405.20 General.

(a) Equipment management. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) uses automotive equipment extensively in carrying out its programs. All vehicles should be operated economically and safely.

(1) Each accountable property officer has an overall responsibility to carry out an effective equipment operation and maintenance program throughout his or her area of supervision. The employee in charge of each field location is responsible for the proper operation and maintenance of all vehicles assigned to that office.

(2) Government-owned vehicles are to be used for official purposes only. Ordinarily an employee is to use an assigned vehicle, but each vehicle in SCS is available for official purposes by an authorized employee at any time it is not in use. Periodically, check the amount of use of each vehicle. To the extent possible, all vehicles should receive equal use. Excess vehicles should be transferred to other locations where their use can be justified or should be disposed of.

(b) Responsibilities of vehicle operators. (1) Each vehicle operator is to operate vehicles on official business only and in accordance with state and local laws and ordinances. He or she is to see that the vehicle has been adequately serviced (tire pressure, battery, radiator, brakes, lights, horn, etc.) in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. The operator is to report promptly to the supervisor any needed repairs and see that no vehicle is operated in an unsafe condition. The vehicle operator is subject to disciplinary action for abuse or neglect of equipment.

(2) The operator is responsible for safeguarding the U.S. Government national credit card assigned to the vehicle. The credit card is to be kept with the keys and secured in the office when the vehicle is not in use. All vehicles are to be locked when unattended.

(3) Maximize efficient vehicle use. Avoid repeat trips by making appointments in advance, if possible, to enable employees to travel together. Establish travel patterns to service as many cooperators/landusers as possible each trip.

405.20(c)

(c) Automotive equipment quotas. (1) SCS maintains enough automotive equipment to enable its personnel to perform their work efficiently. Servicewide vehicle quotas have been established for the normal needs of an office according to the number of regularly assigned employees requiring vehicles in their work. Using these quotas as guides, the vehicle quota for each individual office is recommended by the state equipment and supply committee and approved by the state conservationist. Vehicles assigned to a location are to be utilized so as to provide transportation to intermittent or part-time employees and non-SCS personnel through effective scheduling.

(2) General SCS-wide quotas are:

Number of employees	Number of vehicles
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	4
6	5
7	5
8	5
9	6
10	6

405.21 Official use of Government motor vehicles.

(a) Policy. Motor vehicles acquired with Government funds shall be used for official purposes only. "Official purposes" is generally defined as those items of business that further the mission of the SCS. In this respect, "official purposes" includes use in emergencies involving possible loss of life or property. It does not include transportation of an employee between his or her residence and place of employment, except in cases of employees engaged in field work, the nature of whose duties make such transportation necessary, and then only when authorized in accordance with GM 120, Part 405.22. For personnel in travel status, the term "official use" includes travel between places of temporary lodging and places where the employee's presence is required incident to official business; where public transportation is unavailable or its use impracticable; and between either of the above places and establishments necessary for the sustenance, comfort, or health of the employee.

(b) Employee Responsibility. Employees assigned the use of Government-owned or -leased motor vehicles are responsible for assuring that vehicles are used only for official purposes. Employees shall exercise discretion to avoid, wherever possible, any situation which may tend to convey an impression to the public that the assigned vehicle is being used for other than official purposes. Except as noted below, no one should be transported in Government vehicles unless for official purposes.

Non-Federal employees may operate SCS-owned or -leased vehicles only if used for official purposes of the SCS and an agreement exists between SCS and the organization authorizing such use. SCS and Soil and Water Conservation Districts may enter into agreements authorized by the basic Memorandum of Understanding allowing authorized employees of the districts to operate SCS vehicles on district business when vehicles are otherwise available and insurance is provided by the district as required by GM 120, Part 405.23(m).

Such items of district business may not include moving goods where the district is involved in a profit-making concern but may include use by district managers to review district-funded conservation practices; use by employees working with the district on cooperatively funded programs; and use to attend district sponsored meetings.

(c) Supervisory responsibility. Supervisory control over employees assigned the use of a Government-owned or -leased motor vehicles shall include: (1) Advising employees of the requirements of these regulations;

(2) Establishing prior approval procedures for use of vehicles at irregular hours, or under circumstances where the use of the vehicle may create an unfavorable public reaction;

(3) Ensuring the type of vehicle assigned is suitable for the intended use and consistent with the achievement of maximum economy.

(d) Penalties. Any officer or employee who uses or authorizes the use of a Government-owned or -leased vehicle for other than official purposes is subject to a suspension of at least one month or, up to and including, removal.

405.22 Storage.

(a) Policy. (1) In the interest of economy, it is SCS policy to obtain free storage of vehicles except in unusual situations. Free storage, made available to SCS on private property (such as a service station) or on public property where a fee is normally charged the general public, must be arranged by a written agreement signed by the state conservationist or the NTC director. The authority to sign this agreement may be redelegated.

(2) Agreements are not needed if parking is provided in connection with rented office space, if parking is on public property where no fee is charged, or if free parking is provided to the general public.

(b) Private residence storage. (1) The rules on private residence storage are:

(i) Long-term or permanent storage. Only the Chief has authority to approve long-term or permanent storage of a Government-owned or -leased vehicle at or near an employee's home. Authorizations are issued in the name of the individual and are not transferable. Requests for authorization must include a full explanation of the circumstances justifying this storage. It must be clear that (1) Government or commercial storage or public transportation is not available within a reasonable distance, does not provide service when required, or does not adequately protect Government property, and (2) the employee's official duties make this approval necessary.

(ii) Brief, intermittent, or overnight storage. The Chief has delegated authority to approve storage in these categories to directors of the national technical centers and to state conservationists or persons acting for them. State conservationists can redelegate this authority.

(2) All requests for authorization are to be considered individually. Submit Form AD-728 to request authorization for private residence storage. This authority is to be used only if need for temporary storage is infrequent or cannot be foreseen.

(c) Repair and overhaul of vehicles. Factory warranty must be checked and agreed to by the authorized dealer before authorizing repairs. All repairs must be approved in accordance with the instructions issued by the property management officer (PMO). Emergency road repairs can be obtained locally from service stations offering this service under the terms of Government credit card contracts.

(d) Tires. Correct inflation pressure is important in prolonging tire life. Follow the tire manufacturer's recommendation on tire pressure. Check frequently for excessive or abnormal tire wear. The procurement of retread tires, through the Federal Supply Schedule, should be used to the extent practicable.

(e) Batteries. Most new batteries are maintenance free. Check batteries at least once a month. If replacements are needed, purchase batteries similar to those installed in new vehicles. These batteries usually have a 24-month guarantee.

(f) Fuel. Use unleaded gasoline in all vehicles except those having engines not made to use unleaded gasoline. Use self-service gasoline pumps whenever possible. Vehicle operators should consider using alternative fuels, where available.

(g) Oil and Grease. Follow manufacturer's recommendations as a guide for service requirements. The PMO is to establish criteria for oil changes and chassis lubrication, which may vary with the make of the vehicle. Different uses and climatic conditions must also be considered.

(h) Cleaning vehicle. All automotive vehicles are to be kept neat and clean and are to be washed when needed.

(i) Carrying equipment and materials. (1) Fasten the equipment box to the pickup with bolts and position it to permit safe access to the contents. Boxes are not to be moved without the prior approval of the PMO. Engineering equipment, including levels, transits, tripods, leveling rods, etc., is to be transported in equipment boxes or trunks or otherwise safely secured. Levels and transits (in their cases) are to be securely

fastened by straps or clamps in equipment boxes or other appropriate places in the pickup to avoid damage. Every vehicle is to have some arrangement for carrying engineering equipment and other tools securely and safely. Levels, transits, and similar equipment are not to be left in vehicles overnight.

(2) Tiedowns are to be provided in all vehicles to prevent loose equipment and materials from becoming missiles in the event of a sudden stop or accident.

(k) Trailer hitches and other equipment. (1) SCS vehicles can be used to tow only Federally owned, leased, or borrowed equipment required for official purposes. Trailer hitches can be installed if approved by the PMO.

(2) Under some conditions, better traction can be obtained by adding weights. If weights are added, they must be securely fastened to the vehicle as approved by the PMO.

(3) Radio receivers are not to be installed in SCS vehicles unless authorized by the state conservationist. Installation of two-way communications systems must be approved by the Information Resources Management Division in the National Headquarters.

(4) Fire extinguishers may be provided for the vehicle at the discretion of the PMO.

(l) Speed limits. Government-owned vehicles must be driven in compliance with state and local speed limits.

(m) Loan of vehicles. (1) Vehicles can be loaned to other agencies of the Department of Agriculture, to Federal agencies outside the Department, and in some circumstances to non-Federal agencies. All loans require formal written agreements unless there are unusual circumstances or statutory limitations, for which the PMO can provide instructions. All requests for loan of vehicles must be referred to the PMO.

(2) If vehicles are loaned to a district, the district is to carry a property damage and bodily injury liability insurance policy, and shall include the United States as an insured thereunder. The policy covers district employees and others under its supervision while driving SCS vehicles on district assignments. It is suggested the amount of insurance should be, as a minimum, that required by state law.