



*Alexandria Police Department*  
**Directive 13.1B**



**WIND AND WATER**

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**13.01B.01 PURPOSE AND POLICY**

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for police operations during weather emergencies involving high winds and flooding of sufficient severity to cause a hazard to vehicular or pedestrian traffic, and/or other concerns for safety.

It is the policy of the department to staff emergency functions 24-hours every day and the public's expectation is that police service will be accessible 24 hours day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. However, there are occasions because of weather conditions when police services must be reduced or stopped; for example, heavy snow, hurricanes, tornadoes, tropical storms and flooding conditions.

With the exception of extreme rapidly occurring weather conditions, the Watch Commander will make the determination when to reduce or cease street operations (i.e. Sworn Officers, Parking Enforcement and Crossing Guards etc.). When time permits, the Watch Commander should consider consulting with the Fire Safety Officer or Emergency Manager to determine when to reduce, cease and resume field operations.

The information used in this directive to determine unsafe conditions in the two types of environments was gathered from multiple sources.

**13.01B.02 DEFINITIONS**

**Sustained Wind** - The wind speed obtained by averaging the observed values over a one-minute period.

**Tropical Storm** – sustained wind speeds of 39 – 73 mph.

**Hurricane** – sustained winds speeds of 74 mph or higher.

**Moving Water** – water that has movement, current or tide flow, to include the channel of the Potomac River. Especially dangerous is flash flooding flows.

**Fixed body of water** – still, calm, or non-moving water.

**13.01B.03 PROCEDURES****Wind**

Wind speeds during a Tropical Storm range from 39 mph – 73 mph sustained. Hurricane force winds occur at 74 mph and higher.

During a Tropical Storm the Watch Commander is to monitor weather conditions and should call the Emergency Operations Center 703-838-6257 to obtain current wind speed.

Wind speeds from 39-73 mph (Tropical Storm strength) can be an increased safety risk (falling trees and flying debris) and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Watch Commander.

A sustained wind speed of 74 mph (and higher) is dangerous and all field operations will **stop**.

**Water**

Employees should recognize any law enforcement activity in, near and around water is inherently dangerous. Never let emotion and urgency drive decisions.

Moving water is particularly dangerous and six inches of moving water can knock the average size person down. Because employees will not receive the equipment and training necessary to work in this environment (and most injuries occur in this area), they are prohibited from working within 15 feet of moving water. Employees should

never tie a rope to themselves or others and attempt to wade into moving water to help someone. Rescuers die each year that way, stuffed under cars or entrapped in debris.

Flooding is the #1 cause of weather-related fatalities in this country. In fact, as many as 60 percent of flood-related deaths occur because people try to drive through the water. Water weighs 62.4 pounds per cubic foot and usually travels between six to 12 miles per hour, depending on the slope. For every foot the water rises, it pushes with 500 pounds of lateral force against a vehicle. In addition, water gives even the heaviest car some buoyancy. Indeed, every foot of water lifts around 1,500 pounds of vehicle weight. That's why two feet of water will float a 3,000 pound car.

A good rule of thumb: If you can't see the yellow or white line on a road, you're in trouble. Employees are prohibited from driving through an unknown depth of moving water.

The City has many fixed (flat or calm) water sites (ex. Lake Cook). Employees often feel compelled to assist citizens or others in rescue type operations in, near and around fixed water. However, employees should realize their level (or lack) of proficiency in this type of endeavour and consider other pertinent factors such as training, equipment needed for a rescue, the weight of the officer's equipment etc.

Whenever possible, employees should avoid entering fixed water or operating within 10 feet of the water line.

**By Authority Of:**

**Earl L. Cook  
Chief of Police**