



OPERATIONAL MANUAL

OPS-355 – DISABLED OR STRANDED MOTORISTS

Amends/Supersedes: OPS-355 (12/11/2017)

Date of Issue: 04/22/2024

I. GENERAL

Newport News Police Department officers and police aides will provide reasonable assistance to motorists who appear to be in need and who request assistance. [61.4.1]

II. PROCEDURE

A. The first officer on the scene of a disabled or stranded motorist shall:

1. Advise the Communications Division of the disabled vehicle and give its location and license number.
2. Activate emergency lights while assisting disabled vehicles. [41.2.1]
3. Provide traffic control as necessary.
4. Upon the owner's/driver's request, the officer shall request the Communications Division to contact and dispatch a district wrecker or a specific (local) wrecker named by the stranded motorist to tow the disabled vehicle. If the motorist cannot access a cellular phone, the officer may call a transportation service or individual named by the stranded motorist for transportation.
 - a. In the event neither a transportation service or an individual can be contacted, the officer may, with the permission of the on-duty supervisor, transport the motorist to the nearest secure place with access to a telephone.
 - b. When needed, the officer shall advise the Communications Division they are transporting someone of the opposite sex when they provide the mileage as they leave the scene and upon arrival.
 - c. Police officers and police aides will not attempt to repair stranded vehicles. This includes jump-starting with a police vehicle/jump box or tire changing.
 - d. Officers will not transport any gasoline or petroleum products in police vehicles at any time.
 - e. Officers may assist the public in entering locked vehicles only under emergency conditions jeopardizing safety or welfare.
 - 1) When a person (child, elderly, etc.) is locked in a vehicle, officers must assess the need for and request a medical evaluation when appropriate.
 - 2) When an animal is locked in a vehicle without the owner present, particularly during extreme heat, the officer will request that the Communications Division notify Animal Welfare.
 - 3) If emergency entry necessitates the officer breaking a window, officers should use the window furthest away from an occupant whenever possible.

B. In cases that necessitate emergency action, the first officer on the scene shall:

1. Advise the Communications Division of location and vehicle description.
2. In case of personal injury or fire:
 - a. Request the Communications Division to dispatch an ambulance and/or fire unit.
 - b. Administer first aid to the injured.
 - c. Utilize the department fire extinguisher in cases of small fires.


C. Pushing Vehicles

1. Disabled vehicles should be removed from the roadway by tow truck operators. However, occasions may arise in which the disabled vehicle presents an **immediate** traffic hazard and remaining in the



travel lane will cause significant traffic backups. In those instances, officers should push the vehicle out of the travel lane if they can do so safely.

2. Push bumpers may be used for pushing disabled vehicles that are on a public highway or roadway, causing, or likely to cause, obstruction of traffic. [61.4.1(d)]
3. Police units will not push any vehicle with a gross weight over 5,500 pounds.
4. The following conditions shall be given consideration before attempting to push a disabled vehicle.
 - a. Avoid over-the-hill pushing.
 - b. If bumper contact is lost, ensure the disabled vehicle has stopped before you regain bumper contact.
 - c. Make certain you can see the disabled vehicle you are pushing at all times.
 - d. Avoid deep holes, as this can cause misalignment of the bumpers.
 - e. Avoid pushing on questionable surfaces like ice or snow, which may cause traction loss.
 - f. Avoid 90-degree turns if possible.
5. Officers assigned units equipped with push bumpers must have the proper training to utilize them and demonstrate in the presence of their supervisor their ability to properly use them following specific guidelines.
6. Prior to utilizing the push bumpers, the owner/operator will be advised that the City is not responsible for damage occurring to a vehicle. In addition, the officer shall have the owner/operator sign the NNPD [Form #284 Push Bumper Request Form](#) documenting their consent and request to have his vehicle pushed.
7. DO NOT push a vehicle without a driver. Determine if the driver is capable of operating the vehicle and obeying the following instructions, which the officer will explain to the driver:
 - a. Examine the bumper of the vehicle to be pushed for stability.
 - b. Check for the proper alignment of bumpers on both vehicles.
 - c. Visually check the wheels on the vehicle to be pushed for free movement.
 - d. Put the vehicle in neutral.
 - e. Take and keep your foot off the brake.
 - f. Make certain the steering wheel is unlocked, if applicable.
 - g. Explain that the power steering and brakes will not be engaged, making them harder to operate.
 - h. Point out the destination of the push.
 - i. Explain that the operator will feel a slight bump when the push bumper makes contact with the vehicle.
 - j. Have the operator signal when ready to be pushed by raising their hand.
 - k. Do not exceed 10 m.p.h. during push.
8. When pushing the vehicle, proceed with caution to ensure movement of all wheels.
9. Officers assigned units equipped with push bumpers shall:
 - a. Report any damage to either vehicle sustained during a push to the on-duty supervisor.
 - b. Record the information required by NNPD [Form #284](#) each time the push bumpers are used. Submit the form to the fleet coordinator, in the Logistics Division.


Steven R. Drew
Chief of Police