



COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Morristown-Hamblen Emergency Management Agency

April 9, 2024

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury



DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS



JASON E. MUMPOWER
Comptroller

April 9, 2024

Hamblen County Commission
511 West Second North Street
Morristown, TN 37814

and

Morristown City Council
P.O. Box 1499
Morristown, TN 37816-1499

Morristown-Hamblen Emergency Management Agency Officials:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of the Morristown-Hamblen Emergency Management Agency, and the results are presented herein.

Copies of this report are being forwarded to Governor Bill Lee, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney General of the 3rd Judicial District, certain state legislators, and various other interested parties. A copy of the report is available for public inspection in our Office and may be viewed at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason E. Mumpower", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury

JEM/MLC

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Morristown-Hamblen Emergency Management Agency

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury investigated allegations of malfeasance related to the Morristown-Hamblen Emergency Management Agency. The investigation was limited to selected records from January 1, 2023, through February 16, 2024. The results of the investigation were communicated with the Office of the District Attorney General of the 3rd Judicial District.

BACKGROUND



The Morristown-Hamblen Emergency Management Agency (MHEMA) operates with Hamblen County (county) and the City of Morristown (city) for the purpose of coordinating activities of local, state, mutual aid, and federal agencies in the event of a man-made or natural disaster in the county. The MHEMA is funded by federal, county, and city funds, which are managed and accounted for by the county government.

The county mayor appoints and supervises the MHEMA director (director). The MHEMA director was appointed on November 1, 2011.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

1. THE DIRECTOR USED COUNTY VEHICLES ASSIGNED TO MHEMA FOR PERSONAL USE

The director used county vehicles assigned to MHEMA on multiple occasions for personal use during the period reviewed. The MHEMA is assigned two county vehicles to enable the performance of job duties: a white Ford F-250 truck (**Refer to Exhibit 1**) and a black Ford Crown Victoria car (**Refer to Exhibit 2**). The director used the county vehicles assigned to MHEMA at his discretion. On July 12, 2021, the director signed an acknowledgment form stating he read and would abide by the county vehicle use policy, which prohibits personal use. The county's vehicle use policy, revised in June 2021, states the following:

“Vehicle Use: The primary purpose for the ownership and operation of vehicles by Hamblen County is to enable the performance of job duties by its employees; and vehicles may be used only for legitimate County business purposes. Personal use, except as defined in *Commuting Privileges* is strictly prohibited.”

Exhibit 1



County-owned Ford F-250 truck assigned to MHEMA.

Exhibit 2



County-owned Ford Crown Victoria car assigned to MHEMA.

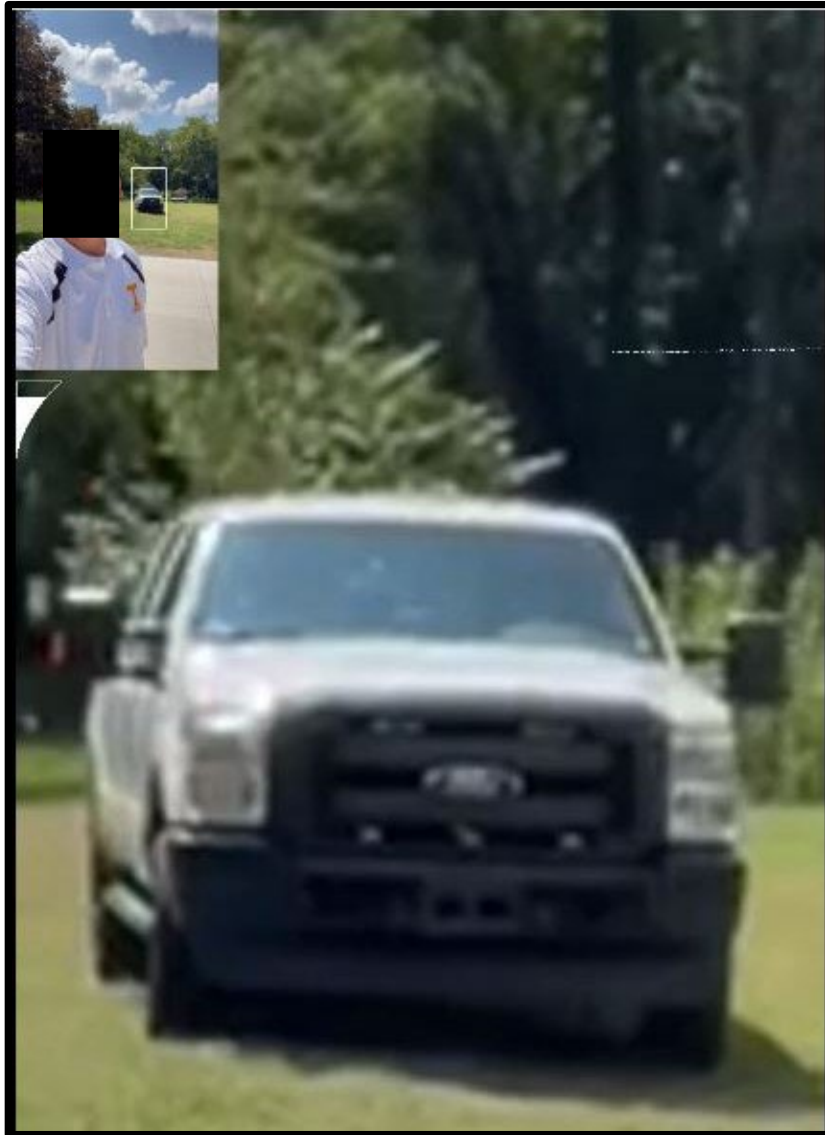
On September 12, 2023, the director posted a video on his social media account that pictured the MHEMA assigned, county-owned, Ford F-250 truck (**Refer to Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 4**) at one of his personal job sites.

Exhibit 3



Director's social media post picturing the MHEMA assigned, county-owned, Ford F-250 truck at a personal job site.

Exhibit 4



MHEMA assigned, county-owned, Ford F-250 truck; identified by grill lights and mirrors as shown in Exhibit 3.

On October 26, 2023, investigators witnessed the director at a private apartment complex in the MHEMA assigned, county-owned, Ford Crown Victoria car (**Refer to Exhibit 5**). On November 16, 2023, the director told investigators he was at the private apartment complex on this date to inspect a sewage leak; however, investigators confirmed the director later acquired an ownership interest in the private apartment complex on December 28, 2023. On Thursday, February 8, 2024, investigators again observed the director at the private apartment complex in the MHEMA assigned, county-owned, Ford F-250 truck (**Refer to Exhibit 6**) where it appeared construction work was being performed.

Exhibit 5



October 26, 2023: MHEMA assigned, county- owned, Ford Crown Victoria car driven by the director at the private apartment complex (he obtained an ownership interest on December 28, 2023).

Exhibit 6



February 8, 2024: MHEMA assigned, county-owned, Ford F-250 truck at the private apartment complex, where it appeared construction work was being performed.

On November 16, 2023, the director advised investigators that he uses the county-owned vehicles assigned to MHEMA locally because he is on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The director did not keep mileage records or pay taxes on the benefits received from the personal use of county-owned vehicles assigned to MHEMA. Furthermore, the personal use of county-owned vehicles referenced above goes beyond allowable de minimis use for on-call or emergency personnel. Investigators found no authorization per county policy or Internal Revenue Service guidelines for the director's above-reported personal use of county-owned vehicles. Due to a lack of supporting documentation, investigators could not determine the extent to which the director used county-owned vehicles and county-purchased fuel for his personal use. The director's personal use of county-owned vehicles, outside exemptions allowed in the county vehicle use policy and IRS guidelines, increases county liability risks and risks of fraud, waste, or abuse going undetected.

2. THE DIRECTOR ROUTINELY MADE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT POSTS DURING WORK HOURS OF PERSONAL JOB SITE VISITS

In 2023, the director made at least 20 social media account posts during work hours, as documented on his timesheets, of personal job site visits (**Refer to Exhibit 1**). Of these posts, 18 were uploaded to the social media account outside of lunch hours, as documented on his timesheets. Investigators noted that the visits depicted in the posts occurred during the day but could not definitively conclude that they occurred during work hours. The director promoting his construction business on social media accounts during work hours and any visiting of personal job sites for non MHEMA purposes while using county-owned vehicles and fuel during work hours increases county liability risks and risks of fraud, waste, or abuse going undetected.

Hamblen County officials indicated that they have corrected or intend to correct these investigative findings.