



Alexandria Police Department

Directive 10.11A



Emergency Vehicle Operation

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10.11A.01 POLICY AND PURPOSE

All personnel operating Department vehicles shall exercise due regard for the safety of all persons: protection of life is the paramount goal of the Department. No task, call, or incident justifies disregard of public safety. Further, the public expects its law enforcement officers to demonstrate exemplary driving skills.

In emergency situations an expedient response is necessary; however, the need for urgency must always be balanced against operator and citizen safety. Emergency response is recognized as appropriate and necessary under certain conditions; however, nothing in this directive relieves operators of potential criminal or civil liability for their actions.

The purpose of this directive is to set guidelines for the operation of emergency vehicles.

10.11A.02 AUTHORITY

The authority to operate emergency vehicles in response to emergencies is provided under Virginia State Code Section §§ 46.2-920 and 46.2-829.

10.11A.03 DEFINITIONS

Emergency Equipment - flashing, blinking or alternating emergency lights and a siren, exhaust whistle or air horn designed to give automatically intermittent signals.

Emergency Lights - lights are required under the Virginia State Code in emergency response. Police vehicles are required to have flashing, blinking, or alternating blue, blue and red, blue and white, or red, white, and blue combination warning lights (§ 46.2-1022)

Priority Response - responding to a situation assigned emergency status using emergency equipment; and only when the operator of such vehicle displays a flashing, blinking, or alternating emergency light or lights and sounds a siren, exhaust whistle, or air horn designed to give automatically intermittent signals, as may be reasonably necessary.

Emergency Status - the status assigned an incident which may appear to be life threatening or of a serious nature as based on available information, and therefore requires emergency response.

Emergency Vehicle – any law-enforcement vehicle operated by or under the direction of a law-enforcement officer (i) in the chase or apprehension of violators of the law or persons charged with or suspected of any such violation or (ii) in response to an emergency call. Such vehicle shall be equipped with emergency lights and siren. (§§ 46.2-1022 - 46.2-1061).

Routine Status - the status assigned an incident that does not require emergency response. In responding to such an incident the operator will obey all traffic laws and ordinances.

Sirens or exhaust whistles – every law-enforcement vehicle authorized to be equipped with warning lights, shall be equipped with a siren, exhaust whistle, or air horn designed to give automatically intermittent signals (§ 46.2-1061).

10.11.04 RADIO CODES AND SIGNALS (From PD 10.29)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Priority Response Authorized: Officers may use emergency equipment at their discretion (for example, the dispatched unit is in congested traffic and activating emergency equipment is not practical at the moment, or a dispatched unit is a few blocks from the scene and emergency equipment is not necessary).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

10.11A.05 RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The dispatcher will assume primary responsibility for giving an incident emergency status or routine status and advising the unit(s) to respond accordingly. [41.2.1]

- B. Officers will not respond Priority Response to a call without specific authorization from a dispatcher or supervisor, except in an extraordinary circumstance, defined in "D." below. Officers operating vehicles not fully equipped as an emergency vehicle, i.e., rental cars, seized vehicles, etc. will not engage in any emergency driving (§ 46.2-920).

- C. Personnel on the scene and supervisors en-route to the scene may upgrade or downgrade responses to calls when conditions warrant, for example, based on factors such as weather, roads or other pertinent conditions, or based on additional information or expertise possessed. **[41.2.1]**
- D. Under normal circumstances, field officers will remain in their assigned areas unless otherwise directed by a supervisor or a dispatcher. If they are nearby an emergency call, i.e., officers in adjacent sectors, they may move (*not Priority*) toward the area, but not to the scene, and be available, should additional officers be needed at the scene. In an extraordinary circumstance, defined only as a [REDACTED] (officer in trouble call), officers may respond **Priority** from their assigned areas without obtaining prior approval from the dispatcher. Once information is broadcast that the scene is stable, officers not on the scene shall immediately cease *Priority response*, and return to their prior duties.
- E. Officers will not respond to a call unless sent by the dispatcher or a supervisor. Officers close to a dispatched call, and not dispatched, will request approval from the dispatcher prior to responding on the call (PD 10.29) unless an extraordinary circumstance, defined in D. above, exists.
- F. Employees will operate Department vehicles in such a manner as to avoid injury to persons or damage to property (6.4.02.A.5). Regardless of the seriousness of the situation to which the officer is responding, and excepting circumstances that are clearly beyond the officer's control, he or she shall be held accountable for the manner in which he or she operates the vehicle.
- G. Employees will pay full time and attention to driving and will not use cellular telephones or *Mobile Data Browsers* (MDB) in any manner that would endanger or distract them or cause an accident while engaged in an emergency response.

10.11A.06 PROCEDURES

- A. The dispatcher will dispatch as many units as are necessary, based on existing guidelines and information received, to the scene of the emergency. When a dispatcher gives a call emergency status, the dispatcher will give the responding officers authorization for a **Priority Response**. The dispatcher will advise responding officers of a change in response status as soon as it is known, and will ensure that affected units acknowledge the change.
- B. When officers receive notification of the termination of **Priority Response** status, they will cease emergency operation as soon as is reasonably safe, keeping in mind that State Code exemptions only apply in response to an emergency.

C. The driver of any emergency vehicle, when such vehicle is being used in the performance of public services, and when such vehicle is operated under emergency conditions, **may**, without subjecting himself to criminal prosecution (State Code regulations § 46.2-920):

1. Disregard speed limits, while having due regard for safety of persons and property.

NOTE: This Department imposes on the operator the restriction of driving no faster than 20 miles per hour above the posted speed limit in an emergency response (excluding pursuits).

2. Proceed past any steady or flashing red signal, traffic light, stop sign, or device indicating moving traffic shall stop if the speed of the vehicle is sufficiently reduced to enable it to pass a signal, traffic light, or device with due regard to the safety of persons and property;

NOTE: Upon approaching an intersection, or other location where there is great possibility of collision because of traffic congestion, limited visibility, or other factors, the driver shall reduce the speed of the vehicle, **stopping completely, if necessary**, before entering and traversing the intersection.

3. Park or stop notwithstanding the other provisions of this chapter;

NOTE: Vehicles will be parked in a manner so as to cause the least interference with traffic flow except when an emergency requires otherwise. At emergency scenes, vehicles should be parked in as safe a manner as possible, considering the need to allow access for fire, medical and other police vehicles. As soon as practical, or at the direction of a supervisor, emergency vehicles will be relocated to restore the normal flow of traffic.

4. Disregard regulations governing a direction of movement of vehicles turning in specified directions so long as the operator does not endanger life or property;

NOTE: This exemption has often been misinterpreted as permitting travel the wrong way down one-way streets. There is no authorization in the State Code allowing any emergency vehicle to travel the wrong way on one-way streets.

5. Pass or overtake, with due regard to the safety of persons and property, another vehicle at any intersection;

6. Pass or overtake with due regard to the safety of persons and property, while en route to an emergency, stopped or slow-moving vehicles, by going to the left of the stopped or slow-moving vehicle either in a no-passing zone or by crossing the highway centerline;

7. Pass or overtake with due regard to the safety of persons and property, while en route to an emergency, stopped or slow-moving vehicles, by going off the paved or main traveled portion of the roadway on the right. Notwithstanding other provisions of this section, vehicles exempted in this instance will not be required to sound a siren or any device to give automatically intermittent signals.

Nothing in the State Code releases the operator of any such vehicle from civil liability for failure to use reasonable care in such operation.

By Authority Of:

**Earl L. Cook
Chief of Police**