

# Emergency Ride Home Program

## Overview

### The Need

Employees who sustainably commute to work (transit, carpool, walk, and bike), sometimes find themselves in emergency situations where they need to get home in a short period of time.

### The Solution

An ERH program gives these employees the option of taking a quick ride home (i.e. taxi), with full or partial compensation by their employer.

### The Benefit

Employees utilizing sustainable transportation modes feel supported and the ERM program eliminates added stress in already high-stress

*Emergency Ride Home program is an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to reducing traffic and improving air quality by encouraging commuters to leave their car behind for their commute to work.*

Emergency Ride Home (ERH) programs are a form of “low-cost commuter insurance”. They are a “safety net” for sustainable commuters by providing a quick and reliable ride home in the event of an unexpected personal or family emergency or illness, unscheduled overtime, or if the regular ride home is not available for certain reasons. This addresses a common objection to use alternative modes of transportation: “I need my car just in case”. When commuters have access to an ERH program, confidence in commuting options rises, and so does participation in sustainable transportation.

Through an ERH program, registered employees are provided with a free or partially subsidized ride home, and are typically restricted to a certain number per calendar year. The cost of offering this program to employees tends to be low because it is infrequently used.



## Getting Started

**1. Cost.** The cost of creating and launching an ERH program varies, but it ultimately depends on how much investment is made into creating materials, the guidelines around usage, marketing the program to employees, and general administration. ERH programs tend to be low cost and, as seen below, typically cost only a few dollars on average per eligible employee per calendar year. Once set-up, these programs tend to be low effort to administer.

The table below summarizes findings from a 2002 survey of more than 45 ERH programs ([National Center for Transit Research, University of South Florida](#)). The survey confirms that ERH programs are inexpensive and require little administrative effort once they are established.

	Urban	Urban/Suburban	Suburban/Rural
Administrative Burden (minutes/week per 100 commuters)	10	15	15
Usage Rates (rides/year per 100 commuters)	3	6	6
Approx. Cost (\$/commuter per year)	\$2	\$5	\$5

The table below summarizes findings from the 2007 Employer TDM Program Benchmarking Survey by the Center for Urban Transportation Research. It shows the average number of ERH trips per year based on the size of workplace.

Employer Size	Number of Employers by Number of ERH Rides					
	No Rides	1-9 Rides	10-24 Rides	25-49 Rides	50-99 Rides	>100 Rides
<99			3			
100-249	1	2				
250-499			1	1		
500-999	1	4		1	1	
1,000-4,999	3	4	1	2	3	1
5,000-9,999		3	1	2		1
>10,000	3	3	2		1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

**2. Guidelines.** An employer faces a variety of decisions when establishing a new ERH program, including [Terms & Conditions](#). The following are a few key questions to consider:

- Which employees should be eligible for the service?
- What circumstances should merit providing a ride?
- How should rides be provided?
- How often will a commuter be able to use the service?

It is important to have clear guidelines around who is eligible for the ERH. Overly restrictive requirements will limit the number of commuters who utilize the service, where as a less restrictive policy may result in greater effectiveness at encouraging alternative modes of transportation and therefore getting greater participation from employees. Here are some common parameters used for eligibility:

- Employees must pre-register for the service.
- Employees must participate in a rideshare program (i.e. [GoManitoba](#)).
- Employees must carpool, bike, walk, or take transit to work a minimum number of days.  
A typical cut-off could be:
  - At least two or three times per week or eight to 12 times per month.
- Excludes employees who drove to work on the day they request a ride.
  - i.e. employee who drove alone to work who has unexpected engine troubles

ERH programs need guidelines to specify when rides will be provided. The following are example circumstances where an employee would be eligible or not eligible for a ride through an ERH program:

### **Eligible**

- Personal or family emergency.
- Personal or family illness.
- Unscheduled overtime approved by a supervisor.
- Driver of an employee's carpool having to leave work unexpectedly.

### **Not Eligible**

- Pre-arranged appointments, such as visits to the doctor or dentist.
- Weather emergencies, earthquakes, or other natural disasters.
- Work-related travel, such as rides to the airport or business meetings across town.
- Regular rides to work.

## Green Action Centre

### Workplace Commuter Options

- Transit disruptions or delays.
- Overtime that occurs regularly, is scheduled in advance, or not approved by a supervisor.
- Building closures.
- Power outages
- Transportation to a hospital or doctor's office following an on-the-job injury. Expenses associated with these types of injuries and accidents are typically covered under workers compensation.

Transparency with guidelines is important, so that there are no gray areas and employees understand how to navigate the program with ease. This includes how to apply for the program, the procedure for requesting a ride, limitations for the program's use, etc. The more specific the better. This could include providing an FAQ sheet.

Programs may use one or multiple means of providing a ride, including:

- Taxi
- On-demand ride services
- Rental car
- Transit
- Company fleet vehicle
- Ride with a coworker

Programs usually limit how often an employee may receive an emergency ride. Many programs limit employees to a fixed number of rides, such as two and 10 per calendar year, or to a total dollar amount spent on rides, such as \$100 per calendar year. Programs with limits can notify employees who are nearing their usage limits. Other programs do not impose usage limits at all due to the rarity of uptake (experience shows that employees rarely use the service more than once per year). Either way, the ERH program materials should clearly describe the program's usage limits.

**Step 3. Administration.** Some ERH programs issue vouchers to employees, which are provided to the ride provider as payment. The ride provider submits the voucher with a billing invoice for payment. Other programs ask employees to pay upfront and submit a claim form with receipts for reimbursement. Employers can partially or fully cover the cost for the program. For example, vouchers can be set for a particular dollar amount or percentage of coverage.

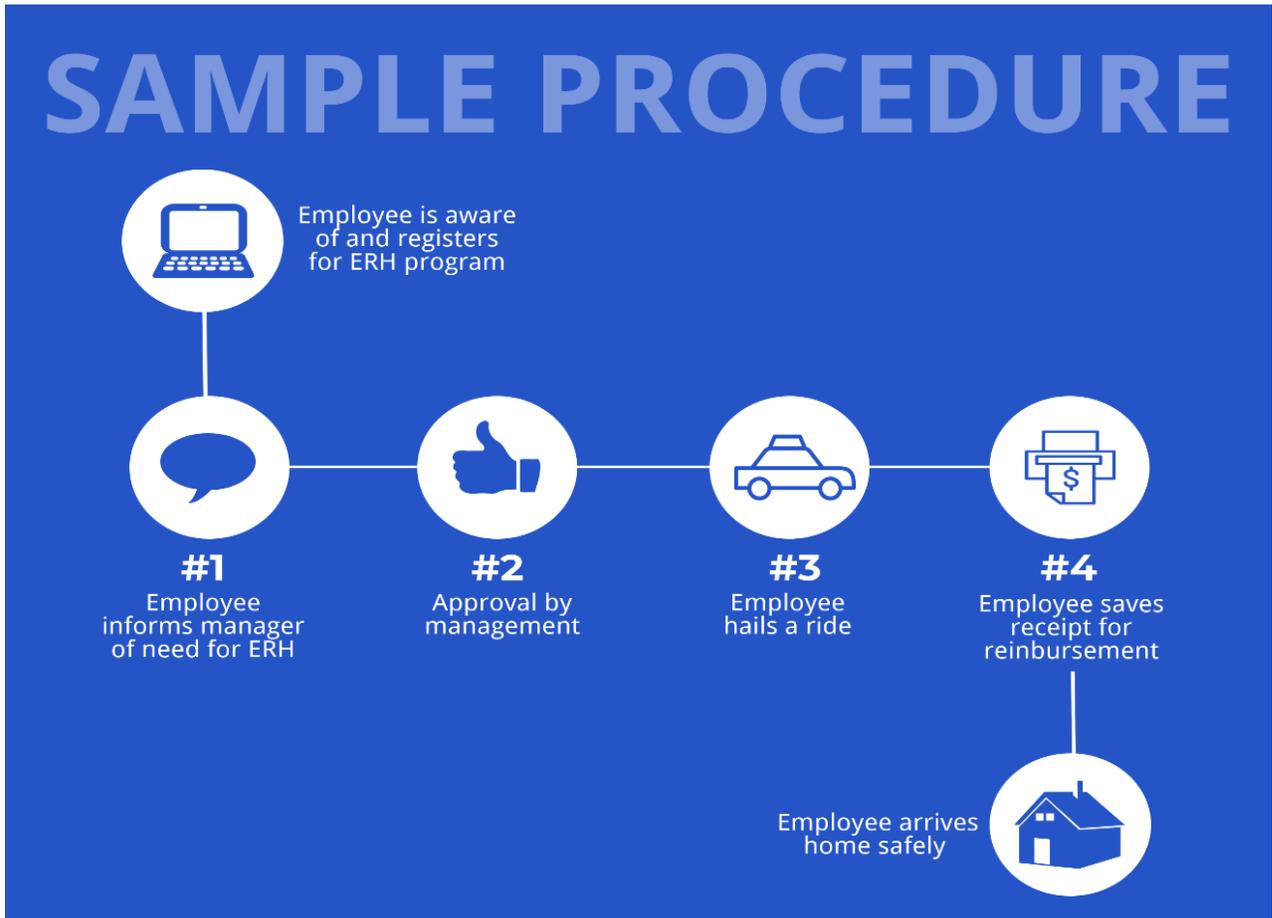
As employees register, ensure there is a process in place to verify eligibility, enter their details into a database, and collect liability waivers (should an employee have an accident on the ride

home). Registration is also a great time to educate employees about how and when to use the program.

Evaluations and annual surveys are a great way to gather information and feedback that can be used to fine-tune and improve ERH programs. They collect feedback that help gauge the effectiveness of your program and commuters' overall satisfaction with the service.

**5. Management.** Most ERH programs have found that misuse is rarely a problem. The following measures will help you manage your program effectively, and keep misuse to a minimum:

- Have users pre-register for the program online. Once an employee is registered, have a process in place to verify that each participant meets the program's eligibility criteria.
- Require annual registration to keep the database up-to-date and clean.
- Require employees to sign an agreement and waiver form.
- Brief managers on when and how the program will provide rides and require a manager to approve each ride request before the ride is arranged.
- In orientation materials for new employees, include information about the proper use of the ERH program.



➔ See this [Sample Emergency Ride Home Policy](#) from a local Winnipeg workplace

***Sources***

National Center for Transit Research, University of South Florida - [Emergency Ride Home Toolkit](#)

[Commute Ontario](#) – Emergency Ride Home Terms and Conditions, FAQ, and Claim Form

Victoria Transport Policy Institute - [Guaranteed Ride Home, A Backup For Commuters Who Use Alternative Modes](#)

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission - [Emergency Ride Home](#)