

TOPEKA POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL
5.3 TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND MOTORIST ASSIST

Traffic Direction and Motorist Assist

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5.3.1 PURPOSE

This order establishes the standards for traffic direction and control activities, and procedures for motorist assistance.

5.3.2 POLICY

Officers should utilize the Department's uniform signals and gestures for traffic direction and otherwise assure that their directions are visible and contribute to safe and effective traffic flow.

5.3.3 TRAFFIC DIRECTION

A. Uniform Signals and Gestures for Traffic Direction

1. Officer Visibility
 - a. Officers shall wear reflective jackets or vests provided by the Department which meet Federal standards when directing traffic or in the roadway controlling traffic.
 - b. Officers should position themselves where they can be seen clearly by all vehicles or pedestrians, usually in the center of an intersection or street; and
 - c. Officers should stand facing the traffic that is stopped, with the side of the body toward the vehicles authorized to move.

2. Use of Whistle and Gestures

- a. To stop traffic, the officer may give one long blast on their whistle and extend their arm and index finger toward the vehicle to be stopped until the driver is aware of the officer's presence; and
- b. Once the driver has recognized the command, the officer may raise the palm of the pointing hand at the wrist gesturing until the person stops.

3. Starting Traffic

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- a. To start traffic, the officer should face the traffic with his or her arm and point their index finger toward the vehicle to be started until the driver is aware of the direction to proceed;
- b. The officer should give two short blasts on his or her whistle and with palm up, gesture the driver to proceed forward by swinging the arm from the elbow through a vertical semi-circle until the hand is adjacent to the chin; and
- c. Officers should continue this pattern of gesturing until all desired traffic has cleared the area or there is a need to stop traffic.

4. Right Turns

Drivers turning right usually effect their turn without being directed by an officer. When it becomes necessary to direct a right turn, the officer shall proceed as follows:

- a. If the driver approaches from the officer's right side, the officer may give two (2) short blasts on his or her whistle and extend the right arm and index finger towards the driver;
- b. The officer should follow through by swinging the extended arm and index finger in the direction of the driver's intended turn;
- c. If the driver is approaching from the officer's left side, the officer should use the same procedure using the left arm extended.

5. Left Turns

- a. Drivers turning left shall not be directed to affect their movement while the officer is also directing oncoming traffic to proceed.
- b. The officer may give one long blast on his or her whistle and stop oncoming traffic by using the right hand raised palm up, facing the traffic;
- c. After the oncoming traffic has come to a complete stop, the officer may give two short blasts on his or her whistle and signal the driver to turn left by extending the arm and index finger towards the driver; and
- d. The officer should follow through by swinging the extended arm and index finger in the direction of the driver's intended turn.

6. Flashlights

The flashlight and/or an attached wand may be used to halt traffic. To stop traffic, slowly swing the beam of the light across the path of oncoming traffic. The beam from the flashlight strikes the pavement as an elongated spot of light. After driver has stopped, arm signals may be given in the usual manner, the vehicle's headlights providing illumination.

B. Traffic Direction During Emergency Conditions

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1. Officers should use the same arm movements and whistle signals:
 - a. At scene of traffic collisions;
 - b. At scenes of critical incidents; and/or
 - c. During periods of adverse road and weather conditions; and
 - d. During hours of darkness, with the additional use of a flashlight.
2. During hours of darkness, to stop traffic, the officer should slowly swing the flashlight beam across the path of oncoming traffic. The officer can also use the flashlight to aid in signaling a direction by swinging the beam of light in the direction the vehicle can proceed.
3. Officers should provide traffic direction and control at the scene of downed power lines, broken gas or water mains, or construction sites where conditions could endanger the safe movement of traffic.
4. An officer may close a street or portion of a street if, in his or her judgment, the surface conditions and terrain creates a hazardous condition. The Field Commander shall notify and request assistance from the proper agency in alleviating the problem and request public service radio announcements or proper signage be made in reference to the closure.
5. The Field Commander should request SCECC to notify the local media outlets, public works, or fire/medical of adverse road conditions that could cause potential driving hazards.
6. The Field Commander should ensure that the Department of Transportation is notified and assists in the closure of any state road, interstate, or highway.

C. Fire Scenes

1. Officers at a fire scene should coordinate their efforts with the Incident Commander on scene.
2. Officers engaged in traffic direction and control at a fire scene should position their patrol vehicle at the scene in a manner that will allow ingress and egress from the scene by fire/medical and other emergency vehicles. Officers at the scene will ensure no vehicles cross over fire hoses without the approval of the senior fire official on the scene.
3. Officers on the scene should ensure parked vehicles interfering with fire/medical operations are towed, if necessary.

5.3.4 TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

A. Temporary Traffic Control Devices

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1. Officers shall notify their immediate supervisor of situations requiring the use of temporary traffic control devices beyond what is available in each patrol vehicle.
2. The on-scene officer or supervisor shall contact the appropriate City department, Traffic Engineering section or SCECC and request assistance with obtaining the necessary equipment.
3. Officers should ensure temporary devices are removed when the event or emergency situation is over and should request SCECC to notify the appropriate department that the items are ready to be retrieved.

B. Malfunctioning Traffic Control Devices

1. Employees observing or receiving information that any official traffic signal or stop sign is missing, defective, or damaged to the extent that it will not safely control traffic shall:
 - a. Notify their supervisor and SCECC immediately of the location and nature of the defect or damage;
 - b. The officer will request Traffic Engineering be notified immediately;
 - c. The uniform officer shall manually direct traffic until relieved by another officer or until re-assigned by a supervisor; and
 - d. The assigned supervisor will make a decision on the need for continued action. Supervisors should consider several factors when making this decision, such as public safety, available personnel, and/or other present emergencies.
2. Inoperable signals due to power failure:
 - a. An employee observing or receiving information that any official traffic signal is not functioning because of power failure shall notify a supervisor and Shawnee County Emergency Communications Center (SCECC) at once. In case of general power failure, the field supervisor shall determine available personnel taking into consideration factors, such as, public safety, other present emergencies, and/or public protection. After determining available personnel the supervisor will give priority to high volume intersections; and
 - b. The officer will notify Traffic Engineering and request placement of stop signs or take other appropriate action at the intersection or intersections as needed.

5.3.5 SERVICES AND MOTORIST ASSISTANCE

A. Ancillary Services

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1. Whenever providing assistance to motorists, officers shall inform SCECC of their location, the tag, make and model of the vehicle. Officers shall also inform SCECC when they go back into service.
2. A range of traffic related ancillary services may be performed. Such services include:
 - a. Providing reasonable assistance to a motorist who appears to be in need of aid;
 - b. Identifying and reporting highway hazards to the SCECC who will report the hazard to the appropriate agency;
 - c. Providing general information and direction to the public;
 - d. Provide assistance to the motorist in the changing of a tire. This assistance may be in the form of calling for a tow truck, or providing an area where the driver may change their own tire;
 - e. Provide assistance to a motorist who runs out of fuel. With supervisory approval, this assistance may include the officer transporting the motorist to the nearest service station, and after obtaining fuel, returning the motorist back to his or her vehicle only if the motorist uses a DOT approved gas container; or
 - f. Provide transportation to a motorist whose vehicle is disabled. This transportation will be done only with the permission of the supervisor. The transportation will be to a nearby place where the motorist may call and/or wait for other assistance.
3. Any time an officer transports a citizen of the opposite sex, the officer will call in his or her starting mileage and location at the beginning of the transport and ending mileage and location when the detail is completed. If equipped with a body worn camera it shall be recording as well.
4. Officers will not use their patrol cars to push or pull any vehicle for the purpose of starting it.
5. In the event that patrol cars are used for removing a vehicle from a public roadway, only vehicles equipped with push bumpers designed for that purpose will be used.
6. Officers will not use their patrol cars to jump start a disabled motorist without the permission of a supervisor.

B. Mechanical Assistance and Towing Services

1. Whenever a motorist encounters mechanical or other difficulties necessitating assistance or towing, the officer will ask the operator of the vehicle if he or she has a preference for a particular service station or tow company. If so, the officer will request SCECC to contact the service and obtain a response time.
2. If, in the opinion of the officer, the estimated response time is unacceptable and the vehicle presents a hazardous condition

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- necessitating an immediate tow, the officer will request a tow truck from the Department authorized wrecker service.
3. If the operator of the vehicle has no preference for a road service company the officer will direct SCECC to contact the next tow company on the non-preference list.
 4. Officers should remain with stranded motorists until such time as the hazardous obstruction is removed from the roadway, and the officer's services are no longer needed.
 5. When the vehicle is not in the roadway, the officer will consider traffic hazards, location, time of day, weather conditions and priority of calls for service in determining the best course of action regarding remaining with a disabled motorist until the situation is resolved. If the officer leaves the motorist at the scene to await towing services, he or she will periodically check to ensure the condition does not deteriorate.

C. Emergency Assistance

1. Officers shall render all practical assistance to motorists involved in emergency situations, including protections to stranded persons. Such assistance may come in the form of providing first aid, obtaining medical assistance, fighting fires, obtaining fire service assistance, and transporting civilians.
2. If medical transport or fire suppression assistance is needed, officers will contact SCECC and ensure that they clearly communicate their exact location and the specific situation that has caused the need for service.
3. Officers will advise SCECC of any traffic engineering deficiencies as a result of the problem. Officers will advise SCECC to transmit appropriate problem data to any local or regional traffic authorities who may be affected.

D. Escorts

1. Bureau Commanders may authorize law enforcement escort service on a priority basis as staffing and equipment allow.
2. Emergency warning lights will be activated in the following situations:
 - a. Multi-vehicle escorts;
 - b. Escorts of public officials;
 - c. Dignitaries;
 - d. Funerals; and
 - e. Oversize vehicles and hazardous or unusual cargo.
3. Use audible sirens as appropriate at congested or major intersections or any time a vehicle or pedestrian appears to have not observed or yielded to the escort.

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4. The nature of the escort and the ability of vehicles to remain in close proximity to the escort vehicle will dictate the speed of the escort. In all cases, the escorting officer shall ensure the speed is reasonable and prudent. Escorts shall be conducted within authorized speed limits when not using both audible and visual warning devices.