

St. Joseph, Missouri Police Department



DIRECTIVE TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		INDEX NUMBER: GO0014
SUBJECT: Standard Police Vehicle Operations		
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I. POLICY:

All Department vehicles shall be operated in accordance with State Statutes, City Ordinances, and the Policies and Procedures noted herein. Members shall exercise due regard for the safety of all persons, always. Members shall have a valid driver's license. Department Garage personnel are authorized to operate all department own vehicles for repair and installation purposes.

II. DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Emergency Vehicle:** A public safety vehicle equipped with a siren and one or more emergency lights may be operated as an emergency vehicle. Both siren and emergency lights must be in operation when functioning as an emergency vehicle. As defined, in part by Section 304.022, RSMO. "An emergency vehicle giving audible signal by siren or while having as least one lighted lamp exhibiting red light visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of 500 feet to the front of such vehicle, or a flashing blue light authorized by Section 307.175, RSMO".
- B. **Code 1 Response:** A non-emergency response (no emergency equipment used) that is used for responding to non-emergency or not in progress calls. Members responding Code 1 shall do so without unnecessary delay but may handle other violations of the law or situations requiring their attention that they may encounter enroute to the original call. When responding to Code 1, members shall adhere to posted speed limits and traffic/parking regulations.
- C. **Code 2 Response:** A non-emergency response (no emergency equipment used) that is governed primarily by Code 1 criteria, except members responding Code 2 shall do so without delay. Code 2 is typically used for in progress nonemergency calls for service or calls that require immediate attention. Code 2 is not an excuse to drive fast without lights and sirens.
- D. **Code 3 Response:** An emergency response using emergency lights and siren, that is used when members are responding to an emergency call, and the member's quick arrival is necessitated by the situation. In general officers shall have discretion to

make reasonable decisions to response Code 3 to a given situation. Code 3 responses include but are not limited to:

1. Situations that have resulted or might reasonably result in serious injury or death; and
 2. Situations that might have a disastrous effect on the community (such as escaped prisoners who pose a serious threat to citizens; hazardous chemical spills, etc.).
- E. This General Order does not restrict members from using emergency lights without a siren while making vehicle stops or during escort duties.
- F. **Vehicle Types:** The Department maintains numerous types of vehicles that may be described in three categories:
1. **Type I:** Highly visible- Squad cars with external markings, emergency lights and siren. **Both lights and siren must be operating for the vehicle to be considered an emergency vehicle.**
 2. **Type II:** Less visible, especially at high speed- Unmarked cars with emergency lights and sirens, police motorcycles, and other vehicles on truck chassis with emergency lights and sirens. **Both lights and siren must be operating for the vehicle to be considered an emergency vehicle.**
 3. **Type III:** Any Department vehicle without emergency lights and siren. **Type III Department vehicles are not emergency vehicles.**
- G. **Authority of Emergency Vehicle Drivers: RSMO 304.022-4 States:**
1. *The driver of any emergency equipped police vehicle shall not sound the siren thereon or have the front red light on except when such vehicle is responding to an emergency call or when in pursuit of an actual or suspected law violator.*
 2. *The driver of an emergency vehicle may:*
 - a. *Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.*
 - b. *Exceed the prima facie speed limit so long as the driver does not endanger life or property; and*
 - c. *Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions, but only with the highest degree of care.*
 3. *The exemptions herein granted to an emergency vehicle shall apply only when the driver of any such vehicle, while in motion, sounds audible signal as may be necessary, and when the vehicle is equipped with at least one lighted lamp displaying a red light visible under normal atmospheric conditions from 500 feet to the front of such vehicle.*

III. PROCEDURE:

- A. All operators of and passengers in City-owned vehicles shall use always provided safety restraints when the vehicle is in operation (not applicable to motorcycle units).
- B. Call Response Procedures:
1. **Non-Emergency Calls:** A single tone alert will be used by the Communications Center to alert members to non-emergency calls.
 - a. Members will use either a Code 1 or Code 2 response, depending upon the circumstances known (i.e. reports calls, parking, and information).
 - b. A Code 2 response should be used for in-progress crimes, domestic and other disturbances, traffic accidents, and incidents with potential for personal injury.

- c. On non-emergency calls, vehicles must be parked legally and locked while unoccupied. However, while on certain types of calls, members may park in no-parking zones at businesses or locations where it is impractical to park a great distance from the building (i.e. picking up prisoners, protecting accident or crime scenes, etc.). Red lights or emergency flashers must be on while parked in no-parking zones. Members will be allowed to double-park a police vehicle under extenuating circumstances.
 - d. Members should not leave their vehicles running while on calls for service or when the vehicle is unattended unless extenuating circumstances apply.
 - e. Members will not drive a police vehicle into or through areas that are inadequately improved to achieve reasonably "damage-free" vehicle operation.
 - f. When backing vehicles, members will make every effort to ascertain that there are no pedestrians or obstructions at the rear or side of the vehicle.
2. **Emergency Calls:**
- a. The Communications Center will use a multiple tone to alert members to emergency calls.
 - b. Both the lights and siren must be activated while responding to an emergency call. Such a Code 3 response should be used by members dispatched on emergency calls. The responding member must constantly consider the risks created by the emergency response. Each member will give their location and state that they are running code 3. The decision to respond Code 3 must be made using the totality of information available, including, but not limited to:
 - b1) Seriousness of the offense.
 - b2) Driving conditions, road, weather, etc.
 - b3) Pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
 - b4) Speeds involved.
 - b5) Possibility of identification and apprehension later.
 - b6) Barriers to visibility.
 - b7) Location of pursuit (schools, residential, business, etc.).
 - b8) Time of day; and
 - b9) Information known to the member relevant to the final decision.
 - c. Supervisors have the authority to initiate and/or cancel a Code 3 response.
 - d. Members are only exempt from traffic control regulations while on emergency calls. However, members are not protected against the consequences of a reckless disregard for the safety of others. (**See also II G 1.2.3. of this G.O.**)
 - e. A Code 3 response is appropriate only as long as the member deems an emergency exists. If the situation de-escalates or stabilizes enroute, the Code 3 response will be terminated. Members should also be aware of the tactical situation as they approach the scene. A silent approach may be necessary.
 - f. After the emergency is stabilized, all vehicle movement and parking will be governed by Code 1 criteria, when practical. However, members will make every attempt to open the roadway for normal traffic as soon as possible.
 - g. Vehicles should not be left running or unattended unless there are extenuating circumstances (i.e. foot pursuit, etc.). Any secondary "back up" member(s) should not leave a vehicle running or unattended if the situation is under control upon their arrival. Primary officer vehicles shall be secured as soon as possible.

- h. If a police vehicle may have sustained some sort of damage pursuant to a Code 3 response, the vehicle will be checked, and a report made to indicate where the damage might be. If such damage may affect the safety of the vehicle's operation, the vehicle will be taken out of service immediately, and Garage Personnel shall check the suspected damaged area(s) to ensure the future safe operations of said vehicle.
 - i. **A member will neither be criticized nor disciplined when his/her decision to terminate an emergency response and/or a pursuit is based on his/her best judgement of the risk considerations involved.**
 - j. Pursuits: See Department General Order governing pursuits.
 - k. Supervisors of members that violate any directive listed herein shall make note of violations and follow up with appropriate corrective action.
- C. Other Uses for Emergency Equipment:
1. During their duties, members will need to utilize emergency lights to alert the public of hazardous traffic-way conditions created by legitimate law enforcement operations. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Routine traffic law enforcement:
 - a1) Use of emergency lights to follow and alert traffic law violators of the need to stop. If lights fail to alert the driver, members may utilize the siren and/or air-horn. When it becomes apparent that the driver is refusing to stop, members will evaluate the pursuit option, as authorized by Department Policy and Procedures.
 - a2) Members will conduct enforcement operations using appropriate emergency equipment to reduce, as much as possible, the negative impact on traffic flow. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a.2.1) Accident scene protection.
 - a.2.2) Roadway obstructions or hazardous conditions.
 - a.2.3) Parade routes; and
 - a.2.4) Other traffic diversion priorities.
 2. Emergency flasher light systems may be used on parking lots, off the roadway locations, or in circumstances where they are more effective than strobes.
 3. Members will utilize parking lights to illuminate police vehicles parked on the shoulder of the roadway during a call for service located on a dark street unless specific knowledge of a threat to member safety exists. (This does not apply to vehicles parked in legitimate parking spots)
 4. Sirens may be used only in conjunction with emergency systems that comply with State Statute. The "Wail" cycle is preferred for most emergency clearance. The "Yelp", "Hi-Low", or "Horn" functions should be used to clear intersections, move through congested conditions more effectively, or to alert a motorist who has failed to respond to the "Wail" siren cycle.
 5. Members are expected to activate sirens only for legitimate public safety purposes, and to test their operation status. Inappropriate activation is prohibited.
- D. Take-Home Vehicle Program
1. Special Ordinance 5439 establishes guidelines for the use of City-Provided Vehicles. Members must sign the City-Provided Vehicle Use Agreement

signifying their acknowledgement of the regulations set forth in Ordinance 5439 and agreeing to the limitations therein.

2. City policy and the Police Working Agreement establish ten (10) straight-line miles from the corporate city limits as the maximum distance a member can reside and have a take-home vehicle. The Chief of Police may for good cause grant exceptions to the distance policy.
3. Examples of acceptable and unacceptable include but are not limited to:
 - a. Acceptable use:
 - a1) Infrequent brief stops enroute to or from work to make minor personal purchases.
 - a2) Unanticipated family emergencies such a sick child needed to be picked up from school.
 - b. Unacceptable use:
 - b1) Picking up a family member or other person and taking them to an appointment.
 - b2) Delivering child to school or taking a family member to or from work.
 - b3) Hauling or delivering personal items or other non-city property anywhere.

Paul Luster, Chief of Police

Date