



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

JILL LATHAN
ACTING DPW COMMISSIONER

ERIC WEISMAN
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Date: September 26, 2022
RE: Driver Safety

212966: That the Administration provide a report for all departments using city vehicles for non-emergency services, detailing the measures taken to ensure that staff follow traffic regulations, including the hands free while driving law, and maintain maximum traffic safety while driving.

Safety Training

Human Resources and the Department of Public Works (DPW) currently offer a 2-hour online training on driver safety, including a the "Safer Trucking in Changing Cities" video. Employees complete a course covering the fundamentals of driving safety, including, but not limited to Distracted Driving, Pedestrian Safety, Cyclist Safety, Speed Limits, Signs and Signals, etc.

Training participants include all employees who regularly operate City or personal vehicles as part of their duties. This includes staff in DPW, Water, Sewer, Parking, ISD, Parks and Recreation, Assessing, and IT. We are currently training all existing staff. New employees are trained as part of their onboarding process.

Addressing Violations

It is expected that DPW employees follow all traffic laws while operating a motor vehicle in the course of duty. Any unsafe driving, including speeding, failure to follow signs and traffic signals, failure to yield to pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists, and distracted driving, is not acceptable. When the DPW receives a report of unsafe operation of a motor vehicle, we investigate. Depending on the nature of the complaint, we may issue discipline including verbal warnings, written warnings, suspensions and termination. Typically, however, most complaints are handled as learning opportunities and are resolved with employee counseling.

Hands-Free Devices and Next Steps

Some employees use mobile phones to communicate as part of their duties. Many employees have received hands-free technology such as earpieces to use while driving. We have requested more hands-free devices for the rest of our staff.

We are currently testing after-market speed-limiters in our fleet to determine if they would be an effective additional tool to curb unsafe driving behaviors. These devices are intended to cap maximum speeds based on location. The devices in question also prevent sudden acceleration.