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“Department Training Bulletins shall be used to advise members of current police techniques and procedures and shall constitute official policy.”

Directing Traffic

This Training Bulletin outlines techniques for using hand signals and other traffic-control devices to direct traffic.

To enhance visibility, absent exigent circumstances, any officer/employee directing or controlling traffic should wear reflective clothing at all times.

During incidents which require more than one officer to direct traffic, the officer directing traffic in the primary direction shall be in charge.

Officers should note, after voluntary assumption of a duty, an officer is liable if his/her failure to exercise due care increases the risk of harm or if harm is suffered because of another's reliance upon the officer's undertaking [Westbrooks v. State of CA (Ventura S.O.) 173 Cal. App. 3rd 1203(1985)].

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Figure 1:
Looking at the driver you want to stop, extend your arm and point at the driver.



Figure 2:
Raise the hand of your extended arm so your palm faces the driver in a stop position.



Figure 3:
Having both arms raised, this officer stops oncoming traffic from two directions.

Hand Signals

Order a Driver to Stop

To order a driver to stop his/her vehicle, an officer performs the steps listed below.

1. Position your body so that one side of your body is toward the traffic to be stopped.
2. Looking at the driver you wish to stop, extend your arm and point at the driver. See Figure 1.
3. When the driver sees you point-or has had time to see you point – raise the hand of your extended arm so your palm faces the driver in a stop position. See Figure 2.
4. Hold the position described in step three until the vehicle stops.
5. To stop traffic from two oncoming directions in order to allow traffic on a cross street the right of way, hold your hand in the stop position for the traffic coming from the first direction and perform steps two and three for the traffic coming from the second direction.

Do not lower either arm until vehicles coming from both directions have stopped. See Figure 3.

6. To stop traffic in multiple lanes from one direction, face oncoming traffic, extend both arms in front of your body, and point at both drivers in each lane. Complete steps three and four.



Order a Driver to Start

To order a driver to start his/her vehicle and resume motion, an officer performs the steps listed below.

1. Position your body so that one side of your body is toward the traffic you wish to resume motion.
2. Extend your arm, palm skyward, toward the driver you wish to resume motion. See Figure 4.

Hold this position until you get the driver's attention.

3. Keeping your arm extended and bending it at the elbow, motion the car forward by bringing your hand toward your ear. See Figure 5.

Repeat this step until the driver resumes motion.

4. If you are starting traffic from two directions, drop your arm after traffic has started from one direction and, using your other arm, repeat steps two and three to start traffic from the second direction.
5. To order drivers to resume motion in multiple lanes from one direction, face oncoming traffic and extend both arms with palms skyward toward the drivers you wish to resume motion.

Hold this position until you get the drivers' attention.

6. Keeping both arms extended and bending at the elbow, motion the cars forward by bringing your hands up toward your shoulders.

Order a Driver to Keep Moving

To order a driver to keep moving or to encourage a slow or timid driver, an officer repeats the motion described in step three above, swinging the hand and forearm in the direction the officer wants the vehicle to travel.



Figure 4:
Extend your arm, palm skyward, toward the driver you wish to resume motion.



Figure 5:
Bending your arm at the elbow, motion the car forward.



Figure 6:
To help a driver approaching from the right make a right turn, swing your right arm in the direction you want the vehicle to proceed.



Figure 7:
To help a driver approaching from the left make a right turn, swing your left arm in the direction you want the vehicle to proceed.

Order a Driver to Turn Right

To order a driver to turn right, an officer performs the steps listed below.

In most instances, an officer need not signal a driver to make a right turn because drivers can make this turn on their own.

1. Looking at the driver you wish to direct, extend your arm and point at the driver.

If the car approaches from the right, point with your right arm. If the car approaches from the left, point with your left arm.

2. After the driver sees your gesture, swing your arm to point in the direction you want the vehicle to proceed. See Figures 6 and 7.

Repeat step two until the driver turns.



Order a Driver to Turn Left

To order a driver to turn left, an officer performs the steps listed below.

In directing a driver to make a left turn, you may have to halt traffic first in the lane or lanes through which the driver must cross.

1. Using proper techniques, give the stop signal to stop oncoming traffic in the lane(s) through which the turning driver must cross.

Hold this position.

2. If the driver wishing to turn left is delaying traffic, signal the driver to move into the intersection so that the cars behind can continue through or make right turns.

To signal the driver, point at the driver with your index finger, motion the driver to move forward, and point to the position on the pavement where you want the driver to stop. See Figures 8 and 9.

3. If you directed a driver into the intersection, signal the car(s) behind the turning driver to move through the intersection or make right turns.
4. When it is safe to do so, give the turning gesture to motion the driver to proceed with a left turn. See Figure 10.



Figure 8:
Point at the driver with your index finger and motion the driver to move forward.



Figure 9:
Point to the position on the pavement where you want the driver to stop.



Figure 10:
When it is safe to do so, give the turning gesture to motion the driver to proceed with a left turn.



Use of Whistle, Voice, and Flashlight

Whistle

An officer may use a whistle in conjunction with hand signals to help get the attention of drivers and pedestrians.

An officer is judicious using the whistle. Whistle blasts directed to pedestrians need not be as shrill as those used to command the attention of drivers.

Use one long blast with a hand signal to stop traffic.

Use two short blasts with a hand signal to start traffic.

Voice

An officer seldom uses a verbal command to direct traffic.

In traffic, verbal commands are not easy for an officer to give or for a motorist to hear or understand, and a misinterpretation can produce dangerous consequences.

In addition, an order which an officer shouts to deliver can antagonize an individual.

When a driver or pedestrian does not understand a hand signal, an officer moves reasonably closer to the person and politely and briefly explains the command.

Flashlight

An officer may use a flashlight in an emergency at night to halt traffic.

To use a flashlight, an officer performs the steps listed below.

1. Position yourself outside the direct path of the approaching vehicle.
2. Slowly swing the flashlight at arm's length across the path of the approaching vehicle.

The beam from the flashlight should strike the pavement as an elongated spot of moving light, readily seen by the motorist.

Avoid blinding the motorist with the flashlight's beam.



Use of Flares, Cones, and Barricades and Signs

The purpose of warning devices is to warn, guide, and direct traffic.

No officer/employee shall manually control any traffic-control device without prior authorization from a supervisor or command officer.

Manual operation of a traffic device shall only be authorized when its operation will facilitate the flow of traffic and improve the safety for drivers and pedestrians.

Flares

An officer uses flares to alert oncoming drivers of an obstruction in a traffic lane or, at night, of an obstruction on a shoulder or side of the road.

An officer places flares in a manner to provide sufficient advance warning based upon existing conditions, i.e. roadway configuration, lighting, posted speed limit, visibility, weather, etc.

An officer shall not use flares around flammable substances such as gas spills or oil spills. An officer shall not use flares in hazardous environmental conditions such as in high winds or beside grass fields or where other environmental concerns exist such as rain spattering or Botts dots.

To light a flare, an officer performs the steps listed below.

1. Remove the cap to expose the strike plate. See Figure 11.
2. Place the cap on the end of the flare opposite the strike plate to keep the flare from rolling.
3. Hold the flare at arm's length.
4. Contact and hold the flare against the strike plate. See Figure 12.
5. Turn your face away from the strike area.
6. Strike the flare away from your body.
7. Keep the lit flare down wind at arm's length and to the side of your body. See Figure 13.



Figure 11:
Remove the cap to expose the strike plate.



Figure 12:
Contact and hold the flare against the strike plate.



Figure 13:
Keep the lit flare down wind at arm's length and to the side of your body.



Figure 14:
Tap or scrape the flare's burning end against the pavement until the flare is extinguished.

To extinguish a flare, an officer performs the steps listed below.

An officer performs the following steps only when at least three inches of the flare remain and the flare is not warm to the touch.

An officer shall let flares which are warm to the touch or shorter than three inches burn out by themselves.

An officer shall not step on a flare to extinguish it. An officer shall not throw a flare or kick a flare out.

1. Pick up a cool flare longer than three inches by the non-burning end.
2. Tap or scrape the flare's burning end against the pavement until the flare is extinguished. See Figure 14.

Cones

Cones may be used as a substitute for flares in daytime situations.

Illuminated cones may be used as a substitute for flares in nighttime situations.

Barricades and Signs

Barricades and signs may be used for incidents requiring long-term traffic control.