoid situations that put them in close indoor proximity to members of the public whose vaccination and health status is not known, and should always wear a mask indoors.

Research involving boats

The following guidelines must be followed:

- No more than two people should be on the CSUF Whaler at one time in order to maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- Cloth or surgical masks must be worn the entire time when outdoors on the vessel. Individuals must wear a N95 or KN95 mask during extended periods indoors.
- A field cleaning kit with latex gloves, spray disinfectant, 1-gallon ziploc bags, paper towels, and spare face masks must be carried on to the boat. Hand rails, the helm and wheel, and common surfaces should be disinfected upon reaching the boat. Wipes used to disinfect surface must be sealed in a ziploc bag and taken back to the dock for proper disposal.
- Divers on the deck must always maintain physical distancing between dives. All dive gear (regulators, masks) must be covered with a towel between dives and stored in large plastic tubs with a cover to reduce contamination. When not wearing a dive mask, divers must wear face masks and maintain physical distance.