HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

GENERAL ORDER OPS-28
TRAFFIC SERVICES & TOWING PROCEDURES

Effective December 15, 2025

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I. POLICY

The Howard County Department of Police (HCPD) shall assist motorists and address quality of life issues to facilitate the smooth and efficient flow of traffic throughout the County.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Abandoned Vehicle: Any motor vehicle, trailer, or semi-trailer:

1. That is inoperable and left unattended on Public Property for more than 48 hours;

2. That has remained illegally (i.e. in violation of a parking regulation) on Public Property for more than 48 hours;

3. That has remained on Private Property for more than 48 hours without the consent of the owner or person in control of the property;

4. That has been left unattended on any portion of a controlled access highway for more than 48 hours; or

5. That has remained on Public Property for more than 48 hours and:

a. Is not displaying currently valid registration plates; or

b. Is displaying registration plates of another vehicle.

B. County Utilized Towing Service (CUTS): Tow companies approved for HCPD tows, such as accidents, traffic violations, etc.

C. Hazardous Conditions: Roadway and environmental hazards, to include:

1. Defects in the roadway itself (i.e., holes, ruts, or dangerous shoulders);

2. Lack of or defects in highway safety features (e.g. center and roadway striping and reflectors) or improper, damaged, destroyed, or visually obstructed traffic control and information signs;

3. Lack of traffic control and information signs (i.e., curve, hill warnings, stop, yield signs, speed limit signs, street and highway identification) or improper, damaged, destroyed, or visually obstructed traffic control or information signs;

4. Lack of roadway lighting systems or defective lighting systems;

5. Natural or man-caused obstructions (i.e., fallen trees and rocks, litter, debris, parts of vehicle, broken water mains, and electrical wires);

6. Ice or heavy snow accumulations on roadway surfaces;

7. Fire and smoke in areas adjacent to the highway;

8. Vehicles parked or abandoned on or near the roadway; and/or

9. The lack of mechanical traffic control devices, improperly located or malfunctioning traffic control devices. This shall include traffic lights and downed stop signs. Members shall strictly follow the specific additional requirements identified within this Order regarding traffic control devices.

D. Hazardous Material: Any element, compound or combination that is flammable, corrosive, explosive, toxic, radioactive, an oxidizer, or is highly reactive and that, because of handling, storing, processing, and packaging may have detrimental effects upon operating and emergency personnel, the public, equipment, and/or the environment.

E. Private Property: Any property not owned or controlled by a federal, state, or county governmental entity.

F. Public Property: Any property owned or controlled by a federal, state, or county governmental entity.

G. Roadside Hazard: All physical features of the roadside environment which are such that a vehicle leaving the road surface for any reason, even momentarily, can impact with them, resulting in unnecessary injury to people or damaged property. Roadside hazards in this definition include but are not limited to:

1. Rigid non-yielding supports for traffic control devices and lights, or the non-performance of safety installations (i.e. breakaway sign supports that fail to function properly);

2. Improperly engineered guardrails;

3. Bridge abutments and other hazardous fixed objects built off the roadway into which the vehicle might crash with high injury probability; and/or

4. Utility poles, trees, ditches, inappropriately steep banks, culverts, rock formations, and other fixed objects and features of the roadside environment into which a vehicle might crash instead of being able to come to a stop in a clear distance.

H. Special Events: Activities that may involve large amounts of vehicular or pedestrian traffic. These may include parades, demonstrations, sporting events, festivals, or other large public gatherings.

III. GENERAL ASSISTANCE TO MOTORISTS[1]

A. Members shall offer reasonable assistance to motorists who are in need of aid. This will apply at all hours of the day, but particularly at night and in periods of inclement weather when potential hazards are greater due to reduced visibility. This shall also apply to off-duty members driving Departmental vehicles.

B. Members shall be constantly alert for roadway users who appear to need assistance. Members shall provide information and directions upon request. In an effort to better serve the citizenry, members should become familiar with the streets and services in their respective patrol areas.

C. Members shall notify the Communications Division of the location where assistance is being rendered to a motorist. If practical and reasonable, members should transport motorists to nearby telephones to make arrangements for service or for a tow.[2]

D. Members shall NOT use a Departmental vehicle to jumpstart a motorist's vehicle or transport fuel without supervisory approval. Only when extenuating circumstances exist will a supervisor approve these actions.[3]

E. Members in vehicles equipped with push bumpers and who have been trained in their use may assist motorists in moving disabled vehicles from the travel portion of a roadway. When it becomes necessary to push a disabled vehicle from the traveled portion of the roadway, it will only be pushed as far as necessary to remove it from the traveled portion of the roadway to a safe location.

1. Only patrol vehicles equipped with push bumpers will be used to push a disabled vehicle. Push bumpers will not be used to push start stalled vehicles.
2. Passenger cars, unloaded pickup trucks, and vans not exceeding three-quarter ton will be the only vehicles that may be pushed. Under no circumstances will a vehicle towing another vehicle or a vehicle in combination with another vehicle be pushed using the push bumper.
3. Verbal consent is required from the owner/operator of the disabled vehicle prior to pushing the vehicle from the traveled portion of the roadway, with the noting the name of the person giving consent and the vehicle's tag number in CAD via MDC or Communications.
4. After receiving authorization from the owner/operator, the member will ensure that the vehicle can be safely pushed from the roadway by performing a cursory check of the vehicle's overall operational condition in addition to the vehicle's steering and braking capabilities.
5. Prior to pushing a vehicle, the member will ensure that the vehicle operator and passenger(s) are utilizing the vehicle's safety restraining devices, the vehicle's transmission is in neutral, and the parking/emergency brake is released. The owner/operator of the disabled vehicle will be advised that the vehicle's steering and braking functions will require additional physical exertion during the maneuver, and all precautions will be taken to avoid damaging the vehicle.
6. The patrol vehicle will be operated at the lowest speed possible until the push bumper makes contact with the disabled vehicle.
    a. The operating speed of the patrol vehicle during the pushing maneuver is not to exceed 5 mph and all available emergency lighting will be activated.
    b. While pushing the disabled vehicle, the member will place the gearshift selector of the patrol vehicle in the lowest gear possible.

[1] CALEA 61.4.1
[2] CALEA 61.4.1
[3] CALEA 61.4.1

c. Under no circumstances will a vehicle be pushed with the police vehicle's gearshift selector in drive or with the overdrive system activated.

7. Should damage occur to the other vehicle during this process, it will be photographed and documented in a memo to the Watch Commander detailing the nature and cause of the damage. A copy of the memo and contact information for the vehicle owner will be forwarded to Risk Management.

8. If damage occurs to the HCPD vehicle, the member will contact Central Fleet and arrange for repair in accordance with ADM-23, Departmental Vehicle Policy.

9. If the rubber guard on the push bumper is missing or damaged, the member will contact Central Fleet and arrange for repair in accordance with ADM-23, Departmental Vehicle Policy. No attempt will be made to push any vehicle until the push bumper is repaired.

10. The intentional use of a push bumper during a vehicle pursuit is strictly prohibited.

F. Members may use their discretion when assisting a motorist with a flat tire. Traffic flow, location of vehicle, road conditions, and weather should be taken into consideration when deciding how best to assist the motorist.[4] Assistance for other mechanical issues should be restricted to ensuring the safety of the scene and taking other reasonable steps to secure appropriate services for the motorist.

G. Stranded motorists shall not be abandoned when exposed to a hazardous situation.

1. Consideration shall be given to traffic hazards, location, time of day, weather conditions, and the priority of other calls for service.

2. This does not preclude placing warning devices (flares, traffic cones, etc.) to warn oncoming traffic and clearing the scene if conditions are such that this could be done safely.

3. Members will periodically check to ensure the condition does not change. If a member cannot check on the stranded motorist, they shall notify Communications to have another member make the check.[5]

H. Members shall render all practical assistance to motorists who are involved in emergency situations.[6]

1. Vehicle Fires: Members shall respond to vehicle fires to provide assistance to the motorist unless they are canceled by the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS).

a. Members arriving on the scene of a vehicle fire shall advise Communications of the extent of the fire if the DFRS has not yet arrived.[7]

b. Members should use the fire extinguisher from their Departmental vehicle, as appropriate.

c. Members shall direct or divert traffic as needed to expedite the smooth flow of traffic.

2. Medical Emergencies: Members shall handle medical emergencies in accordance with their Emergency Medical Responder training.

a. Upon discovery of a medical emergency, the member will request assistance from the DFRS.[8]

[4] CALEA 61.4.1
[5] CALEA 61.4.1 & 61.3.2d
[6] CALEA 61.4.1 & 61.3.2c
[7] CALEA 61.3.2c
[8] CALEA 41.2.4

b. To assist the DFRS, the member will provide Communications with the type of emergency encountered, location, condition of the patient(s), and any other pertinent information.

3. Traffic direction and control at the scene of a fire or rescue incident is the responsibility of the HCPD.[9] Members will ensure that responding emergency equipment and personnel have direct access to the affected area.

a. Members should coordinate the appropriate access and detour routes with the DFRS Incident Commander at the scene.

b. Members will prohibit access to unauthorized vehicles and persons attempting to enter the scene.

c. Any DFRS personnel arriving at the scene in privately owned vehicles will be directed to park at the edge of the established perimeter. Any problems in this area should be directed to the DFRS Incident Commander.

I. Officers may not move any privately owned vehicle except in exigent circumstances, and then only with supervisory approval.

J. Vehicular Escort Service:[10]

1. Members will NOT escort privately owned vehicles to hospitals or medical facilities in an emergency mode.

a. If a medical emergency is encountered, a member shall contact Communications and request an ambulance and render first aid until the ambulance personnel arrive.

b. If, due to the proximity of the hospital or the condition of the patient, waiting for DFRS would seriously jeopardize the life of the patient, a member may transport the patient with supervisory approval.

2. Legitimate requests for scheduled law enforcement escort services include, but are not limited to, those associated with funerals; motorcades, including dignitaries; oversized vehicles; highway construction vehicles; and vehicles with hazardous or unusual cargo.

a. All requests for vehicular escort services shall be forwarded to the Traffic Management Division Commander for evaluation. When time constraints and availability issues arise, the on-duty Watch Commander shall be notified to assist in the evaluation and manpower deployment.

b. If a vehicle escort is approved, the Traffic Management Division Commander or his designee will ensure that the following functions are performed:

i. The trip route and the maximum speed to be maintained along each segment of the route will be established in advance.

ii. Point traffic control will be established, as appropriate, at locations along the scheduled route.

[9] CALEA 61.3.2c
[10] CALEA 61.3.3

iii. The member in charge of the escort will ensure that the safety of all persons involved in the escort and other motorists on the roadway is maintained at all times.

IV. PARKING RESTRICTIONS

A. "No Parking" signs shall be posted at least 48 hours prior to any of the following circumstances:

1. Upon approval of a request from the Department of Public Works (DPW) that parking restrictions be implemented or a road be closed to assist in the completion of a DPW project.

2. In exigent circumstances, “No Parking” signs can be posted with less than 48 hours notice with the authorization of the Traffic Management Division Commander. In this event, the towing of vehicles should always be done as a last resort.

3. In preparation for a special event for which a permit has been issued.

B. Special Event Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Ensure that all parking restrictions listed in any special event permit are posted at least 48 hours prior to the time the parking restriction will take effect.

2. Coordinate all requests for special parking restrictions as received from DPW.

3. Ensure that "No Parking" signs are posted upon approval of a request from DPW. The request from DPW must be received at least 72 hours prior to the time the parking restriction will take effect. This will allow sufficient time for the Department to comply with the 48-hour notice requirement.

C. Watch Commander Responsibilities:

1. For routine events, the Watch Commander shall be authorized to have vehicles remaining on the affected street and in violation of the parking restriction removed after verifying that "No Parking" signs have been properly posted and attempts to contact the last registered owner have failed.

2. The following procedures shall be followed in emergency or exigent circumstances (i.e. natural disasters, fires, gas line leaks, barricade situations, etc.):

a. The Watch Commander is authorized to immediately remove vehicles from County roadways or County owned or leased property that pose a threat to public safety.

b. The Watch Commander shall ensure that the last known owner of the towed vehicle is notified as soon as practical as to the circumstances surrounding the towing.

3. Ensure a written report is completed in all instances where a vehicle is towed as the result of the above procedure.

V. TOWING PROCEDURES[11]

A. Howard County is divided into separate tow areas. The County maintains towing agreements with private companies that are assigned a particular tow area. Copies of the tow agreements will be kept on file in the Traffic Management Division. All member-initiated requests for tow services will be directed to the contract tow company for the respective area. If the area tow company cannot respond within the timeframe specified within the tow agreement, another contracted tow company can be requested for a member-initiated request.

[11] CALEA 61.4.1, 61.4.3b & 61.2.2f

B. Members of the Traffic Management Division, Crash Reconstruction Section (CRS), may use any County contracted tow company for collisions being investigated by CRS.

C. Requests for towing and/or impoundment will be made through the Communications Division.

D. Officers shall tow a vehicle in the following cases:

1. Any vehicle disabled as the result of a traffic accident.[12]

2. Any vehicle disabled as the result of a vehicle fire.

3. There is probable cause to believe that the vehicle was involved in a criminal or serious motor vehicle offense AND:

a. It contains implements or evidence of a crime; or

b. The vehicle is a tool of the offense and may be used as evidence; or

c. The vehicle must be moved to a suitable location for a search or processing.

4. There is probable cause to believe the vehicle is stolen.

5. The operator of the vehicle is arrested AND:

a. The vehicle presents a danger to the public due to its location; or

b. The vehicle and its contents will likely be stolen or damaged if it is not towed.

Note: When the operator of a vehicle is arrested, the vehicle may not be left on Private Property (i.e. shopping center parking lot) unless permission is first obtained from the property owner. If permission cannot be obtained, the vehicle shall be towed. If permission is obtained, the property owner's name and contact number shall be included in the Incident Report.

E. In addition to the previously listed circumstances, officers and uniformed civilians may tow a vehicle in the following cases:[13]

1. The vehicle presents a safety hazard and cannot be driven or otherwise moved within a reasonable period of time.

2. The vehicle is illegally parked and the Howard County Code authorizes impoundment of vehicles for that specific violation.[14]

a. All vehicles impounded for a parking violation will be issued a parking citation. The Traffic Management Division shall coordinate the impoundment of vehicles that the Howard County Department of Finance has targeted as having multiple outstanding local parking citations, pursuant to the Howard County Code.

b. The Howard County Code allows the HCPD to impound vehicles when exigent circumstances exist and at the owner's expense for the following parking violations:

i. In front of or within five (5) feet of a public driveway or within a private driveway, without consent of the owner or occupant of the premises;

[12] CALEA 61.2.2f
[13] CALEA 61.4.1
[14] CALEA 61.1.12

ii. Within an intersection;

iii. Within a tee or modified tee turnaround;

iv. On a sidewalk or pathway;

v. On a pedestrian or school crosswalk;

vi. Alongside or opposite any street excavation or obstruction when such stopping, standing, or parking would obstruct traffic;

vii. Upon any bridge or other elevated structure;

viii. Within a highway tunnel;

ix. On any ramp entering onto or exiting from any highway;

x. On the roadway side of any vehicle stopped or parked at the edge or curb of a street;

xi. On the traveled portion of any roadway;

xii. In any hazardous or congested parking area posted as a no-parking tow away zone;

xiii. In a bike lane;

xiv. Except as specifically authorized by Howard County Code Section 21.207;

3. The vehicle is subject to forfeiture pursuant to Maryland Code Annotated, Criminal Law Article, Section 5-101, *et seq.*

4. The vehicle meets the criteria for classification as "abandoned" (on public right-of-way and unregistered or inoperable, tagged 48 hours prior).

F. Officers and uniformed civilians towing and/or impounding a vehicle (unless at owner's request) shall:[15]

1. Notify Communications of the need for the area tow service.

2. Complete HCPD Form 2006, Tow Report, for each impounded vehicle and forward the white copy (original) to the Records Section with the Incident Report. One copy each will be given to the tow operator and the vehicle owner/operator (if present). If the owner is present, the officer will have the owner initial the Tow Report to indicate receipt of his copy.

   NOTE: The "Time" section on the Tow Report should be completed to document when the tow truck arrives on the scene, not the time the incident occurred.

3. Inventory the vehicle and any containers in the vehicle for items of value. Cash, jewelry, and other items of significant value shall be removed and placed in the HCPD Property Room. The inventory is to be indicated on the Tow Report.[16]

4. If the owner is not present the member will:

[15] CALEA 61.4.3c & 61.2.2f
[16] CALEA 61.2.2

a. Notify in person or by telephone the vehicle's registered owner of the circumstances for the tow, the location the vehicle was towed to, and the procedures for obtaining its release; AND

b. Complete the HCPD Vehicle Tow Letter on the reverse of the Tow Report and submit it to the appropriate District or Bureau Office for mailing to the last registered owner via certified mail. This will be completed as soon as practical, but in all cases prior to the end of the shift. Returned certified cards will be submitted along with the Tow Report to the Records Section.

5. The report cannot be closed/inactivated by supervisors until provisions of sections E.2 or E.4 have been completed. The report can be closed/inactivated if all investigative avenues have been exhausted (to include a registration check, by VIN, through MD, DE, VA, WV, PA, DC, and/or locating and contacting the lien holder).

6. Members shall submit all available information into the Electronic Tow Log via the Department's SharePoint system as soon as practical, but in all cases prior to the end of shift.

G. Towing at Owner's Request:

1. Notify Communications of the need for the area tow service or allow owner to obtain a tow service, provided the following:

a. Vehicle is not creating a hazard.

b. Vehicle is not involved in a collision with another vehicle.

2. Owner shall make arrangements with the tow company on payment and drop off.

3. No Tow Report is required.

4. No entry in Tow Log is required.

5. If the officer is unable to stay with the vehicle, the officer shall tag the vehicle as disabled.

H. The following does not apply to vehicles seized under forfeiture proceedings. Refer to General Order ADM-09, Asset Seizure and Forfeiture, for information on towing vehicles seized under forfeiture.

1. Supervisory approval is required for any officer holding an impounded vehicle for longer than 48 hours. Holding a vehicle for longer than seven (7) calendar days requires the approval of a District Commander or Bureau Commander. The reasons for holding the vehicle will be documented in an Incident Report.

a. The officer shall document in the report narrative the authorizing supervisor's name to hold the vehicle beyond the 48-hour limit.[17]

b. The officer shall document in the report the authorizing Commander's name to hold the vehicle beyond the seven (7) day limit and the reason for the hold.

c. The officer shall conduct a follow-up by the next duty shift on all vehicles placed on hold and document the reason the vehicle needs to continue to be held. This will be monitored by the officer's supervisor.

d. The officer shall document the date the tow company was notified of the release and the date the registered owner was notified of the release.

[17] CALEA 61.4.3c

e. The report shall not be closed/inactivated by a supervisor until all required information is entered into the report and the vehicle hold is released.

I. If an impounded vehicle is to be processed for evidence, it should be processed at the scene prior to requesting the tow service.[18] If the vehicle cannot be processed at the scene, the vehicle will be towed to the secured tow yard. Refer to General Order OPS-13, Auto Theft Investigations, for information regarding recovered stolen vehicles.

1. If the seriousness of the crime and the circumstances surrounding the case suggests that the vehicle should be towed to a District Station for processing and evidence maintenance, supervisory approval will be obtained prior to the tow.

2. The case investigator shall coordinate the processing of the vehicle and arrange for release and/or disposition upon completion of the processing.

J. The impounding or assisting officer shall remain at the scene until the vehicle has been hooked up by the tow service. Only the vehicle keys shall be turned over to the tow truck driver. If other keys accompany the vehicle keys, they will be returned to the owner. If this is not possible, they will be submitted to the Property Room.

K. If the Tow Report indicates that the vehicle is NOT to be released, the reason for the "hold" will be indicated on the Tow Report, and the vehicle will not be released without the approval of the case investigator.[19]

L. Under no circumstances will the towing or impoundment of vehicles be initiated to punish the owner or operator.

VI. ABANDONED VEHICLE PROCEDURES[20]

A. Vehicles Abandoned on Public Property:

1. If an Abandoned Vehicle is on Public Property, the member will conduct a stolen check on the vehicle and registration tag. If the vehicle is not stolen, the vehicle will be tagged with an Abandoned Vehicle Tag.

a. All sections of the Abandoned Vehicle Tag will be completed, to include the officer's name and telephone number.

b. The Abandoned Vehicle Tag will be placed in a conspicuous place on the vehicle.

c. The lower portion (stub) of the Abandoned Vehicle Tag will be submitted to the Special Operations Bureau for processing.

2. Upon receipt of the Abandoned Vehicle Tag stub by the Special Operations Bureau, the information on the stub will be recorded in the electronic Abandoned Vehicle Log. The stub will then be assigned to an officer or a uniformed civilian for follow up.

3. After 48 hours has elapsed, the assigned officer or uniformed civilian will respond to the location and verify the information on the stub. If the vehicle is no longer at the location, the stub will be marked "GOA," dated, and returned to the Special Operations Bureau for log entry and disposal.

4. If the vehicle is still at the location, the officer or uniformed civilian will:

[18] CALEA 61.2.2f
[19] CALEA 61.4.3c
[20] CALEA 61.4.3a

a. Confirm that the vehicle is on Public Property and that the vehicle's condition meets the definition of an Abandoned Vehicle.

b. Obtain a report number if there is not a report number already assigned to the stub for an Abandoned Vehicle and have the vehicle towed to and stored by a County Utilized Towing Service (CUTS). An Abandoned Vehicle may be towed at any time if it presents a significant public safety hazard.

c. Conduct stolen and registration checks to determine the legal owner of the vehicle. If there is no registration tag(s) on the vehicle, the VIN will be checked through the vehicle registration records for Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Washington, D.C., or any other state which may be indicated by inspection stickers etc. for the last registered owner.

c. If the owner/lien holder is located, they will be contacted in person or by phone.

d. Whether or not the member was able to contact the owner/lien holder, the member will forward the completed Abandoned Vehicle Tag stub, one copy of the Incident Report, the original HCPD 2006a,Tow Letter form, and one copy of the Tow Report to the Special Operations Bureau by the end of the shift.

f. The Special Operations Bureau will send a copy of the Tow Report to the owner, if known, via certified mail. Returned certified cards will be submitted, along with the Tow Report to the Records Section.

B. Abandoned Vehicles not claimed by an owner will be processed in accordance with Standard Operating Procedure ISOC-01, Abandoned Motor Vehicle Process.

C. Vehicles Abandoned on Private Property – Commercial[21]:

1. Members responding to complaints of Abandoned Vehicles on Commercial Private Property will conduct a stolen vehicle inquiry on the VIN and registration tag.

a. If the vehicle is not stolen, the officer will direct the property owner or acting agent to contact their contracted trespass tower to have the vehicle removed from their property. If the commercial property does not have a contracted trespass tower, they will be instructed to contact the Howard County Office of Consumer Protection to set up that process.

D. Vehicles Abandoned on Private Property – Non-Commercial:[22]

1. Members responding to complaints of Abandoned Vehicles on Non-Commercial Private Property will conduct a stolen vehicle inquiry on the VIN and registration tag.

a. If the vehicle is not stolen, the officer will tag the vehicle as abandoned and then after 48 hours, the vehicle may be towed from the Non-Commercial Private Property by an officer or uniformed HCPD civilian member.

VII. HAZARDOUS ROADWAY CONDITIONS[23]

The following procedure shall be adhered to in identifying, reporting, and correcting hazardous roadway, roadside, or environmental conditions:[24]

[21] CALEA 61.4.3b
[22] CALEA 61.4.3b
[23] CALEA 61.4.2
[24] CALEA 61.3.2d, 41.2.4 & 61.4.2

A. Special attention shall be given to intersections whenever the traffic control signal is no longer controlling the flow of traffic. The same level of attention shall apply when a stop sign is no longer effective (downed or missing) based upon all relevant factors, including but not limited to traffic volume, speed limit, pedestrian volume, weather, and time of day.

1. The first arriving member shall remain on the scene controlling the intersection until the intersection is properly controlled, the member is relieved by another member, or the member is reassigned by the Watch Commander.

2. Communications shall ensure the timely response of personnel to the scene and alert the Watch Commander of any delays/concerns.

3. If the signal/sign is going to be out for an extended period of time and traffic flow allows, the officer should consider the use of temporary traffic control devices, generators, or other resources.

a. The officer should attempt to re-erect a downed stop sign if it can easily be restored to an effective condition.

b. The Watch Commander should make notification to Communications to advise them of what equipment may be needed (sign boards, stop signs, variable message boards, generators, etc.).

4. During instances where weather or power outages impact a large number of intersections, the Watch Commander shall be responsible for determining the appropriate use of all available resources and shall assign available resources to best cover the locations with the greatest risk to persons and property.

B. When a hazard is identified that requires immediate correction (such as a fallen tree or electrical wire across or on any part of the traveled portion of the roadway), the officer will immediately inform Communications of this situation and identify the assistance required.[25] The member shall protect the scene and direct traffic or take other action necessary to safeguard the public until the hazard can be eliminated or they are relieved by the authority of a Watch Commander.

C. Hazardous conditions resulting from natural occurrences such as snow, icing, or flooding shall be reported immediately to Communications. Members will provide the location and nature of the hazard and any additional information which might assist in determining the appropriate response.

1. When ice and/or snow makes driving hazardous and the Department of Public Works is mobilized, officers and uniformed civilians shall not contact Communications to report specific locations where salting is necessary unless specifically requested by DPW. The exception to this policy shall be extremely critical roadways that require immediate attention.

D. Hazardous roadway conditions resulting from roadway damage or damage to traffic control devices shall be reported immediately to the appropriate County or State agency. This notification should be made through Communications.[26]

E. When a hazard is detected that represents a potential accident situation but the threat of such is not imminent, the member shall obtain direction from the Watch Commander and ensure that Communications is appropriately notified of the situation and corrective action being taken.[27] Communications will be responsible for promptly making all requested notifications. Members may also submit a memorandum through their District or Bureau Office for referral to the appropriate agency when non-emergency conditions exist.

[25] CALEA 41.2.4
[26] CALEA 61.3.2d & 41.2.4
[27] CALEA 41.2.4 & 61.3.2d

F. When a roadway or traffic-related sign is observed in a damaged or destroyed state, the member shall also notify Communications for the appropriate notification to the responsible agency for repairs.[28]

VIII. HAZARDOUS MATERIALS ON ROADWAY[29]

A. Radioactive materials are in current use in hospitals, research laboratories, and numerous industrial and military applications, and are transported throughout the County by truck rail and air. Members need to be alert to accidents and industrial accidents that may involve these materials. Every precaution should be taken in any situation that has the potential to involve hazardous or radioactive materials.

B. DFRS has primary responsibility in handling hazardous material incidents. The HCPD shall provide support functions to assist DFRS in the actual control and removal of hazardous materials.

C. When it is believed that a hazardous material spill has occurred, the first member on the scene shall:[30]

1. Notify Communications of the incident for proper notification.

2. Request that the area supervisor respond to the scene.

3. Coordinate the maintenance of a wide perimeter by closing off all access roads leading to the accident scene.

4. Assist in the evacuation of non-essential personnel from within the perimeter.

5. Attempt to identify the hazardous materials involved in the accident through the identification of placards on the vehicle or containers and use of the Emergency Responder HAZMAT Guide. It is important to note this identification should be made as far away as possible. At no time shall a member jeopardize his own safety for material identification purposes.

D. The Watch Commander shall coordinate all activities with DFRS in the safe resolution of the problem.

IX. TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL RESPONSIBILITIES[31]

A. Police Officers, Cadets, and Auxiliary Officers have primary responsibility for the safe and efficient movement of vehicle and pedestrian traffic within the County. These members shall be alert for problems that hinder the efficient flow of traffic and take appropriate action to eliminate problems when they are encountered.

B. Crossing Guards have primary responsibility for the safe and efficient movement of school-related pedestrian traffic at designated locations within the County, as well as vehicular traffic that could adversely impact pedestrian safety at those locations.

C. All members encountering traffic problems shall take all reasonable actions to control the problem to include:

1. Notify Communications of the location, nature, and extent of the traffic problem;

2. Request additional members, if needed, to control the problem and restore the normal flow of traffic;

[28] CALEA 41.2.4
[29] CALEA 61.4.2
[30] CALEA 41.2.4
[31] CALEA 61.2.2g & 61.3.2a

a. Request other required services (DFRS, DPW, Maryland State Highway Administration, a gas and electric company, tow services, etc.) to respond and assist in correcting the problem;[32] and

b. Request any specialized equipment needed to correct the problem.

D. Members assigned to a traffic post shall remain at that post until another member relieves him, the problem is corrected, or the specific assignment parameters are fulfilled.

E. The DPW Traffic Engineering Section is responsible for the ongoing analysis of traffic conditions and placement of traffic controls and signals on County roadways. The Department, through the Traffic Management Division, will cooperate with the Traffic Engineering Section and provide assistance and information related to these studies by: [33]

1. Referring complaints or suggestions concerning traffic engineering deficiencies to the Traffic Engineering Section through:

a. County Extension 2430;

b. The County's Web Site at www.howardcountymd.gov; or

c. E-mail at traffic@howardcountymd.gov.

2. Collision and enforcement data will be sent to the Traffic Engineering Section by the Crime Analysis Section on a monthly basis, as detailed in General Order OPS-23, Traffic Enforcement Procedures.[34]

3. The Records Section will ensure that copies of all ACRS reports are sent to the Traffic Engineering Section.

X. TRAFFIC DIRECTION PROCEDURES[35]

A. Manual traffic direction should be conducted in a uniform fashion to enhance driver and pedestrian recognition and response. Traffic direction will be conducted as instructed by the Education and Training Division.

B. All Officers, Cadets, and Auxiliary Officers are issued reflective vests which must be worn at all times while directing traffic or conducting roadside enforcement activities. These vests will be carried both on- and off-duty when in a Departmental vehicle.[36]

C. School Crossing Guards will wear their issued uniform and reflective vest while working.

D. Members assigned to direct traffic for a detail or special situation (i.e., heavy traffic flow due to road closure on a main feeder road, concert, funeral, etc.) will first evaluate the intersection and determine the procedures to follow, which may include:[37]

1. Operating the traffic signal manually with the plunger at the light box;

2. Switch the light on "flash" and physically direct the traffic to enhance vehicular flow;

3. Use of temporary traffic control devices; and/or

4. Use of marked police vehicle with overhead lights in operation.

[32] CALEA 41.2.4
[33] CALEA 61.3.1a
[34] CALEA 61.3.1b
[35] CALEA 61.3.2a & 61.2.2g
[36] CALEA 61.3.2e
[37] CALEA 61.3.2

E. Members are prohibited from adjusting or otherwise attempting to repair traffic signals. Members shall immediately notify Communications of any traffic signal malfunction and request that the appropriate agency respond and repair the signal. Notification should also be made anytime a traffic signal is placed on flash.

XI. TRAFFIC CONTROL EQUIPMENT[38]

A. Flashlights with traffic wands or similar equipment should be used for traffic directions during periods of low light or unfavorable weather conditions. Road flares may also be used; however, their use should be limited.

1. Flares will not be used during hazardous or potentially explosive conditions.

2. Members will ensure that their vehicles are stocked with a minimum of a half box of flares.

B. A supply of traffic cones and barricades are maintained by the Traffic Enforcement Section and are available for use during traffic control assignments.

1. Arrangements can be made for the delivery and pick up of these materials through the Administrative Office in each District or the Special Operations Bureau Commander.

2. These materials are stored at the District Station and are available for after hours use as operational needs dictate.

C. Incidents creating lengthy delays may require the placement of temporary traffic controls and signs. These items are available through the Howard County Bureau of Highways and the State Highway Administration.

1. Officers requesting this equipment shall contact Communications with the location of the incident, a description of the problem, and equipment needed.

2. The appropriate highway agency will make the final determination as to what traffic controls are implemented.

3. Communications may also contact the media to advise the public of the situation.

XII. SPECIAL EVENTS

A. The HCPD will provide traffic direction for Special Events that have an approved permit issued from Howard County, and the permit indicates traffic direction services will be provided.

B. Traffic control planning for Special Events will be conducted by the Traffic Management Division. Each proposed event shall be analyzed to determine its impact on the following areas:

1. Ingress and egress of vehicles and pedestrians;

2. Spectator control;

3. Availability and effect upon available public transportation;

4. Provisions for news media;

5. Alternate routes for through traffic;

6. Temporary traffic controls and parking prohibitions;

[38] CALEA 61.3.2

7. Emergency vehicle access; and

8. Manpower requirements.

C. When a Special Event Permit request is submitted to the Traffic Management Division, an operations plan will be developed addressing the safety of the proposed event and its impact on the surrounding community.

1. The plan may also include recommendations that would improve these aspects of the event.

2. For events requiring HCPD's services, the Traffic Management Division will outline in the plan assignments and manpower requirements for the event.

3. The operations plan will then be submitted to the Chief of Police for approval.

D. Staffing for special events will be coordinated through the Operations Command and the Special Operations Bureau.

XIII. DISASTERS

A. During natural or man-made disasters members will coordinate with the ranking DFRS officer at the scene when determining the most appropriate access and detour routes.

1. These routes should be communicated to incoming emergency vehicles through Communications.

2. If detour routes will be in effect for an extended period of time, the detour routes shall be communicated to the media through the Office of Public Affairs and the Communications Division.

B. Members will prohibit access to unauthorized vehicles and persons attempting to enter the disaster site. Members will also maintain security of the disaster site to preserve law and order.

C. The Emergency Operations Manual provides relevant policies to be reviewed regarding disasters.

XIV. SCHOOL CROSSINGS[39]

A. The Department of Public Works and the County's Traffic Engineering Section are responsible for determining the locations and placement of school crossing sites that may benefit from a school crossing guard throughout the County.[40]

B. The Crossing Guard Section Supervisor will ensure that all crossing guards are fulfilling their duties as outlined in the School Crossing Guards Manual.

C. The Traffic Management Division Commander shall ensure the completion of an annual documented review by October 31st that evaluates all existing crossing guard posts and makes recommendations on those that would benefit from additional or a reduction in crossing guards. The review will also include the identification of any new locations that may benefit from a school crossing guard. The review will be conducted in conjunction with the Traffic Engineering Section and the Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation.[41]

D. The following variables should be considered when recommending the locations where school crossing guards are needed:

[39] CALEA 61.3.4d
[40] CALEA 61.3.4d, e
[41] CALEA 61.3.4e

1. Traffic volume and speed;
2. Number of turning movements;
3. Width of intersection;
4. Physical terrain;
5. Existence or absence of traffic control devices; and
6. The number and age of children utilizing the crossing.

XV. ANNUAL REVIEW

Supervisors shall review Sections VI and VII of this order in February of each year with their subordinates.

XVI. CANCELLATION

This General Order cancels and replaces General Order OPS-28, Traffic Services & Towing Procedures, dated June 7, 2017.

Authority:

Chief

Gregory J. Der
Chief of Police