


STRATFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT 	Type of Directive: Policy and Procedure	Updated: 04-26-2024
	Title: Use of Police Vehicles	No. 13.6
	Issuing Authority: Chief Joseph McNeil	Issued: 07-03-2018
	Reference: 1.7.7, 1.7.15, 1.7.16, 1.7.19, 2.5.19 History: 03-01-23	

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the use of Stratford Police vehicles.

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Stratford Police Department to regulate the proper use and care of police vehicles by department members. All police vehicles shall be operated in a manner that protects the public and in a careful, safe and prudent manner, obeying all laws and departmental orders pertaining to such operations.

Officers shall exercise caution at all intersections and other high-risk locations even when operating in emergency mode with lights and siren activated.

PROCEDURE:

All vehicles owned or used by the Stratford Police Department will be operated in a safe and efficient manner, and only for lawful purposes. All persons operating these vehicles will have a valid Connecticut driver's license.

Members of the Department must drive with due regard for the safety of others. Officers may pass through traffic controls in an emergency situation only after stopping or slowing down to the extent necessary for the safe operation of the vehicle. Officers may exceed the speed limit so long as they do not endanger life or property.

The wearing of seatbelts by members of the Department and passengers can significantly improve survivability and reduce the severity of injuries in a crash. Seatbelts help operators maintain control of their vehicles during emergency driving and after a crash and are a critical component in the vehicles' occupant safety system. To ensure the safety of all personnel, safety belts shall be worn at all times by drivers and passengers in all vehicles, owned, leased or rented by the Stratford Police Department.

Officers must have and maintain a current and valid Connecticut driver's license in order to operate a department vehicle. Any arrest and/or conviction of any motor vehicle charge or the loss or suspension of any driving privileges shall be immediately reported to the Chief of Police in writing through the chain of command.

Vehicle Inspection

Prior to operating a police vehicle, normally at the beginning of a tour of duty, personnel must inspect the vehicle for damage and to ensure the vehicle's equipment is operating properly; personnel must check for cleanliness, presence of unauthorized articles, and adequate supplies. In the case of an emergency, a vehicle inspection may be postponed until the emergency has passed, at which time an inspection shall be conducted.

Operators shall identify and report to the Traffic Division any defective equipment utilizing the vehicle inspection form at the beginning of their shift. Emergency lights and siren, head and taillights, directional signals, marker lights, auxiliary emergency lights, on-board computers, radios, radar, license plate readers, in car camera system, gun rack and patrol rifle, E-Ticket printer, spotlight, public address system, etc., will be checked. Any defects found shall be reported immediately to the Desk Sergeant after being discovered.

All officers will remove any items of trash or debris at the end of their shift. The previous operator shall be responsible for any trash left in the vehicle and found during a pre-tour of duty inspection. Prior to returning the vehicle, the operator should ensure that the vehicle is fueled and the interior of the vehicle is cleaned of any debris or other items not belonging in the vehicle.

Officers will check the rear passenger compartment of the vehicle for weapons or contraband prior to the start of their shift and immediately again before and after transporting any persons placed under arrest or held during an investigative detention. This will also include when the prisoner transport van is used.

Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) This Department has implemented an in-vehicle laptop computer system. This system will allow officers in the field direct access to a subset of COLLECT and NCIC information through the use of the software running on a laptop computer mounted in the patrol vehicle. The information using a wireless computer network and application software. The information will be made available to the officer without the need for voice interaction with a dispatcher.

MDT SYSTEM SECURITY: The system software will require the users to enter a unique user identification (ID) and password to access the laptop computer system. Only certified officers will be given user ID and password to access the system. The users must be certified by the State in the use of COLLECT and NCIC prior to using the laptops. The NCIC rules regarding the obtaining and disclosure of information and other concerns are in full effect when operating the laptop computer system.

MDT SYSTEM OPERATION: The Mobile data system should be considered another tool to assist the field officer in performing police work. If the system software is not working, or down for a period of time, the officer can use the voice radio system to request information from the Dispatch Center. The laptops will not be operated while the cruiser is in motion, unless there is a second officer in the cruiser and the passenger is operating the computer. All NCIC/COLLECT hits must be confirmed with Communication Unit personnel prior to taking enforcement action. **(2.5.19)**

Operating Procedures

Police vehicles are not to be driven in a reckless or negligent manner. Unless required for the performance of an officer's duties, vehicles are not to be left with engines running.

When a police vehicle becomes disabled the Patrol Supervisor is to be notified. If a vehicle is taken out of service an incident report is to be completed indicating the reason and the Patrol Supervisor is to be notified.

Officers will not transport anyone in a police vehicle unless necessary in the performance of their duties or authorized by a supervisor. Whenever an officer does transport non-sworn personnel or members of the general public in a police vehicle, officers are required to make sure all passengers use seatbelts in the vehicle while the vehicle is being operated.

All Officers are required to properly secure with a seatbelt any detainees who are transported as a passenger in a marked or unmarked police vehicle. Rare exceptions may exist in which it is unsafe for officers to buckle arrestees without subjecting themselves to injury due to unruly/combatative arrestees. In those situations, the arrestee will not be buckled.

Children being transported in a police vehicle may be transported without a car seat only in an emergency situation, if car seats are not available. In any event, a child being transported in a police vehicle should not be left unattended by an adult, and should always have a seatbelt or car seat in use while the vehicle is in operation.

Operation of Patrol Vehicles during Patrol - Under the normal circumstances of patrol, all traffic regulations shall be strictly adhered to and posted speed limits shall not be exceeded. Operators shall avoid fast starts and the spinning of wheels, and at all times officers are expected to set a good example for the public to follow. Operators shall take all necessary precautions in an effort to avoid accidents or injury to themselves or other users of the road. Officers will not operate a police vehicle on any unpaved surfaces, except in the case of an emergency or if response is necessary to an unpaved location. This does not mean an established graveled or hard-surfaced driveway of some type made for the express purpose of motor vehicle use.

Emergency Operations of Police Vehicles - Police vehicles responding to calls or engaging in detective work shall be operated in either a routine, urgent or emergency mode. These modes are defined as:

- Routine: Non-life threatening or property damage producing incidents. i.e. shoplifting incidents, criminal investigation reports (not in progress), loud noise or disturbance calls, requests for service and other non-emergency calls. Routine responses involve no use of either emergency lights or siren. When an officer is operating in a routine mode, he or she shall obey all laws and ordinances pertaining to motor vehicle operations.
- Urgent: Immediate response, though there is no imminent threat to life or property. Emergency lights/siren may be used intermittently at the officer's discretion (i.e. property damage accident with roadway blocked). Urgent responses involve the use of emergency lights. Unless emergency lights and siren are activated, the officer shall obey all laws and ordinances pertaining to routine (non-emergency) motor vehicle operations.
- Emergency: An emergency situation exists, and there is an immediate threat to a person or property. Officer should respond with emergency lights and siren. When operating in or responding to an emergency assignment. Violation of traffic laws without the use of emergency equipment is not protected under C.G.S. 14-283. Response to Calls for Service shall be adhered to.

Security of Police Vehicles - Whenever a member of the Department is assigned use of a police vehicle, it is that member's responsibility to ensure that the vehicle is properly secured at all times. Members of the Department shall be held responsible for the security of the vehicle and the equipment contained within it while the member has use of that vehicle.

All responsibilities placed on the operator of a police vehicle shall apply to any other officer assigned to the same vehicle. Police vehicles shall not be used for personal business or pleasure, unless designated by contract or approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

PROCEDURES FOR EQUIPPING AND SUPPLYING POLICE VEHICLES

Supplies carried in the police vehicles shall be periodically checked, replaced, and/or replenished as necessary by the Traffic Division. Officers will be responsible for reporting all defective and missing equipment by utilizing the Stratford Police Vehicle Inspection Form. All marked and unmarked patrol vehicles shall be equipped with emergency lights and a siren, and the following supplies and equipment:

Marked Vehicles: All marked police vehicles intended for normal patrol should be equipped with the following supplies and equipment. Gloves, Emergency Police Tape, Civilian Complaint/Commendation Forms, E-Ticket Printing Paper, Fire Extinguisher, Flares, Hand sanitizer and Wipes.

Unmarked Vehicles: All unmarked police vehicles intended for use by detectives should be equipped with Civilian Complaint/Commendation Forms and Gloves. All unmarked police vehicles intended for use as undercover units shall be equipped according to the needs of a specific operation, as directed by the Head of the Division utilizing the vehicle. Vehicles intended for use in special operations shall be equipped according to the direction of the Head of the Division utilizing the vehicle. All unmarked police vehicles intended for use by command staff should be equipped with Civilian Complaint/Commendation Forms.

Specialty Vehicles

The below listed vehicles require permission or training prior to use. Only authorized personnel will be allowed to operate these vehicles under normal circumstances.

- Crime Scene Van
- Police Boat
- BEARCAT/Armored Rescue Vehicle
- PAL Bus

All personnel authorized to operate these specialty vehicles will be responsible for their proper operation, inspection and care.