

EMERGENCY RIDE HOME PROGRAM

One of the most common reasons that employees express for commuting in their personal vehicle is that there might be an emergency during the workday and a personal vehicle would be needed. The emergency ride home (ERH) program alleviates that fear by providing the employee an option for getting home in case of a family or other emergency. ERH programs can be thought of as a “smart commuting insurance policy.”

State employees assigned to worksites in Thurston, Pierce, King and Spokane counties are eligible for free taxi rides through ERH contracts held by the CTR program at the Department of General Administration (GA). Funding is allocated by the Legislature.

State employees located at CTR affected worksites in Clark, Kitsap, Snohomish, Whatcom, and Yakima counties are covered through programs in those counties. Details for each county are listed below.

Agencies with worksite in counties not affected by the CTR law are encouraged to adopt ERH policies for their employees. Methods include a policy to reimburse employees for taxi rides taken, using state vehicles, having other employees take them home in either their own or state vehicles, or using rental vehicles. (Specific details below)

Other Methods to Provide an ERH

- ◇ State Vehicles may be used for the ERH if a vehicle is available and the employee is able to return the vehicle before it is needed by the agency. The employee must be physically able to drive, i.e. not too sick or distraught, and must have a valid driver’s license. The employee would have to take leave. Non-state personnel are not permitted to ride in state vehicles unless on state business. Therefore, the emergency may not include picking up a sick child or a family member who is not a state employee. (SAAM 12.20.55, 7/1/07)
- ◇ Allowing another employee to drive the person home using an agency vehicle or their privately owned vehicle (POV). The employee who is the driver would not be required to take leave for the duration of the emergency trip. The employee with the emergency would be required to take leave. Because the driver is not required to take leave, the driver is considered to be on state business. Therefore, within an agency’s POV policy, the employee may request reimbursement from the agency for the POV miles.
- ◇ Rental Vehicle: another option would be for the agency to rent a vehicle from a local car rental agency such as Alamo, Avis, Budget, Enterprise, Hertz, National, etc. Before using a rental vehicle option can be used, it must be included in the agency’s CTR policy and clearly identify who is responsible for payment, i.e. totally by the agency, a split with the employee, etc. and the circumstances for which a rental vehicle would be utilized. If the agency is paying the cost, the vehicle is considered a state vehicle and no non-state employees will be permitted to ride in the vehicle.

Emergency Ride Home Programs in CTR Counties

Thurston and Pierce Counties

The State Agency Free Emergency (SAFE) Ride Program is available to all state employees in Thurston and Pierce counties who ride the bus, train, or ferry, drive or ride in a carpool or

vanpool, walk, or bicycle to work. State employees in non-CTR worksites are included as long as the agency has an overall CTR program or is a participating CTR agency. GA contracts directly with taxi companies for the service.

Eligibility

To be eligible, an employee must have commuted to work that day by means other than a single occupant vehicle and have an emergency that occurs during their work hours. The SAFE-Ride program pays for up to 65 one-way miles, excluding gratuity. Employees may use the program up to eight (8) trips per year with no more than four (4) for unexpected overtime.

Emergencies include, but are not limited to, illness of self or a family member, unexpected overtime (employee is asked/told that day they must work overtime), a missed ride home due to the emergency of another, or other emergency situations. In the case when the driver of a carpool or vanpool left early because of an emergency leaving more than one employee behind, the remaining employees must share the taxi ride.

The program cannot be used for personal errands, pre-scheduled appointments or overtime, trips to the hospital in place of ambulance service, business related travel, injury while on the job, weather including snow and other acts of nature, or worksite disruptions (power outage, leaky pipes, etc.) that may cause the early closing of a building.

If the emergency requires an additional stop before going home (for example to pick up a sick child at school or daycare or to pick up a prescription) SAFE-Ride will stop there first and then take both home or to their vehicle in a park and ride lot. The intermediate stop must be pre-approved by the worksite's SAFE-Ride Coordinator.

If the SAFE-Ride is for unexpected overtime, the coordinator can reserve the ride with the taxi company with the understanding that the employee will call the taxi about twenty minutes before s/he are ready to be picked up.

Criteria

- ◇ The employee must have come to work that day by bus, train, ferry, carpool, vanpool, walking, or bicycle. He/she does not have to be enrolled in the agency's CTR program.
- ◇ The SAFE-Ride trip must begin at the employee's worksite and end at home or other location such as a park and ride lot, hospital, etc. **Note:** if the emergency requires the employee to be dropped off at a hospital or other site, the taxi's commitment under SAFE-Ride is ended and the employee is then responsible for the remainder of their trip.
- ◇ Emergency-related interim stops are permitted ONLY if requested and approved by the SAFE-Ride Coordinator prior to the ride.
- ◇ If the trip includes a ferry ride, the taxi will go only as far as the ferry terminal.
- ◇ Employees are allowed up to eight (8) trips per year, with no more than four (4) trips due to unexpectedly working late.
- ◇ SAFE-Ride will pay the first 65 one-way miles of the trip. Employees (or their agencies) must agree to reimburse GA for any additional miles.
- ◇ Gratuities are not included and are up to the discretion of the rider. Neither GA nor the employee's agency will reimburse a gratuity.
- ◇ Unauthorized or inappropriate use of the program will result in termination of the employee's SAFE-Ride privileges.

- ◇ GA has contracted with local taxi companies for this service and therefore, neither the employee's agency nor GA are responsible for actual services provided and have no liability in the provision of such service.

King County (Home Free Guarantee)

The State Agency CTR Program has a contract with King County Metro to provide emergency taxi rides to all state employees assigned to a worksite in King County. To be eligible, an employee must have commuted to work that day by bus, train, ferry, vanpool, carpool, walking or bicycling and have an emergency that occurs during their work hours. *Note:* employees in non-CTR worksites are included as long as the agency has an overall CTR program and the worksite is registered with the State Agency CTR Program at GA and with King County Metro.

The employee must meet the same criteria as for the SAFE-Ride Program described above.

Spokane County (Guaranteed Ride Home)

The State Agency CTR Program has a contract with Spokane County to provide emergency taxi rides to all state employees assigned to a worksite in Spokane County. To be eligible, an employee must have commuted to work that day by bus, vanpool, carpool, walking or bicycling and have an emergency that occurs during his/her work hours. *Note:* employees in non-CTR worksites are included as long as the agency has an overall CTR program and the worksite is registered with the State Agency CTR Program at GA and with Spokane County.

The employee must meet the same criteria as for the SAFE-Ride Program described above.

Clark County

The program is provided free to CTR affected employers. It is administered by the City of Vancouver under the auspices of the Clark County CTR Program.

Eligibility

- ◇ Employee of a CTR affected employer.
- ◇ Commuted by carpool, vanpool, bus, bicycle, or walking on the day the ride is needed.

Usage

- ◇ Up to six times per year and up to 50 miles.
- ◇ Allows an intermediate stop to pick up child at school, stop at pharmacy, etc.
- ◇ Employer is provided vouchers that are given to the participant as needed.
- ◇ Covers most emergencies, i.e. illness of employee or family member, driver emergency, or working late.

Kitsap County

Kitsap Transit will pay for the entire cost of an Emergency Ride Home trip that originates in Kitsap County, including the portion of the trip into Jefferson, Mason, or Pierce County. Kitsap Transit will not pay for the cost of a ferry ride or any portion of a trip into King County. Tips are discretionary and will not be paid by Kitsap Transit. Employees needing a ride must contact their ETC who authorizes the trip and provides a voucher.

Eligibility

- ◇ Employer must be registered in Kitsap Transit's GRH Program, and

- ◇ The employee must be a Smart Commuter. A Smart Commuter walks, bicycles, carpools, vanpools, or takes the bus to work at least three times a week, and
- ◇ The employee must be pre-registered with their Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC).

Usage:

- ◇ Illness of self or family member.
- ◇ Unexpectedly asked to work past normal quitting time at the request of a supervisor.
- ◇ Missed regular ride due to an unexpected change in employee's work schedule.
- ◇ Other, similar, emergency and the ride is approved by the employee's ETC.

Non-eligible trips:

- ◇ Personal errands.
- ◇ Prescheduled overtime or appointments.
- ◇ Pre-planned medical appointments.
- ◇ Business-related travel.
- ◇ Working late with at least one day's prior notice.
- ◇ Working late without a supervisor's request.
- ◇ Trips to the hospital in place of ambulance service (for injury or illness).
- ◇ Trips to a doctors or hospital resulting from an on-the-job injury.
- ◇ Non-emergency side trips.
- ◇ Major area disaster.

Snohomish County

Community Transit offers the program at no cost to CTR affected and voluntary employers. Vouchers are provided to the ETCs who give them to employees requiring emergency transportation as payment for the taxi ride.

Eligibility:

- ◇ Employees at a CTR affected or voluntary site.
- ◇ Must have commuted via non-SOV.
- ◇ Emergencies include their own or a family member's illness, other family emergency, the driver had an emergency and left early, or working unexpected overtime.
- ◇ Participants allowed up to six trips per year.
- ◇ Trips length limited to 65 miles one-way.

Whatcom County – Smart Trips

Eligibility:

- ◇ Current WTA bus pass holder.
- ◇ Registered Smart Trips participant.
- ◇ Arrived at work that day by bus, vanpool, carpool, bicycling or walking.

Usage:

- ◇ Illness of employee or family member.
- ◇ Unexpected overtime, i.e. requested that day.
- ◇ Carpool or vanpool driver had an emergency and left early.

- ◇ 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- ◇ Allowable one brief stop between worksite and final destination.

Non eligible trips:

- ◇ Personal errands.
- ◇ Scheduled medical or other appointments.
- ◇ Transit delays.
- ◇ Rain or inclement weather.
- ◇ Expected or foreseeable overtime.

Yakima County

The program is administered by the worksite ETC who verifies the commute mode. The rides are provided free as a community service by A-1 Tri City Taxi. The vouchers are returned to Yakima Transit that monitors the program usage.

Criteria:

- ◇ Any employee of a CTR affected employer (includes state employees) may utilize the program.
- ◇ There is currently no limitation on number of times an employee can use the program.
- ◇ Miles are limited to within the county.

Usage:

- ◇ Employee or family member becomes ill.
- ◇ Employee unexpectedly needs to work past his/her normal quitting time at the request of the employer.
- ◇ Employee has another similar type of circumstance.
- ◇ Employee's carpool driver experiences any of the above situations leaving his riders without a way home.