

# Police Department Policy and Procedure Manual

## Chapter 4 — Operations

**Section Number:** 4-1-1  
**Section Title:** Operation of Emergency Vehicles  
**Most Recent Update:** 06/23/2020

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### I. Policy

- A. To carry out the mission of protecting life it may become necessary for an officer to operate a police vehicle as an emergency vehicle. It is the policy of this Department to safely respond to emergency situations.

### II. Definitions

- A. Emergency-as a method of motor vehicle operation means an immediate response, usually utilizing emergency warning lights and siren. Emergency responses are necessitated by events, which if allowed to continue unchecked, will likely result in death, injury, or serious property damage.
- B. Non-emergency– as a method of motor vehicle operation means routine driving. Non-emergency operation is that which is generally used while on routine patrol, or when responding to calls for service of a non-emergency nature.
- C. Police Vehicle – means a vehicle used for police operations. Sometimes referred to as a “patrol vehicle” or “patrol unit”, there are two types:
  - 1. Marked – An authorized emergency vehicle of the Clive Police Department that displays the department’s designated logo and striping, and is equipped with either audible and/or visual emergency warning devices as required by the Code of Iowa for the purpose of being exempted from certain traffic regulations during emergencies or pursuits. These exemptions shall only apply when such vehicle is making use of an audible signaling device meeting the requirements of section 321.433 and/or a visual signaling device as defined in section 321.423. The stipulated exemptions 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.

- a. Audible Signal: A siren, whistle or bell ...”capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from a distance of not less than 500 feet...” (Code of Iowa, Section 321.433)
  - b. Visual Signal: A “light or lighting device that, when illuminated, will exhibit a solid flashing or strobing red or a blue light used in conjunction with a red light provided that the blue light is positioned on the passenger side of the vehicle and the red light is positioned on the driver’s side of the vehicle.” (Code of Iowa, section 321.423)
2. Unmarked – Any vehicle that does not meet the definition of a marked vehicle.

### III. Procedures

- A. It is the responsibility of the driver of each police department vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with the Iowa Motor Vehicle Code. This code provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations, which apply to police department vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident or when pursuing violators of the law. Responding to an emergency does not absolve the driver of the responsibility to drive with due caution. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for safe operation at all times.
- B. The use of sirens and warning lights does not automatically give the right of way to the emergency vehicle. These devices simply request the right of way from other drivers based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle’s presence. Emergency vehicle drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected inappropriate actions of others.
- C. Police vehicles may be operated as emergency vehicles when the officer has reasonable cause to believe a life is in danger or when in immediate pursuit of an offender. Communications personnel will attempt to ascertain the true degree of emergency involved in all complaints and relay this information to the cars dispatched.
- D. The following may be considered some examples of emergency situations necessitating the operation of a police vehicle as an emergency vehicle:
  1. Officer needs emergency assistance.
  2. Report of a forcible felony in progress.
  3. A person calling for help in such a manner as to indicate immediate danger.
  4. Report of an explosion.

5. A reported fire of an occupied structure.
  6. Report of a shooting or stabbing.
  7. Report of an auto accident with serious injury or other extenuating circumstances.
  8. A rescue call where immediate life-saving care is imperative.
  9. Pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law.
  10. Responding to a crime in progress in which there is a threat of physical danger to the parties involved
- E. Regardless of the nature of the emergency, officers should not drive in such a manner as to endanger the life and property of another. Officers shall always consider road, traffic and weather conditions and their ability to control the vehicle under adverse circumstances. Officers shall drive in a manner which will allow them to maintain control of their vehicle at all times.
- F. When responding to an emergency situation an officer driving in the emergency mode may:
1. Exceed the posted speed limits. Officers shall not drive at a speed greater than will permit the vehicle to be stopped in the assured clear distance ahead.
  2. Proceed past a red light/stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down, as may be required and necessary for safe operation. When approaching a red traffic light or stop sign an officer will decelerate and be prepared to stop, enter the intersection only when it is safe, yield to all moving vehicles and pedestrians, and accelerate only when it is safe to do so.
  3. When approaching a green light in the emergency mode an officer will decelerate and be prepared to stop, enter the intersection only when it is safe, and accelerate only when it is safe to do so.
- G. Unnecessary emergency response shall be avoided. If more than one police vehicle is responding in an emergency mode, the first arriving police unit shall advise the additional unit(s) to respond non-emergency if appropriate. If a police unit is responding to a fire or rescue call in the emergency mode, emergency equipment will be deactivated if a fire or rescue unit arrives on scene prior to the police.
- H. During an emergency response, Police Department vehicles should avoid passing other emergency vehicles especially when those units would have primary responsibility for the scene (fire, rescue, etc.). If passing is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications.

## I. Notifications

1. The shift supervisor will notified of any incident in which the officer feels supervisory assistance is needed.
  2. The medical examiner shall be notified of all unattended deaths within the City of Clive.
  3. Public works for the Iowa Department of Transportation shall be notified of any road hazard which the office is unable to immediately correct.
  4. When a problem or disruption with a utility providing a vital public services such as electricity, Natural gas, or phone service is discovered, the appropriate agency shall be notified.
  5. When an officer encounters a fire or medical situation, they shall immediately notify the Clive Fire Department
  6. Communication personnel shall assist in making the above notifications when directed by an officer.
- J. A supervisor may order a subordinate to cease driving in the emergency mode if in his/her judgment it is not safe to do so, or such an emergency response is not warranted. Any officer directed by a supervisor to cease driving in the emergency mode will comply immediately or as soon as it is safe to deactivate emergency equipment.
- K. Emergency warning lights may be used without a siren to signal traffic violators to the extreme right of the roadway to stop. It may be necessary to use both the lights and siren to effect the violator stop. The warning lights may also be used to assist motorists parked or stopped in hazardous locations, or when the patrol vehicle is stopped on the roadway or in a hazardous location.
- L. The emergency siren should be used in conjunction with the warning lights when responding to emergency situations, and when involved in a pursuit. When responding to a holdup alarm, the siren may be deactivated a short distance from the scene so as not to announce the pending arrival of officers to offenders.
- M. Unmarked police vehicles will not generally be operated as emergency vehicles. Officers operating unmarked vehicles will use extra caution, as their vehicles are more difficult for other drivers to identify as police vehicles. Officers driving unmarked police vehicles may stop traffic violators for flagrant violations committed in their presence if the stop can be made safely. Officers should call for the assistance of a marked patrol vehicle whenever possible to safely protect the scene.

- N. Officers are not permitted to conduct high speed escorts. If it is necessary to escort funeral processions, parades, or slow moving vehicles with oversize loads, the police vehicle's flashing lights may be used. Caution should be exercised while the escort is in progress.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael G. Cennamo".

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Michael G. Venema  
Chief of Police