

THE RALEIGH POLICE DEPARTMENT

1109-09

TRAFFIC SERVICES

PURPOSE

To provide regulations for the control of vehicles and pedestrians, and for various traffic services provided by the Department, including towing of vehicles and transporting persons.

VALUES REFLECTED

This directive reflects our value of *Service and Integrity*. By following these guidelines, we strive to protect and serve the community. Our observance of this directive will help us shield the people of our community from injury, harm, and danger. Furthermore, following these guidelines will help safeguard our employees.

UNITS AFFECTED

All Divisions/All Employees

REFERENCES/FORMS

DOI 1106-05 "Operation of Police Vehicles"

DOI 1109-10 "Traffic Enforcement"

Notice of Towing Form

Vehicle Storage Report

Vehicle Lockout Request and Release

"Traffic Control Manual for Construction and Maintenance," City of Raleigh Transportation Department

"Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways," Federal Highway Administration

May be Released to the Public

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GENERAL POLICIES

Although duties associated with traffic control might be considered routine, the potential for accidental injury is high. Officers must exercise every safety precaution in performing these duties.

All officers of the Department are responsible for reporting and taking appropriate corrective action for whatever highway hazards exist. Street hazards are to be reported to Emergency Communications so that the appropriate agency can be notified.

TRAFFIC CONTROL FUNCTIONS

Safety

When directing traffic, officers and civilian traffic investigators should position their police vehicle so that it provides sufficient warning to the public. Whenever possible, the vehicle's lighting should be used to illuminate the officer during hours of darkness.

Officers and civilian traffic investigators must wear reflective vests or fluorescent raincoats when directing traffic or when repeatedly exposed to moving traffic, such as when investigating a collision, regardless of the time of day.

Officers and civilian traffic investigators should take any necessary added precautions during periods of adverse weather and road conditions, taking into consideration the possibility of motorists' limited visibility and/or increased stopping time.

Manual Traffic Control

Officers and civilian traffic investigators are expected to direct traffic at collision scenes, fires, where automatic control devices have malfunctioned, or at locations where hazardous traffic conditions exist.

As a general policy, officers will not provide traffic control to assist motorists entering or exiting private property, such as shopping centers.

Manual Operation of Traffic Lights

On occasion, officers may need to place a traffic light on flash due to a malfunction or to alleviate a traffic problem. Keys are available from police supervisors or traffic light repair.

Prior to changing the light cycle of a traffic light, an officer should bring traffic in all affected directions to a standstill. Emergency Communications should be notified that the light was placed on manual, even if a malfunctioning light recycles correctly. Emergency Communications will in turn notify traffic light repair and traffic computer personnel.

Traffic Control at Critical Incidents

When directing traffic at the scene of a critical incident, officers should divert vehicle and pedestrian traffic away from the scene. An on-scene supervisor or the Watch Commander may establish a planned detour route to expedite the flow of traffic. Only authorized vehicles and personnel should be allowed to approach the incident scene.

Emergency Communications will dispatch a police unit if the critical incident is a working fire scene. This unit will provide traffic assistance to Fire Department personnel as required, and will request additional units if needed.

No vehicles, other than rescue vehicles, should be allowed to drive into the block where fire apparatus is operating.

No vehicles will be allowed to cross fire hoses without the approval of the on-scene fire commander.

A police supervisor and the Watch Commander should be notified for extensive fires or those involving fatalities [refer to DOI 1109-01 "Patrol Operations"].

NON-EMERGENCY ESCORTS

Non-emergency escorts are confined to funerals, parades, house moving's, heavy or over-sized equipment, vehicles carrying explosives, or special conditions which present unusual hazards. Funeral escorts are the only non-emergency escorts that will be provided without prior supervisory approval [referral to 1106-05 "Operation of Police Vehicles" for emergency escorts].

Funeral Escorts

Officers must obey all traffic laws while providing funeral escorts. Officers will utilize all emergency warning devices, except the siren.

Dignitary Escorts

The Special Operations Division Commander should be notified of requests made to our Department for assistance with dignitary escorts. Officers of our Department will then provide traffic assistance according to contingency plans agreed upon between the cooperating agencies.

Hazardous Vehicle Escorts

In general, police escorts should only be provided where movement of an unusual vehicle would completely obstruct the roadway, or cause significant traffic problems. An example would be a house moving. In other instances, persons with oversized vehicles should be encouraged to provide their own escorts. In all cases, the party will be required to obtain the necessary State or City permits beforehand (refer to Article 16 – Professional Housemoving G.S. 20-356 to G.S. 20-375 and City Ordinance 11-2133 "Regulation of Vehicles and Loads").

TOWING VEHICLES

This section relates to the towing of illegally parked or abandoned vehicles. Officers are encouraged not to tow such vehicles unless necessary. Refer to DOI 1108-04 "Evidence and Found Property" for seizure of vehicles subject to legal forfeiture.

Officer's Duties Prior to Towing

If a vehicle is illegally parked but does not create a hazard, a parking ticket should be issued in lieu of towing.

Police officers and civilian traffic investigators will not tow vehicles in civil cases, such as repossessions.

The officer or civilian traffic investigator must remain with the vehicle to be towed until the tow truck arrives. If it is necessary for the employee to leave, another unit should be called to remain with the vehicle.

The officer or civilian traffic investigator must obtain sufficient information to complete a Vehicle Storage Report and a Notice of Towing Form.

Officers and civilian traffic investigators will inventory the contents of unlocked vehicles prior to having them towed. Forcible entry should not be used to enter trunks, glove boxes or containers. The result of the inventory should be written on the reverse side of the Vehicle Storage Report. Locked areas of the vehicle also should be noted.

Officers and civilian traffic investigators will describe, on the reverse side of the Vehicle Storage Report, any visible contents in a locked vehicle prior to towing.

Illegally Parked Vehicles Creating A Hazard

Illegally parked vehicles may be towed by police officers without prior notice to the owner if:

The vehicle is obstructing or blocking a travel lane, public alley, or sidewalk (City Ordinance 11-2171).

The vehicle is parked on a bridge or overpass, on a railroad grade crossing, within or too close to an intersection, or at one of the other hazards defined in City Ordinance 11-2171(b).

The vehicle is blocking a driveway and a complainant requests that the vehicle be towed.

The vehicle is in a bus zone, no stopping or standing zone (City Ordinance 11-2178 and 11-2173).

The vehicle is improperly parked or obstructing any City owned or controlled parking lot (City Ordinance 11-2175).

The vehicle is in violation of temporary parking restrictions issued by the Chief of Police or his/her designee (City Ordinance 11-2181).

Towing from Private Property

As a general policy, police officers are to refrain from towing vehicles off private property in those instances where State law authorizes the property owner to remove the vehicle (G.S. 20-219.2). This law applies to commercial lots which have appropriate signs posted at each entrance and individually marked spaces.

Police officers may have vehicles towed from private property, upon written request of the owner or lessee of the property, in those instances where State law does not apply.

Examples of private property from which officers may tow include residential yards, business property which is not designated for parking or where vehicles are parked outside of designated parking areas.

The vehicle must have remained parked without consent for at least two hours (City Ordinance 12-7002).

Prior to having a vehicle towed from private property, officers will have the property owner sign a Request for Towing Form. The officer will then include a complaint number on the Request for Towing Form and attach a Notice of Towing form.

Abandoned Vehicles

The Police Department will assume responsibility for vehicles abandoned on public streets or City controlled property. Nuisance vehicles on private property should be referred to the City Inspections Department.

For vehicles that are suspected of being abandoned on the street or on City controlled lots, officers will attempt to contact the registered owner and will place a notice of towing sticker on the vehicle (City Ordinance 12-7002, 12-7005). The sticker is to be placed on a non-painted surface.

No sooner than seven days after a notice of towing sticker is placed on the vehicle abandoned on a street or 24 hours after a notice of towing sticker is placed on a vehicle abandoned on City controlled property, a police officer or civilian traffic investigator will request a rotation wrecker and have the abandoned vehicle removed. The officer or civilian traffic investigator will then complete a post-towing notification form as specified below. If possible, the notice of towing sticker should be removed from the vehicle and attached to the reverse side of the vehicle storage report.

Post-Towing Notification

Immediately following a police initiated towing, the officer or civilian traffic investigator will submit a Vehicle Storage Report and a Notice of Towing Form to the Downtown District Police Information Desk.

The officer should attempt to telephone the last registered owner of the towed vehicle, if no personal contact was made at the scene. Any attempts at contact should be noted on the Notice of Towing Form.

If the towing officer fails to notify the owner, Desk Operations personnel will make a second attempt within twenty-four hours.

STRANDED MOTORISTS OR PEDESTRIANS

Protection of the public requires that officers provide reasonable assistance to motorists or pedestrians stranded in hazardous locations or environments.

Transporting Stranded Persons

Officers are authorized to transport civilians upon supervisory approval. However, they should first seek other alternatives prior to transporting persons in City vehicles.

- Individual should consent to a frisk of their person for weapons prior to transport. If the individual declines to be frisked, the transport should not be conducted and the officer should

attempt to make other arrangements. Bags, purses and personal belongings should either be searched with consent or transported out of the reach of the individual.

- Absent specific articulable facts that establish a safety hazard for the officer or the individual being transported, officers shall not handcuff or otherwise restrain individuals who are not in custody during transport.
- In no event will officers transport gasoline in the passenger area of their vehicle or in a non-approved container.
- When transporting any person, officers shall give their starting odometer reading, starting location and destination. The ending odometer reading must be given upon destination arrival.
- Officers are not authorized to transport civilians beyond the City's one-mile extra-territorial limit. Under such circumstances, adjacent police agencies may agree to meet officers at the City limits. Otherwise, RPD officers shall transport the party to a police facility or other place of safety until outside assistance can be obtained.
- Officers shall not transport juveniles or intoxicated persons to a residence unless a responsible adult is present at that location.

Escorts of Lost Motorists

Officers are discouraged from providing escorts to motorists unless an emergency condition exists [refer to DOI 1106-5 "Operation of Police Vehicles"]. Officers should refrain from providing escorts to motorists who are simply lost. They should instead provide directions to the location that the motorist is seeking.

Assisting Motorists with Keys Locked in Vehicle

Officers will assist motorists who have locked keys in their vehicle in life threatening situations and only after the "Vehicle Lockout Request and Release" waiver form has been completed and signed by the motorist. Life threatening situations include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

Child or animal locked in vehicle.

Vehicle is located in a hazardous location.

Medication locked in the vehicle is not considered a life threatening situation. EMS should be sent if the subject is having a medical crisis.

TRAFFIC ENGINEERING

The Crash Reconstruction Unit (CRU) will lead the Department's efforts to coordinate and cooperate with City and State traffic engineering authorities, and other agencies associated with traffic safety and engineering. Such efforts are essential to the maintenance and improvement of a safe and efficient traffic system in the City of Raleigh.

Department's Engineering Responsibility

Although traffic engineering is not a sole responsibility of the Department, the Department has a unique opportunity and responsibility to contribute to traffic engineering. The compilation and analysis of traffic law enforcement and traffic collision management data provides an excellent groundwork for identifying traffic engineering problems. The elimination of traffic engineering problems is in the interest of the Department and of the community at large.

Traffic Engineering Duties

The Department recognizes its responsibility to contribute to improving traffic engineering in the community. To this end, the Crash Reconstruction Unit will coordinate Departmental efforts to:

Collect and compile traffic-related data relevant to identifying engineering problems and solutions.

Conduct traffic surveys and studies as appropriate at high collision locations and to investigate potential problems.

Analyze collision and enforcement data to discern trends and relationships symptomatic of engineering problems.

Prepare special reports and make recommendations concerning detected traffic engineering deficiencies.

Participate in the City's transportation management system, when requested, to ensure proper consideration of enforcement needs and service demands.

Individual Officer's Role in Traffic Engineering

The Crash Reconstruction Unit will forward a request to each Field Operations District and the Special Operations Division, each month, asking for officers and civilian traffic investigators to report any of the following observations:

A traffic control device which is obscured, damaged or missing.

The need for no parking zones near an intersection to facilitate traffic flow.

A street which needs new lane markings to facilitate traffic flow and prevent collisions.

A malfunctioning or inoperative traffic light. These malfunctions should be reported immediately to the Emergency Communications Center.

The need to increase or decrease the intervals of a traffic light to aid in clearing a problematic intersection.

Officers and civilian traffic investigators may coordinate any suggested improvements through their supervisor. Those suggestions approved through the chain of command will be forwarded to the City's Traffic Engineering Office.

This process does not preclude officers or civilian traffic investigators from taking the necessary action to eliminate an immediate traffic hazard at any time.