
	GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT		
	Traffic Direction and Control		
	GENERAL ORDER	618.1	
Effective Date	05/15/2014		
Authorized by:	Mark P. Sroka CHIEF OF POLICE	SIGNATURE	DATE

I. DEPARTMENT POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Any officer encountering a traffic problem shall take all reasonable actions to control the problem by requesting whatever assistance the officer deems appropriate to restore the flow of traffic.

If necessary, the officer will direct traffic and/or arrange for Public Works, County or State Roads, or the entity with jurisdiction, to deliver traffic cones, arrow Boards, barricades, and/or portable signs. Officers will never leave a hazardous intersection unattended without making an effort to notify motorists of the dangerous situation.

II. TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL PROCEDURES

A. Use of Standardized Signals

1. To minimize confusion and to expedite the flow of traffic, the use of appropriate, standardized gestures and signals are used to have motorists, pedestrians, and/or bicyclists stop, start, or turn.
2. Before an officer begins to direct traffic, the officer should attempt to utilize the traffic signal pattern and direct traffic with the signal. If this cannot be done, contact Public Safety Communications Center to have the lights put on flash by the Traffic Management Center.
3. Officer(s) directing traffic should position their police vehicle in such a manner that it is highly visible to highway users yet does not unnecessarily impede or hinder the flow of traffic, unless the road is shut down.
4. Officer(s) will wear high-visibility or reflective clothing **at all times while they are in the roadway directing or controlling traffic.**

B. Stopping Traffic

1. To stop traffic, the officer should first extend his/her arm and index

finger toward and look directly at the person to be stopped until that person is aware of the officer's gesture to stop.

2. The pointing hand is raised at the wrist so that its palm is facing the person to be stopped, and is held in this position until the person stops.

C. Starting Traffic

1. To start traffic, the officer should stand with shoulder and side toward the traffic to be started, extend his/her arm and index finger toward the vehicle(s) and look directly at the driver to be started.
2. With the palm up, the pointing arm is swung from the elbow, only, through a vertical semi-circle until the hand is adjacent to the chin.

D. Motorists Turning Right

1. Motorists turning right can usually do so without being directed by the officer.
2. However, if a motorist's right turn must be directed, the officer should extend his/her right arm and index finger toward the motorist (if the motorist is approaching from the officer's right) and swing the extended arm in the direction of the motorist's intended turn.
3. If the motorist approaches from the officer's left, the same procedure can be followed, except using the left arm.

E. Motorists Turning Left

1. Motorists intending to turn left should, at all times, be directed to do so by the officer.
2. Officer(s) should stop or hold on-coming traffic and then direct left-turning motorists to execute their turns.

F. Using A Whistle

1. When possible, every officer, while directing traffic, should use a whistle to get the attention of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

G. Flashlights and Flares

1. A flashlight (equipped with a red plastic tip) or light sticks are

recommended for use in reduced-lighting and/or adverse weather conditions, and should be used in conjunction with the arm gestures previously described.

2. Officers are discouraged from physically holding flares to direct traffic, as their embers can be harmful to the officer, highway user, property, etc.

H. Stopping Trains Due to an Incident Blocking a Crossing

1. In the event an officer needs to have a train stopped because of a vehicle collision or other incident that is blocking the tracks, the below procedures are the universal signals to stop trains, as recommended by the CSX Railroad:
 - *Notify the Public Safety Communications Center of the situation and request notification of railroad dispatcher of the hazard.*
 - *If the tracks are completely blocked, thus preventing trains from proceeding to their destinations, one road flare will be placed between the rails of the track at least 2,000 feet in each direction east and west of the incident.*
 - *Officers should be assigned to the locations where the flares have been placed to ensure flares are lit throughout the police operation.*
 - *A police vehicle will be parked nearby with its emergency lights activated.*
 - *On the approach of a train, the officer will walk alongside the tracks, toward the train, and slowly swing a lighted flashlight (or other bright object) in a horizontal motion to alert the train's engineer of the hazard on the tracks.*
 - *If the engineer sees the officer's signal and is able to stop the train, the engineer will acknowledge the officer by sounding the train's horn twice.*
 - *CSX Railroad reminds officers that the average length of a freight train is about 150 cars, and traveling at approximately 60 MPH, it would take about a mile and a half to stop.*
 - *The railroad dispatcher (via the Public Safety Communications Center) must be notified at the conclusion of the police activity.*

I. Stopping or Slowing a Train Due to an Incident Beside the Tracks

1. In the event a police operation is in progress beside the tracks that does not impede rail traffic, the Public Safety Communications Center will be requested to notify the railroad dispatcher and one road flare will be placed beside the tracks, ***at least 2,000 feet, in each direction, north and south of the police operation*** up/down the tracks, to warn train engineers of the need to proceed through the area with caution.
2. For the safety of officers/rescue workers, the Public Safety Communications Center should ascertain from CSX when the next train is due through the area.
3. Officers must also be assigned to the locations where flares have been placed to ensure they are constantly lighted.

III. TEMPORARY TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

A. Usage and Availability

1. Various temporary traffic control signs are stored at the City's Public Works facility and are available to officers 24-hours a day. The temporary control signs are either mounted on barricades or by themselves, and are to be used in emergency situations.
2. Temporary traffic control signs are also available within a Department owned 4-wheel drive support vehicle, stored at the police facility. This 4-wheel vehicle may also be used to store various traffic related items, such flares and traffic cones.
3. Before a temporary traffic control device is placed into service, any traffic signal present should be placed on flashing.
 - ***If the signal itself is causing the problem that necessitates the placement of temporary devices, the Public Safety Communications Center and Traffic Management Center (TMC) will be notified.***
4. If the officer determines that the flashing signal will adequately and safely control traffic, the temporary signs should not be used at that location, because they are likely to confuse motorists (unless the officer believes their use would assist motorists and/or the officer who will be directing traffic).
5. During regular business hours Public Works should be contacted

directly by the officer at the scene so that he/she can specify exactly what is needed.

6. Officers should make every effort to notify (via the Public Safety Communications Center) either County Roads or the State Highway Administration to furnish temporary traffic control devices on streets maintained by them.

IV. TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL AT FIRE SCENES

A. Procedures

1. Officers will direct and control traffic at or around fire scenes and will coordinate efforts with the Fire/Rescue Incident Commander insofar as:
 - *Establishing a perimeter;*
 - *Closing streets; and*
 - *Designating alternate routes and detouring of traffic, etc.*
2. Vehicles that interfere with Fire Department or rescue operations may be towed as necessary.

B. Media Access

1. At the scenes of major fires, natural disasters, other catastrophic events, or at crime or collision scenes, for the safety and security of Department and news personnel, it may be necessary for police to establish perimeters and control access.
2. Normally, members of the media will be allowed no closer than the outer perimeter, but may be afforded closer access to an event than a private citizen. If a member of the media can satisfactorily establish his/her affiliation with a particular news organization, network, radio or television station, or as a freelance reporter or photographer, officers assigned to the perimeter will allow the media representative access when feasible to do so.
3. The intent of this section is to assist a news-gathering representative in gaining access to a scene as part of their normal duties. The access shall be reasonable, but shall not go beyond an official police line as defined by the yellow police tape.
4. No member of the Department shall unnecessarily obstruct news

media representatives in the performance of their duties, but shall extend courtesy to the news media who are covering an incident at the scene.

5. Vehicles and equipment belonging to members of the media will not be permitted to interfere with police or fire/rescue operations, or the general flow of traffic. (General Order 1201.1 -Media Relations and Public Information).

V. **TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL DURING ADVERSE WEATHER AND ROAD CONDITIONS**

A. **Street Closure Authorized**

1. Whenever an officer discovers a hazardous situation that would affect street or highway users, the officer, using their best judgment and discretion is authorized to close a road or portion thereof to traffic until the situation has subsided.
2. If the closure will be prolonged, a Gaithersburg Alert will be initiated.

B. **Procedures**

1. When called upon to direct and control traffic during adverse weather and road conditions, officers will:
 - **Consider requesting barricades, temporary traffic control devices, etc., to slow traffic and/or to establish a safe traffic pattern;**
 - **Consider requesting a salt/sand truck and/or snow plow, or other equipment the officer deems appropriate for the situation;**
 - **Not leave a hazardous situation they have discovered or responded to, unless the hazard has been alleviated or lessened, or until relieved by a supervisor.**
2. High-visibility or reflective clothing shall be worn at all times while the officer is in the street directing or controlling traffic.
3. If possible, the police vehicle should be positioned in such a way that:
 - *Makes it clearly visible to warn motorists and other*

highway users with its emergency lights activated;

- *Affords the officer(s) maximum protection;*
 - *Does not unnecessarily impede traffic.*
4. The setting up of flares or light sticks should be considered to warn motorists and to establish a temporary traffic pattern.
 5. When directing traffic around downed power lines, or a broken gas or water main, common sense should dictate the officer's actions, which will include:
 - *The notification of PEPCO, Washington Gas Light or the WSSC;*
 - *Notification of Fire/Rescue;*
 - *Requesting additional assistance to detour traffic and control bystanders;*
 - *Considering all downed power lines to be energized, unless they are positively sure the lines have been de-energized.*

VI. CLOSING DOWN ROADWAYS

A. Notification of PSCC

1. If a road will be closed down for any length of time, the officer closing the road must notify the Public Safety Communications Center of the closure and the estimated length of time that the road will be closed.
2. Officers will also request the Public Safety Communications Center to notify the news media so that this information can be passed onto highway users via radio and television.
3. Supervisors will activate Gaithersburg Alert in situations where they believe the information will be helpful for avoiding lengthy delays or hazardous situations.