



White Bear Lake Police Department
POST Mandated Policy #100-09
Vehicle Operations and Lighting Exemption of Law
Enforcement Vehicles

MN STAT 169.541

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this POST Mandated Policy is to establish general guidelines and responsibilities for the safe operation of police vehicles and for making decisions with regard to operating police vehicles in an emergency manner. This policy provides a uniform guideline for all department personnel to use when operating a department vehicle without headlights, taillights or marine navigational lighting while functioning as a peace officer.

II. SCOPE

This Mandated Policy will provide guidelines for personnel engaged in routine and emergency operation of police vehicles.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Authorized Emergency Vehicle:** A police vehicle emergency response mode is when the vehicle is being operated with activated emergency equipment as required by MSS 169.03.
- B. VEHICLE:** means a motor vehicle or watercraft owned, leased or otherwise the property of the State of Minnesota or a political subdivision.
- C. LIGHTS:** refers to headlights, taillights and marine navigational lighting as referenced in MN STAT 84.87, 84.928, 169.48 to 169.65 and 86B.511.

D. Response Mode

1. Routine Vehicle Operation

Under normal, non-emergency operating conditions, and while responding to routine calls for service, personnel operating police vehicles will adhere to all traffic laws and drive defensively in a safe and courteous manner. This level of operation of the vehicle does not constitute the vehicle being operated as an emergency vehicle.

2. Emergency Vehicle Operation

Police vehicles operated in emergency response mode during emergency calls for service shall have in operation all appropriate emergency equipment, to include emergency lights and siren, to warn vehicular and pedestrian traffic along the emergency route. When proceeding through a red semaphore or a stop sign, the police vehicle must display a red light to the front and sound a siren. Officers shall comply with MSS 169.03 and 169.17. Headlights shall also be used during daylight hours as an added visibility factor. Four-way flashers shall not be used while the vehicle is in motion as this may interfere with the brake lights and turn signals. In this mode, the vehicle constitutes an emergency vehicle. Supervisors have the authority to call off emergency vehicle operations at any time.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. A police officer initiating a traffic stop will inform the dispatcher of the location of the traffic stop, the license plate number of the vehicle, state of license, description of the vehicle to include appropriate information regarding the number of occupants and, if possible, the description of the occupants.
- B. A police officer making a traffic stop will make every effort to direct the violator to a suitable stopping point where normal traffic flow will not be impeded. The use of side streets, off main thoroughfares, is encouraged. When feasible, private driveways or areas providing access to business establishments should not be used for traffic stops, when alternate locations are available and safety is not breached. When private property is used for a traffic stop, all possible care will be taken to avoid any inconvenience to property owners or patrons.
- C. Unmarked police vehicles may be used for traffic enforcement when operated by uniformed patrol officers and the vehicle is properly equipped with the appropriate equipment, such as emergency lights and siren.
- D. Police officers in plain clothes and detectives should not routinely make traffic stops without the assistance of a marked, uniform unit, unless one is not readily available.
- E. A peace officer may **not** operate a vehicle without lights contrary to MN STAT 169.541. **LIGHTING EXEMPTION FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT; STANDARDS.** under conditions of limited or reduced visibility as defined in MN STAT 84.87, 84.928, 169.48 to 169.65 and 86B.511:
 - on an interstate highway.

- at speeds greater than what is reasonable and prudent under existing weather, road and traffic conditions.
- faster than the posted speed limit.
- in situations where the peace officer is an active participant in the pursuit of a motor vehicle in violation of MN STAT 609.487.

V. EMERGENCY CALLS FOR SERVICE

- A.** Emergency responses to calls for service are limited to those incidents where there exists a clear and present need to ensure public safety or further harm to the public (i.e., accidents with injuries, medical calls and specific crimes against persons in progress).
- B.** The discretion to upgrade or downgrade an initial response will be the responsibility of the supervisor on duty. The criteria to decide will be that of the supervisor's knowledge of the circumstances of the call.
- C.** The decision to respond to an event should be weighed against what the event is; the overwhelming need to protect life, potential injury to others and the number of public safety units already engaged in the emergency response.
- D.** Officers engaged in an emergency response will use due care at all times. Supervisors are to evaluate the need for emergency responses.

VI. VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

It shall be the responsibility of each officer to completely inspect the patrol unit used during that officer's tour of duty. The inspection shall be, but not limited to, the identification and recording of unreported damage, found contraband or inoperable equipment. Each officer shall report any unreported damage, found contraband or inoperable equipment to the on duty supervisor immediately.

Some vehicles are equipped with special equipment, such as brake/tail light cut out switches. Officers should be cognizant of the status of the brake/tail light switches and ensure that they are not engaged to distinguish the brake and tail lights during routine operation of the vehicle.

A. Inspection

Prior to beginning their tour of duty, personnel will visually inspect their vehicle for any safety deficiencies, damage, contraband and operational

condition of all related equipment.

B. Safety

1. The officers will, at a minimum, check the following prior to checking on duty at the beginning of a shift.
 - a. Tires – Proper inflation and tread wear is sufficient
 - b. Brakes – Checked by pumping the pedal after the engine has been started. Additional checking should be conducted before the unit is driven.
 - c. Engage the emergency brake to determine if operational.
 - d. Headlights – low beam and high beam
 - e. Turn signals – left and right, front and rear
 - f. Brake lights – cut-off switch
 - g. Windshield wipers – operational and not worn
 - h. Seat belts – operational
 - i. Four-way flasher – front and rear, operational
 - j. Emergency lights – front, rear, take-down and alley
 - k. Siren and PA system – operational
 - l. Backup lights and cut-off switch
 - m. Interior lights – operational
 - n. Squad and portable radios
 - o. Rifle and ammunition
 - p. Fire extinguisher – fully charged
 - q. First aid kit – complete
 - r. AED and Oxygen tanks
 - s. Flares

t. Mobile DVR

2. The officer shall complete a Service Action Form to immediately document deficiencies or needed repairs. If the deficiency is determined to be a safety problem, the unit will be removed from service and the supervisor will assign another vehicle.
3. Seatbelts shall be worn at all times while the vehicle is in operation.

C. Damage

1. Vehicles will be inspected for any interior or exterior damage. Should any damage be noted, the supervisor will be notified immediately and the same documented in a memorandum prior to the officer assuming patrol.
2. The shift supervisor will conduct an inquiry to determine who was previously assigned the vehicle and ascertain if the previous driver had any knowledge of the damage. After the completion of the inquiry, the supervisor will submit a memorandum to the Operations Division Captain with his/her findings.

D. Contraband

1. Each officer will inspect his assigned vehicle at the start and end of every shift and after every prisoner transport for contraband and weapons.
2. This inspection will be conducted of the interior area of the vehicle:
 - a. The rear seat will be removed and inspected.
 - b. Any contraband discovered will be immediately reported to the shift supervisor verbally and in writing and the contraband shall be submitted to the Property Room.

E. Securing of Vehicles

1. All vehicles will be left free of trash.
2. All vehicles will be locked when unoccupied.
3. Squads in need of specialized cleaning (i.e., biohazards, fluids, animal, etc.) should be removed from service and arrangements made with the supervisor to have the vehicle cleaned, as soon as practical.

F. Designated Units

1. All sergeants and officers will be assigned to a primary squad during each six month rotation.
2. Officers assigned to specialized vehicles or details requiring the use of unmarked vehicles may utilize such vehicles, with the approval of a Patrol Section Sergeant.

VII. BLACKED OUT VEHICLE USE

Police vehicles may be operated with head, tail and brake lights extinguished only when said operation is required to effectively approach a scene in stealth. Officers shall be cognizant of the potential for accident when operating in this manner. Officers shall reset the lights when returning to routine service.

VIII. ESCORTS

A. Emergency Police Escorts

1. Emergency escorts may be defined as:
 - a. Directing a person to an emergency medical facility.
 - b. Assisting the medical field in transporting blood and/or organs.
2. Officers will assist in emergency transports of blood, organ runs, etc., by controlling the intersections (directing traffic) along the route of the emergency run. Officers will not provide an emergency escort to emergency vehicles unless approved by a supervisor.

B. Emergency Escort for Private Vehicles

When an officer in the field is requested to escort a private vehicle under emergency conditions, (carrying an injured or ill person) the officer will decline such a request. The officer will offer alternatives in this preferred order:

1. An ambulance may be called to the scene to render aid and assume the transport.
2. If the citizen rejects that alternative, the officer will instruct the driver to proceed carefully and to obey all traffic regulations and, if appropriate, suggest the quickest and safest route to the hospital, medical facility or fire station. Should the driver not know the way to any of these facilities,

the officer will lead the driver, following normal driving procedures and related MN Statutes governing uniform traffic control laws.

IX. ASSIST OTHER AGENCY REQUESTS

Officers responding to Other Agency Requests for Assistance shall operate police units with due care and in compliance with existing traffic statutes, unless the requesting agency requests that the response be made in an emergency mode. When responding to Other Agency Requests, officers will do so in compliance with this POST policy.

Julie Swanson

Julie Swanson
Chief of Police

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