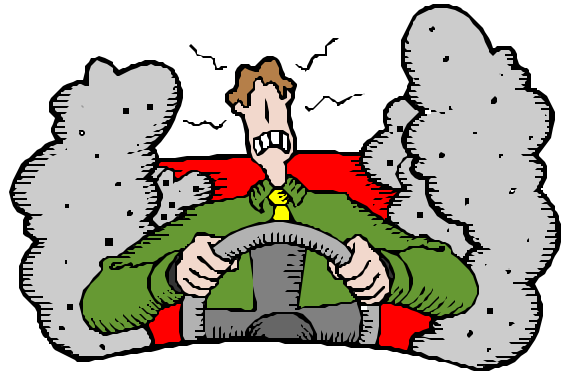


Safe Driving and Use of Wireless Telephones

USDA has established the following two new policies to help increase employee safety while operating Government owned or leased vehicles. The Federal government is becoming more involved in providing a leadership role in promoting the safe use of wireless telephones by employees when engaged in official Government business. New York state has already enacted a ban on using hand-held wireless telephones by drivers and many other states have pending legislation. In addition USDA is also establishing a new policy regarding the safe length of driving time while operating a Government owned or leased vehicle. The Department will soon update these new policies to the Agriculture Property Management Regulations available at www.usda.gov/da/property/property.htm.



1. “USDA employees must obey all state and local traffic laws while operating a motor vehicle during the performance of his or her duties. This applies to any state and local laws pertaining to the use, or prohibition from use, of any wireless telephone equipment. Where state and local laws do not prohibit the use of mobile telephones, USDA strongly discourages the use of hand-held wireless telephones by a driver while operating motor vehicles owned or leased by the Government. Even the use of “hand-free” equipment is strongly discouraged. If a telephone call is necessary, the driver shall pull safely to the side of the road, or a parking area and then initiate the call. USDA employees should be educated on driving safely while using hands-free wireless phones.”
2. “USDA employees are to always use caution and expertise while operating a motor vehicle owned or leased by the Federal government. When it is necessary to operate a motor vehicle for extended periods of time, drivers are strongly encourages to take at least a 15 minute break after each three hours of driving time, or more often, if the driver feels it will enhance his or her safe operation of the vehicle.”

Please forward this information to employees and post where appropriate to ensure ARS employees who operate Government owned or leased vehicles are aware of the new USDA policy. PPD will post this announcement to the PPD Home Page at www.afm.ars.usda.gov/divisions/ppd/.

ISSUE DATE: July 16, 2002

PPD ALERT No. 2002-009