



Wilmington Police Department

Directive: .05.02
Operation of Police Vehicles



CALEA Standards: 41.2.1, 61.3.3
NCLEA Standards: 6.10, 6.11



Last Revised: 9/3/2024

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish procedures for employees to follow when operating Police Vehicles.

II. Procedures

A. Authorized Emergency Vehicles

Only vehicles equipped with a siren and with blue emergency warning lights will be authorized emergency response vehicles. Vehicles not equipped with this equipment or vehicles with such equipment that is not serviceable will not be operated in an emergency manner.

B. Classification of Police Response

Only three (3) categories of response are authorized. These three categories are routine response, self-initiated response, and emergency/urgent response.

- 1. Routine response:** Officers will respond routinely to all calls not designated as an emergency. A routine response consists of operating the patrol vehicle by the most direct route to the call while adhering to all traffic regulations, speed limits and the rules of the road. The use of emergency lights and siren during a routine response is not authorized.
- 2. Self-Initiated Response:** Responses initiated by the officer for the purpose of catching up to and apprehending violators of the law. Operation of the police vehicle contrary to the law shall require the use of emergency lights and siren. Factors such as location, weather, time of day, road conditions, and traffic conditions shall be considered by the officer prior to a self-initiated response. The fact that a police vehicle is exempt from the operation of traffic regulations or enjoys certain prior rights over other vehicles does not permit the operator of such vehicle to drive in **reckless disregard** of the safety of others, nor does it relieve him from the general duty of exercising due care.
- 3. Emergency/urgent response:** Emergency warning lights and siren will be used at all times. The officer should get to the location of the event as quickly and safely as possible. An

emergency response does not automatically authorize excessive speed. Many emergency responses call for normal driving speeds with the use of emergency lights and siren to request the right-of-way and warn other drivers. Quick response is often dependent upon route selection rather than the speed of the vehicle. The operating speed of the vehicle shall be kept at a level which allows the driver to avoid hazards which may be reasonably anticipated including reduced speeds at intersections until certain the intersection is clear or other drivers are yielding the right-of-way. The responding officer must remain aware of public safety.

C. Emergency Calls

Officers may respond in an emergency mode while responding to the following:

1. Traffic accidents with injuries.
2. Officer needs assistance for personal safety.
3. Any crime or hazard which endangers human life.
4. Calls involving injured persons where the extent of injury is unknown.
5. When directed by a patrol supervisor to respond using emergency equipment.

D. Discontinuance of Emergency Responses

Officers should not feel compelled to continue an emergency/urgent response when conditions escalate to a degree which places the safety of the officer or others in extreme jeopardy. Conditions which must be evaluated continuously are:

1. The capability of the officer to control the operation of the patrol vehicle.
2. Condition of the vehicle.
3. Vehicle speed in relation to road conditions.
4. The degree of emergency, urgency or threat to others.

In any event, patrol supervisors will evaluate the conditions and circumstances encountered and may terminate an emergency/urgent response by patrol officers if such a response creates unacceptable hazards.

E. Funeral, VIP, Emergency Vehicles, Oversize vehicles, and Hazardous/Unusual Cargo Vehicle Escorts

1. **Funeral Escorts:** Typically, Wilmington Police Officers are contracted off-duty to perform funeral escorts. Officers may direct traffic (using manual traffic control techniques/vehicle positioning) in a manner that enables the family members to

remain in the procession.

2. **VIP's/Dignitaries:** When requested to do so, Officers may escort VIP's, Dignitaries, and Public Officials for security purposes, however, the Officers will not request the right of way for those officials by use of their blue lights and siren, unless authorized by the Chief of Police or designee to do so.
3. Wilmington Police Officers may use their blue lights and sirens, and other traffic control techniques to safely escort emergency vehicles to their intended destination within our jurisdiction.
4. Wilmington Police Officers may use appropriate traffic control techniques (manual traffic control techniques/vehicle positioning) when called upon to escort Military Convoys, oversized vehicles, and any vehicles hauling hazardous/unusual cargo.

F. Escorting Citizens

Wilmington Police Officers will not utilize their police vehicles to escort privately owned vehicles in medical or other emergencies. Wilmington Police Officers will not use their blue lights and sirens to request right-of-way for private vehicles. If an officer is requested to perform such an escort, they should evaluate the circumstances and respond in one of the following ways:

1. If there is a medical emergency, the officer should advise the citizen that the injured/ill party should be transported by ambulance under the care and supervision of trained Emergency Medical Technicians, and then summon EMS to the scene.
2. If the emergency is not dire, then the officer should advise the citizen to drive at normal speeds, obeying all traffic laws to the hospital.

None of the above options should preclude Wilmington Police Officers from implementing training they have received as First Responders to render first aid and Basic Life Support to injured parties.

Officer may complete a business escort for the public when they are requested or dispatched to do so. The escort will be considered routine response and will not require any emergency equipment.