

TAKOMA PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - GENERAL ORDERS



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| TITLE: Traffic Hazards/Assistance to Motorists | | NUMBER: 709 |
| EFFECTIVE DATE: August 13, 2008 | | REVIEW DATE: August 13, 2022 |
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| AUTHORITY: Chief Ronald A. Ricucci | | TOTAL PAGES: 5 |

01 Purpose: To provide guidelines for assisting motorists in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

02 Policy: To ensure that requests for assistance from motorists are handled in the safest, most efficient and courteous manner possible.

03 General Procedures:

A. Upon being dispatched to, or locating a stranded or disabled motorist, the officer shall place his/her vehicle so as to prevent traffic from striking the disabled vehicle or motorist. The patrol vehicle shall have emergency equipment and flashers activated.

B. Upon determining that a motorist needs mechanical or towing service, the officer shall ask if the motorist would like the towing service of his or her choice to be called. If the motorist has no preference, the dispatcher shall notify the Department's contract tow service.

C. Once a towing service has been contacted, the officer may leave the scene; however, the following factors will be considered in deciding whether to clear the scene or not:

- 1.** Danger factors concerning exact location of the vehicle on a roadway, such as the crest of a hill or in a blind turn.
- 2.** Weather such as snow, fog or heavy rain.
- 3.** Time of day.
- 4.** Availability of officers for other calls for service.
- 5.** At no time will a motorist be left alone in an inherently dangerous situation.

D. Officers are to provide a communications link between a disabled motorist and the needed service to help the motorist.

E. Prior to leaving, the officer shall place a minimum of two flares in a manner so as to divert traffic away from the disabled vehicle.

04 Supervisor's Responsibility: The following factors will be considered in deciding whether to clear an officer from the scene:

- A. Danger factors concerning exact location of the vehicle on a roadway, such as the crest of a hill or in a blind turn;
- B. Weather: snow, fog or heavy rain;
- C. Time of day (late night hours may present special hazards for females);
- D. Availability of officers for other calls for service.

05 Miscellaneous Motorist Requests:

A. Officers will courteously deny citizen requests to make minor repairs or change tires, citing this Department directive, except where conditions are such that a tire change or minor repair can be made safely and immediately. In such cases, prior approval shall be obtained from the Team Leader.

B. Vehicle Lockouts: Officers are allowed to attempt entry into a locked vehicle when the vehicle's motor is running or when a person or animal is locked inside the vehicle. Prior to attempting entry into a vehicle in all other cases, the officer shall obtain written permission using TPPD Form 600-36. Note that only the registered owner/co-owner may give such authorization. If the officer is not able to gain entry, or the citizen does not wish entry to be attempted, the officer will suggest a locksmith or towing service.

Note: All officers are *prohibited* from use of a "**Slim Jim**" (lockout tool) and/or assisting with vehicle lockouts on any vehicle equipped with side impact airbags. If it is unknown whether or not a vehicle has side impact airbags, entry will not be attempted. Citizens requests will be denied with the explanation that a law enforcement officer was killed while attempting such an entry when the side airbag deployed, hurling the lockout tool into the officer.

C. Workload permitting, a citizen may be transported to a service station within City limits, with prior approval of the working Team Leader.

D. Jump Starts: Citizen requests for jump-starts with cables are prohibited.

E. Push Bumpers: A marked police cruiser equipped with push bumpers may be used to push a disabled vehicle with prior approval of the working Team Leader and under the following conditions/limitations:

- 1.** Only the following types of vehicles will be pushed via the push bumper: (a) passenger cars; (b) pick-up trucks not heavily loaded; (c) vans not exceeding 3/4 ton; (d) recreational vehicles not exceeding 3/4 ton.
- 2.** The disabled vehicle's owner/operator must consent to being pushed by the police unit.
- 3.** The traffic assist push will be from the point of stoppage in the traveled portion of the roadway to the nearest shoulder. There will be no pushing to the nearest gas station, parking lot, etc.
- 4.** The police cruiser speed will not exceed 5 mph when pushing a disabled vehicle. Indications are that airbags in the cruisers will activate at impacts greater than 12 mph.
- 5.** Emergency lights will be activated during the push effort.
- 6.** Instruct the driver of the disabled vehicle that the loss of power may affect power brakes and steering. Ensure that the vehicle being pushed has the brakes off and is in neutral. Advise the driver that no >push starts@ will be allowed since this may lead to collisions or activation of the airbag.
- 7.** Instruct the driver of the disabled vehicle to turn the ignition on in order to prevent the steering wheel from locking.
- 8.** Ensure the driver knows where the car is being pushed. This can reduce collisions caused by quick, unexpected turns.
- 9.** Push bumpers are not designed to be used for forcing vehicles off the road.
- 10.** Push bumpers are not designed to push damaged vehicles.
- 11.** Plastic on newer vehicles tends to crack or break in extremely cold weather. Use care when utilizing the push bumpers during these conditions.
- 12.** Push bumpers are designed to push in a straight line. If approaching a turn while pushing a vehicle, stop pushing the vehicle and let it coast thru the turn and then re-engage, again keeping in a straight line.
- 13.** If damage occurs as a result of a push, document the incident so that the City can address any claims.

06 Emergency Assistance to Highway Users: (CALEA 61.4.1.d)

A. If an officer routines or is dispatched to a personal injury accident, he/she shall secure the scene, provide first aid, and obtain medical and fire service assistance.

B. If an officer routines or is dispatched to a call for emergency assistance, he/she will:

- 1.** Provide first aid as required and arrange for transport by ambulance to a medical facility.
- 2.** Use fire suppression equipment in the police vehicle as needed, and obtain fire service assistance.
- 3.** Provide emergency escort, if necessary, in accordance with General Order 701 relating to the operation of police vehicles.

07 Hazardous Highway Conditions: When an officer locates any hazardous highway conditions, he/she shall cause the conditions to be corrected either by himself/herself or by making notifications as follows:

A. State Roads is to be notified by TTY or telephone in cases of the following on state roads or highways:

- * large potholes
- * road signs down
- * ice and/or snow conditions

B. Public Works shall be notified by telephone for hazardous conditions on City streets. If there is any question about jurisdiction of a City street (City, County, State Road), Public Works shall be notified. If Public Work is closed they shall be notified via the emergency notification list.

C. The local power company shall be notified by telephone for any wires/telephone poles down or street lights out.

D. The local water company shall be notified of any water main breaks.

E. The Fire Department is to be notified for any hazardous materials on any roadway, trees down, live wires, accidents with injuries and/or flood conditions where roads and/or bridges may be washed out.

F. Animal Control is to be notified of any injured/dead animals found on the roadway.

08 Traffic Lights:

A. Malfunctioning traffic lights will be immediately reported to the dispatcher by the observing officer. The Team Leader will be notified.

B. The Team Leader will attempt to place the malfunctioning lights on flash cycle. If this is not possible, he/she may assign an officer to the intersection for traffic control.

C. The dispatcher will immediately call the Montgomery County Signal shop and advise them of the location of the malfunctioning traffic light and any efforts that were made to place the lights on flash.

B. For general power failure of the light units, the local power company should be notified immediately.

09 Notifications: In general, prompt notification, with details, will be made to the Chief of Police and the Police Information Officer whenever any hazardous highway conditions might be newsworthy. Appropriate news agencies should be contacted by the Police Information officer, to divert traffic from an area.