


PINE BLUFF POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL

	SUBJECT:	POLICY NUMBER 230
	POLICE VEHICLE – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS	ISSUE DATE 02/19/2008
	CHAPTER: PATROL	EFFECTIVE DATE 02/19/2008
	ISSUED By: Chief of Police John E. Howell	TOTAL PAGES 5

I. POLICY

All personnel of this agency who operate police vehicles will comply with safe driving procedures outlined herein with particular attention paid to procedures for responding to calls for law enforcement service. Emergency warning devices shall be used to a minimum, but consistent with both legal requirements and the safe performance of the law enforcement function and the safety of the public and law enforcement personnel.

II. PROCEDURES

A. GENERAL

1. All department vehicles will be driven in a safe and proper manner, with the driver acting in full compliance with all traffic laws and regulations. Law enforcement vehicles are conspicuous symbols of authority on the streets and the actions of law enforcement drivers are observed by many. This places the responsibility on each driver to set a visible example of driving behavior and habits.
2. Police vehicle costs and operating expenses represent a significant portion of this agency's budget. Safe, proper, efficient, conservative driver habits and behavior will stretch the limited dollars available and allow us to perform our law enforcement mission in an economical manner.
3. Under certain emergency situations as defined below, the Arkansas Motor Vehicle and Traffic Laws, 1993, authorizes disregard of traffic regulations, however both the individual operator and the department are not released from civil liability for failure to use reasonable care in such operation. Improper driving can cost each law enforcement driver, personally, in terms of civil damages while inflicting harm or injury to the driver, other law enforcement personnel, other citizens and/or property damage, as well as causing great damage to the image of this department and law enforcement in general.

B. ROUTINE OPERATION

1. In case of accident or damage to any police vehicle the driver will immediately request dispatcher to notify the shift commander who will make a determination as to who will conduct an investigation of the accident.
2. Unmarked vehicles will not normally be used in the event of a pursuit. In any emergency operation, extreme caution must be used because of the greatly reduced visibility of the unmarked car.
3. All vehicles have mobile radios which will be in operation while the vehicle is in use, whether on duty or off duty.
4. All patrol vehicles have a public address system capability which may be used to broadcast emergency messages or to hear radio transmissions while out of the car for an extended period with no portable radio. Care must be taken to ensure the appropriate volume levels are maintained and do not constitute a nuisance.
5. Hazardous warning lights should be used when the vehicle is parked where other vehicles may be endangered. Alley lights and spotlights may be used when the vehicle is stationary or moving at speeds not to exceed 15 miles per hour and shall not be used in a manner which will tend to blind or interfere with the vision of operators of approaching vehicles.
6. Occupant safety restraining devices (seat belts) ARE REQUIRED to be worn by all law enforcement personnel or ride-a-long personnel during vehicle operation. Exception to this:
 - a. On approach to any scene of an incident or service call where the law enforcement officer believes a rapid departure from the vehicle may be required; the officer may release the belt. Seat belts will, however, be used at any time the vehicle is being operated under emergency conditions.

C. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DEFINED

Emergency operating conditions are defined as those existing where the immediate presence of a law enforcement officer is required in order to protect a person from possible death or injury, a violent crime in progress, or where pursuit and stop of a vehicle is deemed necessary due to the nature of the violation or suspected violation by the driver or occupants. While operating a police unit in an emergency situation, officers may disregard certain traffic regulations as authorized by Arkansas Code 27-51-202, however, special attention must be directed to 27-51-202(b): ***“This section shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the street, nor shall it protect the driver of any emergency vehicle from the consequences of a reckless disregard of the safety of others”***. The safety of the public and the law enforcement officers must be the primary concern in emergency and pursuit responses.

D. AUTHORIZATION TO USE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PROCEDURES - The decision to authorize the use of emergency vehicle operations procedures will be made by:

1. Shift Commander for all EMERGENCY calls for service received by communications, see paragraph f below.
2. Officer exercising personal initiative, see paragraph g below.

E. EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PRECAUTIONS

1. Only police vehicles equipped with a siren and one or more blue lights will be operated as an emergency unit.
2. Siren and blue lights must be operating when responding as an emergency vehicle. If the siren is turned off, the vehicle no longer qualifies as an emergency response vehicle, and must be driven in compliance with all traffic laws.
3. Unmarked vehicles without lights and siren will under no circumstances be operated as an emergency unit.
4. Officers must give careful consideration to certain factors when determining a response speed, e.g., weather conditions, road conditions, traffic density, pedestrian traffic. Vehicle control is the key to speed. A police vehicle out of control due to speed won't get the task accomplished.
5. The driver of an emergency vehicle shall at all times drive defensively and with due consideration for the safety of persons and property.
6. Driver must exercise extreme caution in the area of schools in session, intersections, and such other locations where potential dangers may arise to the public or to the member of the department.
7. Driver may proceed past a red traffic light, stop sign, or other intersection control device only if the speed and movement of the vehicle is reduced and controlled so that the safety of persons and property are assured.
8. Driver must use caution before entering any intersection, even those displaying a green or caution light.

F. EMERGENCY DRIVING AUTHORIZATION

The decision to drive under emergency conditions will be discretionary with each individual officer, based on the following considerations:

1. When deciding to initiate or continue driving under emergency conditions, officers will consider such factors as traffic volume, time of day, and potential hazard or liability to themselves or the public.
2. Emergency response shall be made only when the call involves a perceived or reported life threatening situation or violent crime in progress.
3. The officer has sufficient information to justify the decision to drive under emergency conditions.
4. Officers responding to an "officer needs assistance" type call must bear in mind that even though a rapid response is important, they must arrive at the scene safely in order to be of assistance.

5. When responding to crimes in progress that require an officer to make a relatively silent approach, the officer will turn off his emergency lights and siren a proper distance from the scene and cease driving in an emergency mode (the officer will drive normally, obeying the speed laws and obeying traffic signals.)
6. In pursuit situations.

G. OFFICER INITIATED EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS

1. Once an officer decides to make an emergency response to any situation, he will immediately notify Communications of his decision by using the term "Code Three".
2. Code Three operations do not mean that the officer has the authority to drive with reckless abandon. While operating a police unit in an emergency situation, officers may disregard certain traffic regulations as authorized by Arkansas Code 27-51-202, however, special attention must be directed to 27-51-202(b) as identified above.
3. The field supervisor will override the officer's decision to make an emergency response if, in their opinion, it is not warranted or cannot be done safely.
4. If in the supervisors judgment that it is necessary to continue Code Three, but it is essential that the response be at a reduced speed the supervisor will instruct the officer to "take a slow down". The officer will slow down and proceed with added caution.
5. No officer will operate a vehicle in emergency (Code Three) status if it is occupied by any passenger other than another police officer unless the person has signed a release or waiver of liability. Police vehicles without emergency lights and sirens will not make emergency (Code Three) responses.

H. OTHER IMMINENT EMERGENCIES

When, in the opinion of the operator of a police vehicle, an emergency is imminent or exists, or that activation of emergency warning devices is necessary to protect life or render the necessary law enforcement service, the use of emergency vehicle operations procedures is authorized. Examples (not all inclusive) include:

1. At the scene of any incident where the utilization of blue emergency lights constitutes a necessary warning for the safety of life (such as scenes of fires, accidents or disasters).
 2. As a visual signal to attract the attention of motorists being stopped for traffic violations, or warn motorists of imminent dangers.
 3. In response to an officer emergency requests for assistance.
 4. In pursuit situations.
- I. In such officer-initiated situations, upon activating all emergency equipment, the officer shall contact the dispatch center and give their unit number and the phrase "Have initiated Emergency response". This practice will insure that the officer's use of emergency operating procedures and equipment is made a matter of record in case of later questions arise as to whether such equipment was in use.

J. RESPONSE TO CODE 1100 (Officer Needs Help)

1. When a CODE 1100 is dispatched, or is requested by an officer, it is not necessary for officers to notify MECA that they are responding to the CODE 1100.
2. CODE 3 is authorized.
3. It is understood that when an officer needs help all units are responding. Stay off the radio so that emergency traffic can be broadcast.
4. If the CODE 1100 is cancelled prior to an officer's arrival at the scene, the officer shall turn off their unit's emergency lights and siren, slow down to normal traffic speed, and continue to the scene and drive through the area in a show strength.