



**Maryland-National Capital Park Police  
Prince George's County Division**



**DIVISION DIRECTIVE**

TITLE <b>EMERGENCY OPERATIONS OF POLICE VEHICLES</b>			PROCEDURE NUMBER <b>PG418.0</b>
SECTION <b>Operational Procedures</b>	DISTRIBUTION <b>A</b>	ISSUE DATE <b>06/01/04</b>	REVIEW DATE <b>06/01/06</b>
REPLACES <p style="text-align: center;">PG418.0 "Emergency Operation of Police Vehicles," Issued 11/12/01</p>			
RELATED DIRECTIVES <b>PG420.0</b>	REFERENCES <b>CALEA 41</b>	AUTHORITY <b>Larry M. Brownlee, Sr., Division Chief</b>	

**I. PURPOSE**

This directive establishes policy and procedural guidelines pertaining to the use of emergency equipment and the emergency operation of police vehicles in the following situations: (1) pursuit, (2) response to an emergency, (3) response to a crime in progress, (4) stopping violators, (5) providing motorist assistance, and (6) parking on/off roadways.

**II. POLICY**

When operating a police vehicle under emergency conditions, the safety of the public and the officer are foremost. An officer responding to an emergency situation who never arrives is of no help to those who are in need. Officers shall bear in mind that the use of emergency vehicle equipment only requests the right-of-way, it does not guarantee it.

Each officer shall be individually responsible for the safety of the public he/she serves. These provisions shall not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and property, nor shall these provisions protect the operator from the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others.

It is the policy of this Division to ensure that officers observe procedures that will permit the most expeditious vehicular response to emergency situations consistent with the safety and welfare of the public and officers.

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**III. DEFINITION**

- A. **Police Vehicle**: Any vehicle owned or leased by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission **and** is registered with the State of Maryland as an emergency vehicle **and** is equipped with a siren **and** revolving or flashing red and/or blue overhead emergency lights and/or dash light and/or visor light and/or red or blue grille lights.

**IV. MARYLAND LAW**

- A. Maryland Code, Transportation Article, Section 21-106:

“(a) Subject to the conditions stated in this section, the driver of an emergency vehicle registered in any state may exercise the privileges set forth in this section while:

- 1) Responding to an emergency call;
- 2) Pursuing a violator or suspected violator of the law; or
- 3) Responding to, but not while returning from, a fire alarm.

“(b) Under the circumstances stated in subsection (a) of this section, the driver of an emergency vehicle may:

- 1) Park or stand without regard to the other provisions of this title;
- 2) Pass a red or stop signal, a stop sign, or a yield sign, but only after slowing down as necessary for safety; (refer Section V.F.1)
- 3) Exceed any maximum speed limit, but only so long as the driver does not endanger life or property; and
- 4) Disregard any traffic control device or regulation governing direction of movement or turning in a specified direction.

“(c) Use of audible and visual signals required.

- 1) The privileges set forth in this section apply only while the emergency vehicle is using audible and visual signals ...except that an emergency vehicle operated as a police vehicle need not be equipped with or display the visual signals.
- 2) The driver of an emergency vehicle may not use flashing lights or a bell, siren or exhaust whistle while returning from any emergency call ...

“(d) This section does not relieve the driver of an emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.”

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**V. EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATION PROCEDURES**

- A. Pursuant to Maryland law, officers shall only operate a police vehicle as an emergency vehicle while responding to an emergency call or pursuing a violator or suspected violator of the law, utilizing the guidelines in sections B. through I. below.
  
- B. An emergency/priority response is only warranted for:
  - 1. an in progress call/incident where a life is in danger,
  - 2. a felony in progress or just occurred,
  - 3. an officer in trouble,
  - 4. a domestic assault in progress, or
  - 5. a personal injury accident, **except** when fire/rescue or police personnel are already on the scene and determine that the situation does not require an emergency response.
  - 6. Hold-up/panic alarm
  
- C. Pursuit
  - 1. All provisions of Division Directives PG420.0 "Fresh Pursuit/Vehicular Pursuit" shall be strictly adhered to during all pursuit situations.
  
- D. Response to an Emergency
  - 1. When an officer determines that a situation is an emergency he/she shall, as soon as possible, notify Communications of the response and present location. Officers and supervisors may change the emergency response to a non-emergency response when the situation lessens and it necessitates a change in the type of response recommended.
  - 2. All responses to emergency situations shall be made utilizing the prescribed emergency equipment.
  
- E. Response to Crimes in Progress
  - 1. Officers dispatched to crimes in progress and assigned a "priority" response by the dispatcher shall respond to the area of the call utilizing the prescribed emergency equipment. This equipment may be turned off prior

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to getting to the scene when necessary so as not to warn perpetrators of the arrival of the police, however, the officer must then obey all traffic laws.

**F. Stopping Violators**

1. When stopping traffic violators with a moving police vehicle, officers shall activate the emergency equipment necessary to affect the stop in a safe and timely manner as possible.

**G. General Rules**

1. When approaching an intersection, officers operating a police vehicle under emergency conditions shall reduce their vehicle's speed or come to a complete stop until the intersection is clear of vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic before proceeding, as necessary for safety, through the intersection with caution.
2. Officers operating emergency vehicles shall do so in a reasonable and prudent manner consistent with existing conditions.
3. The unnecessary use of emergency equipment can easily compound traffic problems and create a hazard to the public. Officers shall consider the totality of each situation before deciding to utilize their emergency equipment.
4. When stopping behind a violator or other motorist on or adjacent to a roadway, officers shall attempt to position their vehicle at an angle to the other vehicle with the left front of the police vehicle past the left edge of the other vehicle so as to provide a safety zone for the officer.

**H. Providing Motorist Assistance**

1. When assisting motorists, officers shall activate their vehicle's emergency lights and hazardous warning lights (four-way flashers) so as to provide a warning to other motorists.

**I. Parking On/Off Roadways**

1. Emergency lights and hazardous warning lights (four-way flashers) shall be utilized whenever a police vehicle is stopped or parked on or adjacent to a roadway in such a manner as to cause a hazard or whenever necessary as a warning.

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**VI. USE OF AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT**

A. Emergency Lights

1. Red and/or blue emergency lights shall be utilized at all times when a police vehicle is in movement during any of the situations listed in Section I. of this Directive.
2. Red and/or blue emergency lights shall be utilized whenever a police vehicle is stopped or parked on or adjacent to a roadway in such a manner as to cause a hazard or whenever necessary as a warning.

B. Siren

1. When operating a moving police vehicle during any of the situations listed in Section V. of this Directive, officers shall have their vehicle's siren activated.

C. Hazardous Warning Lights (four-way flashers)

1. These lights provide added warning to other drivers and should be used whenever possible in conjunction with the use of emergency lights whenever the police vehicle is parked.

D. Spotlights

1. The spotlight may be used as a protective device by officers when potentially hazardous conditions exist by illuminating an area or vehicle. Spotlights shall not be used as a warning or signaling device with the beam directed towards other drivers as these lights may temporarily restrict the vision of other drivers.

E. Public Address System

1. The P.A. system can be a valuable tool under a variety of situations and should be used accordingly, however, the P.A. shall not be used to warn other drivers during an emergency response.

F. Headlights

1. Flashing or non-flashing headlights (wig-wags) shall be activated at all times in conjunction with the use of emergency lights while the police vehicle is moving.

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