

Title VI - Information Services

Section 464 – Use of Cellular Telephones for County Business

Latest Update: June 2024

A. PURPOSE

This policy provides uniform and consistent standards for the use of cellular telephones while conducting County business and defines the responsibilities for the costs of cellular telephone service.

B. SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all ¹County departments, officers, and employees. The term “cellular telephone” covered by this policy is used generically and includes all wireless equipment which can send or receive voice or text messages. These include, but are not limited to, cellular telephones, smart phones, air cards, and mobile fidelity devices. This policy covers the voice and text messaging usage of these devices as well as the images and video features of the device.

C. DEFINITIONS

Cellular telephone – a portable telephone operated through a cellular radio network

Smartphone – a mobile phone offering advanced capabilities, often with personal computer like functionality

Air Card – personal computer card that allows mobile broadband data access

Mobile fidelity – device that allows multiple personal computers to have wireless access to a mobile broadband network (provided by Verizon)

Hot Spot – a stand along hot spot (MiFi) or a phone functioning as a hot spot.

D. POLICY OVERVIEW

The County’s general policy is that County-owned cellular telephones are for business use only. No personal use is allowed. Department Heads have the responsibility to maintain accountability over cellular telephone usage in their departments. Use of a cellular telephone in any manner contrary to County policy may result in termination of the employee’s participation in the cellular telephone program or other disciplinary action.

E. POLICY OPTIONS

There are two options to provide employee access to cellular telephones for the purpose of conducting County business. Determination of which option is appropriate will be based on genuine business need.

1. County-owned cellular telephones issued to an individual employee

Based on justifiable need, the County may provide a cellular telephone to an individual employee. The department in which the cellular telephone is used will be billed for its purchase, maintenance, and support. The cellular telephone must be used 100% for County business, including all incoming and outgoing calls and/or data usage. No personal use is allowed. In accordance with IRS guidelines, employees who are assigned a cellular telephone must certify each month that no personal calls were made. If a situation arises that requires a personal call be made on a County-owned cellular telephone, the employee shall identify those calls and submit a County Reimbursement Form to reimburse the County for the cost of any personal use. See Procedures section H.1. These situations must be rare, brief and necessary.

2. County-owned cellular telephones issued to a pool of employees

Typically, these would be cellular telephones that are not assigned to one individual, but rather to a specific work location, a work vehicle or a telephone pool, and are available to many employees. Requests for County-owned cellular telephones assigned to a pool must demonstrate that the frequent emergency response and/or job safety are dependent upon the use of a cellular telephone. These cellular telephones must strictly be used 100% for County business, including all incoming and outgoing calls and/or data usage. Absolutely no personal use is allowed. See Procedures section H.2.

F. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Departments hold primary responsibility for the proper use of cellular telephones.

1. The Board of Supervisors approves the County's Policies and Procedures Manual, which includes this Cellular Telephone Policy.
2. It is the responsibility of departments to:
 - a. Maintain accountability over cellular telephone usage;
 - b. Establish adequate internal controls to ensure employees are following cellular telephone policies;
 - c. Review and approve monthly bills for County-owned cellular telephones;
 - d. Require employees who do make personal calls on County-owned cellular telephones to reimburse the County; and
 - e. Receive and deposit the employee's reimbursement for personal use of County-owned cellular telephones.
3. The Information Services Department will:
 - a. Purchase cellular telephones at the request of the department's phone coordinator.
 - b. Provide web access to all cellular telephone bills.
 - c. Provide copies by request of the cellular telephone provider's bill.
 - d. Monitor cellular telephone usage monthly and provide a report to Department Heads of bills that exceed 500 minutes as well as 0 usage bills.

- e. Determine the rate at which employees must reimburse the County for the cost of any personal use of a County-owned cellular telephone.
- 4. The Auditor-Controller's Office will:
 - a. Review departmental policies and procedures for compliance with this County policy.
 - 5. Employees with County-owned cellular telephones will:
 - a. Use it for business purposes only;
 - b. Certify at least monthly that there is no personal use;
 - c. If there is personal use, reimburse the County for that personal use which should be rare, brief and necessary.

G. ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE USES

County-owned cellular telephones are for business use only. For County-owned cellular telephones assigned to an individual employee. Any personal call must be infrequent and brief, and reasonably could not have been made at another time from a land line. The employee is required to reimburse the County for the cost of all personal use.

Following are examples of acceptable personal use on County-owned cellular telephones assigned to an individual employee that would be considered business use for which the County would not need to be reimbursed:

- 1. To call an employee's home or doctor if an employee is injured or becomes sick at work.
- 2. To notify an employee's family or other appropriate parties of a schedule change caused by official business or transportation changes or delays.
- 3. To advise an employee's family or other appropriate parties of childcare or other dependent care arrangements when employees are required to work overtime without advance notice.

Cellular telephones are not to be used while driving a vehicle unless a hands-free device is used, and it is safe to do so. This includes calls, texts, emails, push to talk and any other communication functions made or received while driving a vehicle. When possible, all communication should be accepted or initiated when the vehicle is stopped off the roadway.

Use of a cellular telephone in any manner contrary to County policy or local, state, or federal laws will constitute misuse, and may result in termination of the employee's participation in the cellular telephone program, or other disciplinary action. Examples of this would include failure to use a hands-free device¹, or using a County-owned cellular telephone in a manner which violates any other County policy, state or federal law, including harassment and illegal activities.

H. PROCEDURES

1. **County-owned cellular telephones issued to an individual employee**

a. Departments may choose to provide an eligible employee with a cellular telephone purchased by the County and supported by a wireless service provider under contract with the County. A cellular telephone request form is available on the County Internet at tools/interactive forms. At least one of the following criterion must be met:

- Employee is vital to public safety.
- Employee is frequently on-call.
- Employee has a direct and frequent County business need for a cellular telephone.
- Employee spends a majority of their time in the field.

b. The employee is required to certify that they did not make any personal calls using a County-owned cellular telephone by completing the cellular telephone usage section at the bottom of their County e-TimeCard or paper timecard. If the monthly phone bill is not available for review yet, employees should use the log feature of the cellular telephone to review their call activity.

c. If the employee did make personal calls, the employee is required to submit a County Reimbursement Form on which the personal calls are documented. Once available, they must attach a copy of the monthly bill with any personal calls or other use highlighted. In a timely manner, the employee must then reimburse their County department for the cost of any personal use at the County's per minute rate plus an administrative fee.

Additionally, all long distance, roaming, text messaging or other special charges directly associated with personal usage are to be added to the amount reimbursed by the employee. Failure to declare personal usage or reimburse the County for personal use may result in disciplinary action.

¹ Exceptions exists for some on-duty safety officers as outlined in the Sheriff-Coroner issued guidelines.

d. The department will review and approve the County Reimbursement Form along with the associated employee's monthly cellular telephone bill. If the employee made personal calls, the department would process the reimbursement for deposit into the County Treasury.

e. The department will conduct periodic review of supported cellular telephone usage to eliminate payment for unnecessary cellular telephones and to ensure cost effective rate plans are in effect.

2. County-owned cellular telephones issued to a pool of employees

The department will review the monthly cellular telephone bill for all pooled cellular telephones. If it appears that personal calls are being made from a pooled cellular telephone, the calls should be researched, and appropriate action taken.

I. FORMS

County Reimbursement Request Form – To reimburse the County for occasional personal usage on a County-owned cellular telephone.

**COUNTY REIMBURSEMENT FORM
(For Occasional Personal Usage on County-Owned Cellular Telephones)**

Employee Name _____

Cellular Telephone Number (____) _____ - _____

Department _____

Budget GL Key _____

Bill Date Showing Charges ____ / ____ / ____

PERSONAL USAGE

Please complete the information below if personal calls were made.
Attach a copy of the telephone phone bill for the County-owned cellular telephone.

Personal Minutes Used	_____
Multiply by County Per-Minute Rate	X \$ _____ per minute ¹
Per Minute Reimbursement Due	\$ _____
Other Charges* (use total from below)	\$ _____
Administrative Processing Fee	\$3.50
 Total Reimbursement Due	 \$ _____

Department staff deposit this into 422000-42124

***Other Charges Summary:**

Please summarize and total any other charges associated with the personal usage, or note the total cost of these charges and attach the bill pages with notes. (includes overage charges, long distance, roaming, etc.)

CERTIFICATION I understand that personal usage of a County-Owned cellular phone is prohibited. The personal usage referenced on this form was unavoidable. Therefore, as stated in the Cellular Telephone Policy, I am submitting the required reimbursement to the County. I certify that I have identified all charges associated with my personal usage of a County-owned cellular telephone.

Employee Signature _____
Date

Supervisor Signature _____
Date

Authorized Signature - Title _____
Date

¹ The reimbursement rate is set by the Information Services Department.

CELLULAR TELEPHONE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Santa Cruz County Cellular Telephone Policy. I have read the policy and clarified with my supervisor any questions regarding its provisions. I agree to comply with all the requirements contained therein and understand that a breach of these terms may result in the loss of privilege or other disciplinary action.

Please sign this acknowledgement form and return it to your departmental Cellular Telephone Coordinator.

Print Employee Name
Telephone Number

Employee ID Number

Cellular

Signature

Date

Supervisor Signature

Date

Original to be maintained in the Department's Employee File.