



POLICY TITLE: *Departmental Motor Vehicle Operation*

STANDARD/REF #: 41.2.1; 41.3.1; 41.3.3

APPROVED BY: *David Dostal, Chief*

REVIEWED DATE: 3/16/2026

REQUIRED REVIEWERS: *Administrative Operations Captain; Captain of Patrol; Lead Driving Instructor*

REVISED DATE: 3/17/2025

POLICY/PURPOSE:

It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Police Department (CRPD) that a responding officer may change a dispatched response code based upon reasonable and articulable information. When a response code is changed the officer must notify the Joint Communications Agency (JCA) of the change. The Watch Commander or shift supervisor may override the dispatcher or officer on code responses. [41.2.1c]

DEFINITIONS:

Police vehicles responding to calls for service will be operated in either a routine, urgent, or emergency mode as defined:

Routine: [41.2.1a]

Person(s) not in compliance with minor city ordinances (i.e. shoplifting incidents, criminal investigation reports, abandoned auto reports, barking dogs, and other miscellaneous non-emergency service calls). Officers will respond in accordance with all traffic laws.

Urgent: [41.2.1b]

Respond immediately, no emergency exists where life or property is in imminent danger. Emergency lights and siren are to be used at the officer's discretion (i.e. property damage accident with lane blockage). Officers will respond with either lights or lights and siren in accordance with Cedar Rapids City Code and Iowa Code 321.231.

Emergency:

An immediate threat to a person or property. Officers will respond with lights and siren in accordance with Cedar Rapids City Code and Iowa Code 321.231.

AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLES (CEDAR RAPIDS CITY CODE): [41.2.1d]

The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected perpetrator of a felony or in response to an incident dangerous to the public or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section.

The driver or any authorized emergency vehicle may:

- Park or stand an authorized emergency vehicle, irrespective of the provisions of this title.
- Disregard laws or regulations governing direction of movement for the minimum distance necessary before an alternative route that conforms to the traffic laws and regulations is available.



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Iowa 321.231 allows for emergency vehicles to:

- Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down to maintain a speed deemed necessary for safe operation by the driver based on information known to the driver at the time.
- Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as the driver does not recklessly endanger life or property.
- Refer to Iowa 321.231 for additional guidelines.

The exemptions granted to an authorized emergency vehicle as stated above for a fire department vehicle, police vehicle, or ambulance shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of an audible signaling device meeting the requirements of Iowa Code, section 321.433, or a visual signaling device approved by the state, except that use of an audible or visual signaling device shall not be required when exercising the exemption granted when the vehicle is operated by a peace officer pursuing a suspected violator of the speed restrictions imposed by or pursuant to this title, for the purpose of determining the speed of travel of such suspected violator.

❖ **NOTE: All CRPD officers operating a department emergency vehicle must use emergency lights or emergency lights and siren while operating in an emergency mode.**

The foregoing provisions shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of the driver's reckless disregard for the safety of others.

- Emergency vehicles will not enter into oncoming traffic lanes unless both emergency lights and sirens are activated:
 - When responding to an emergency assignment, officers will not operate a police vehicle at a speed or in a manner that inhibits their ability to control the vehicle.
 - Officers will not proceed through intersections or traffic signals until the officer is sure that other traffic has yielded the right-of-way.
 - The officer will adhere to the basic rules of traffic safety, regardless of the nature of the assignment.
 - Any officer who is involved in a collision will be required to explain their actions.
 - The use of emergency lights and siren is dictated by circumstances. In the following situations justification may be determined by the police officer:
 - Stopping vehicle on the roadway.
 - At the scene of a motor vehicle collision.



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- At the scene of a traffic control assignment, if applicable.
- At the scene of any type of roadway obstruction.
- Area of danger to the public, which is located on the traveled portion of a roadway.
- When a call is received by an officer indicating an emergency exists, the primary duty is to get there as safely and as quickly as conditions permit.
 - Officers should not pull up behind another vehicle and immediately sound the siren. The motorist may stop suddenly.
 - Officers should not pass on the right of a vehicle in traffic unless absolutely necessary.
 - Officers should always maintain adequate radio volume and remain cognizant of the fact the dispatcher may wish to relay additional information to them while operating in an emergency mode.
- On certain types of emergency responses the sirens and emergency lights may not be used if it would increase the chances of alerting the criminal of the officer's approach. Extreme caution should always be exercised when responding to a call in emergency mode without emergency lights and siren in operation.
- Upon approaching the immediate area of criminal activities, the officer may further reduce the chances of detection by turning off the headlights of the squad. This may only be done when it can be done safely without endangering persons or property.
- Officers, even on emergency calls, are not to go around lowered railroad gates unless they can visually determine that no train is present and crossing can be made safely.
- Before responding to an emergency call, officers should consider possible routes and then take the safest, fastest one.
- No indiscriminate use of siren.

OPERATION OF EMERGENCY VEHICLE(S):

When stopping another vehicle, officers should attempt to make the stop in the safest possible location, considering both the safety of the officer and occupants of the stopped vehicle. If an officer is assigned to investigate a minor motor vehicle accident on a main arterial street during rush hour, the officer may have the drivers move the vehicles around the corner to a side street. This will enhance both the flow of traffic and safety.



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No matter how important the call is, the officer will not help the situation if they should become involved in an accident and cannot reach the scene.

- During performance of official duties, CRPD vehicles may be driven through interstate and freeway medians in cases where it can be done safely and without damaging vehicles or fixtures adjacent to the roadway. Should vehicle damage occur, it will be reported to the Watch Commander as soon as practical.
- All personnel should be constantly aware that those special privileges afforded emergency vehicles, with regard to traffic laws and regulations, are only effective when the vehicle is readily identifiable as an emergency vehicle. Unmarked police cars, therefore, may not operate as emergency vehicles unless the siren is in operation and/or a red light is flashing. Use of a spotlight without the siren does not identify the car as an emergency vehicle. Unmarked cars that are not equipped with sirens or red lights may not be operated as emergency vehicles merely because they belong to the CRPD and are driven by officers. [41.3.1]
- Operators of unmarked police vehicles should be aware of the potential for the average citizen to be apprehensive of stopping for unmarked police vehicles. Officers should be alert for reactions varying from increased distance to stop the vehicle, to failure of motorist to stop. Marked police vehicles may need to respond in order to stop a vehicle.
- Officers should be familiar with and comply with the sections of the Iowa Statutes which apply to the operation of emergency vehicles in accordance with Cedar Rapids City Code and Iowa Code 321.231.
- Officers are not required to shut off their vehicles when they leave their squad for an extended period of time so long as the vehicle is secured. This allowance is due to:
 - The temperature sensitivities of certain items such as naloxone and Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)
 - The use of emergency lighting equipment
 - K9 Unit requirements
- All departmental personnel, both sworn and civilian, shall wear a seat belt whenever operating a city-owned vehicle or when riding in a city vehicle as a front seat passenger, as dictated by state law. [41.3.3]

PUSH BUMPER:

The push bumpers are only to be used for pushing disabled vehicles that are on a highway or roadway causing or likely to cause, an obstruction of traffic, and/or when such obstruction is creating or is likely to create an undo hazard to the safe flow of traffic.



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Procedure:

- Only non-commercial passenger vehicles will be pushed via the push bumper.
- Push bumpers will not be used to push start vehicles.
- Officers should not push a vehicle if they determine the driver is not capable of operating the vehicle to be pushed.
- Officers will adhere to the following when utilizing push bumpers:
 - Activate emergency lights while rendering assistance to disabled vehicles.
 - Activate car/body cameras if vehicle is equipped. Ensure to include:
 - Before and after body camera footage of the disabled vehicle
 - License plate and driver's consent on video
 - Prior consent of the driver is desired; however, may not always be an option during an emergency situation.
 - All video recording will be labeled with a case number or event number.
 - Ensure traffic is clear, or stopped if necessary, and push the disabled vehicle to the nearest shoulder or closest safe location.
- All passengers should exit the vehicle and remain at a safe location until the push has been completed and both the squad car and disabled vehicle have come to a complete stop. Only the driver should be in the vehicle when being pushed. If due to safety concerns this is not possible, all passengers should have their seatbelts on and their heads placed against properly adjusted headrests.
- The following instructions will be given to the person operating the vehicle being pushed:
 - Make certain all passengers have their seatbelts secured
 - Place foot on brake
 - Place the vehicle in neutral
 - All passengers place their heads against properly adjusted headrests
 - Signal when ready to be pushed by raising your hand
 - Once the police vehicle makes contact with your vehicle, remove foot from the brake and keep foot off the brake while the actual push is underway and the vehicles are touching
 - ❖ **NOTE: Be advised that loss of power may affect power steering and brakes**
 - There may be a slight bump when the push bumper makes contact with the vehicle



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- Steer the vehicle to the predetermined location agreed upon by the driver and officer
 - Check for proper alignment of the vehicles, the push bumpers should be contacting the bumper squarely and have plenty of clearance up and down so the push bars don't ride up and crush the trunk lid. Once proper alignment has been established, make extremely slow contact with the disabled vehicle.
 - ❖ **NOTE: Officers should be aware of trailer hitches as they can make push bumper use not advisable.**
 - Do not exceed 10 M.P.H. during push, as faster speeds may activate the airbags.
 - Disengage the push if the vehicle begins to turn or go up or down over a driveway approach.
 - The following provisions shall be adhered to when pushing an unoccupied disabled vehicle:
 - Emergency lights shall be activated.
 - Let other drivers/pedestrians know what you are intending on doing.
 - Officers shall exercise due care to avoid any unnecessary property damage or injury.
 - Ensure that the disabled vehicle is in park, or the emergency brake is on.
 - Verify safe and adequate contact between the push bumper of the police vehicle and the disabled vehicle.
 - Disabled vehicles should be pushed the shortest distance required to get to a safe location off the roadway.
 - If it is practical and safe to do so, visually inspect the disabled vehicle for damage both before and after pushing the vehicle. (Photograph if any damage occurred or suspected.)
 - If a vehicle cannot be safely pushed from the roadway, requesting assistance from a tow truck should be considered.
 - Report any damage to either vehicle sustained during a push to your immediate supervisor.
 - If a department vehicle sustains damage, a Police Vehicle Damage form (CRPD #729) will be completed. The completed Police Vehicle Damage form (CRPD #729) will be submitted to the driver's division commander who will verify receipt and forward the reports to the Administrative Operations Lt. for filing and processing.
 - A copy of the Police Vehicle Damage form (CRPD #729) should be placed into the Vehicle Damage book located in the Command Office.
 - Down the vehicle, in order for it to be inspected by the mechanics.



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- If the disabled vehicle sustains permanent, visible damage as a result of the push, the officer will
 - Request a commander to the scene
 - Obtain a case number if not already issued
 - Complete an Incident Report (CRPD #600)
 - Notify the Administrative Operations Lieutenant via email