



RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER



Subject: **REGULATION OF TRAFFIC**

Chapter
8

Number
1

Pages
8

References:

CALEA: 45.3.1b, 61.3.1a, 61.3.2a-e, 61.4.1

VA State Code: §46.2-833, §46.2-834

Related Orders:

08-13

Effective Date: **09/17/2026**

Revised By: Review

Prv. Rev. Date: **08/29/2023**

*If any provision of this General Order conflicts with any collective bargaining article,
the collective bargaining agreement shall govern.*

Chief of Police:

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for traffic signal emergency service and procedures for the regulation of traffic.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGE

This policy is due for triennial review. Updated information has been added to the Procedures section, including guidance on notifications to the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response, as well as additional information on the positioning of Flock Safety Mobile Trailer sites to ensure clarity and accuracy. All new language is bolded and italicized throughout the directive.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Richmond Police Department to provide safe and consistent regulation of traffic throughout the City of Richmond. Traffic safety is a responsibility of every police officer. Whenever any officer notices a defect or hazard, the location should be relayed to Traffic Engineering to maximize safety.

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this General Order. Failure to comply will result in appropriate corrective action. Responsibility rests with the Division Commander to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated.

This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or case in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

V. PROCEDURE

A. Directing Traffic:

[CALEA 61.3.2a]

At the scene of a situation requiring traffic control including, but not limited to, an accident, fire, disabled vehicle, incident involving death or injury, hit and run, impairment of operator due to alcohol or drugs, damage to public vehicles or property, hazardous materials, disturbances between principals, major traffic congestion, towing or any other like situation requiring traffic control, the involved police officer shall:

1. Utilize the police vehicle's emergency lights to warn motorists;
2. Exit the police vehicle and direct traffic to ensure the orderly flow of traffic; and,
3. Utilize the Department's reflective traffic vest or the reflective reversible raincoat, which is to be worn over the outer most garments. The traffic vest is to be worn regardless of weather conditions, lighting conditions or time of day. After dark or during inclement weather, the flashlight or flares will also be utilized.

[CALEA 61.3.2e]

B. Motorist Assistance:

[CALEA 45.3.1b, 61.4.1]

When assisting a motorist, officers, including Neighborhood Assistance Officers (NAOs), shall:

1. Ensure the safety of the motorist(s) and other highway users. If necessary, stand by until assistance arrives on the scene;
2. Identify any injured parties and begin first aid procedures if needed;
3. Summon emergency medical services or fire service if needed;
4. Use flares or other reflective devices to establish a safety zone for the vehicle, if needed;
5. Consider the time of day and location and ensure the safety and security of the occupants of the disabled vehicle;
6. Request road assistance, wrecker for the vehicle or other necessary assistance if requested or required;
7. If necessary, assist the disabled vehicle off the roadway;
8. If necessary, transport the stranded motorist to a location where assistance can be obtained;

9. Provide motorists with travel directions, information pertaining to necessary services and initiate notification of third parties, if requested or necessary; and
10. Return to regular patrol duties as soon as traffic and personal safety issues have been resolved.

C. Hand Signals:

[CALEA 45.3.1b, 61.3.2b]

Pursuant to VA Code §46.2-834, signals by law enforcement officers shall be as follows:

1. Law enforcement officers may assume control of traffic at any intersection regardless of whether such intersection is controlled by lights, other traffic control devices, or *is* uncontrolled. In such events, signals by such officers shall take precedence over such traffic control devices.
2. ***Uniformed*** NAOs may assume control of traffic otherwise controlled by lights. In such events, signals by uniformed ***law enforcement officers*** shall take precedence over such traffic control devices.
3. Uniformed NAOs may control traffic at any marked school crossing whether such crossing is at an intersection or another location.
4. Instructions for Hand Signals:
 - a) To stop traffic by hand - Stand facing traffic with shoulders squared. Raise arms 45 degrees above shoulders with hands extended, palms toward moving traffic to be stopped.
 - b) To move traffic by hand - Stand with shoulders parallel to traffic to be moved. Extend the arm and hand full length at shoulder height toward traffic to be moved, hand extended and fingers together. Bring hand sharply in direction traffic is to move. Repeat movement with opposite arm and hand to start traffic from opposite direction.
 - c) To stop and start traffic by whistle - one long blast to stop traffic, two short blasts to start traffic. (The whistle shall be used in conjunction with the appropriate hand signals.)
5. Emergency Stop of Traffic by Whistle:
 - a) Three or more short blasts, all traffic shall immediately clear the intersection and stop.
 - b) The hand signal for “stop” shall be used in conjunction with the whistle and directed toward all traffic.

NOTE: Officers should never rely solely on the whistle to stop traffic as many citizens cannot hear and will not respond to the whistle while inside a vehicle.

D. Traffic Light or Mechanical Signals:

Officers, NAOs, and other assigned law enforcement personnel shall be familiar with traffic light signals pursuant to VA Code §46.2-833, i.e., red, green, amber, flashing red and flashing amber lights.

E. Hazardous Highway Conditions:

[CALEA 61.4.2]

Officers shall take immediate corrective action, if possible, when any hazardous highway conditions exist.

1. Emergency Situations:

[CALEA 61.3.2b]

a) Immediate action must be taken to ensure the safety of the motoring public and pedestrians when any condition(s) render the highway unsafe. Examples shall include but are not limited to:

- (1) Major accidents
- (2) Fatalities
- (3) Crime scenes
- (4) Hazardous spills
- (5) Industrial accidents
- (6) Fires
- (7) Adverse road and/or weather conditions, i.e. road cave-in or flooded road
- (8) Large or excess debris in the road
- (9) Large animals in the road
- (10) Fallen trees or electric wires in the road
- (11) Traffic signal outage
- (12) Missing traffic regulation signs
- (13) Large holes or bumps
- (14) Riots or large crowds in the street

(15) Gas or water main leaks

b) The responding officer(s) shall:

- (1) Notify the ***Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response (DECPR)***.
- (2) Notify a police supervisor, if necessary.
- (3) Close the highway and evacuate citizens from the area, if necessary.
- (4) Request the proper emergency service, if needed.
- (5) Notify the agency responsible for correcting the hazardous highway situation.
- (6) Manually operate and/or employ the use of temporary traffic control devices (cones, flares, reflective traffic vests), when necessary, employing the following procedures:

[CALEA 61.3.2c, d]

- (a) Flares shall not be used if combustible material is present.
- (b) Once ***the*** cap is removed, the ignition end of the flare must be turned away from the officer.
- (c) Officers may contact another officer if cones are needed, and they do not have them in the trunk of the patrol vehicle.
- (d) Officers are responsible for removing all devices they employ.
- (7) Stay on the scene until the highway is rendered safe or until police services are no longer needed.

NOTE: During emergencies and/or adverse road conditions involving defective or non-functioning traffic signal light(s), officers shall handle the location as a four-way traffic stop.

2. Non-emergency situations:

- a) Situations that do not render the highway unsafe or require immediate attention shall be handled by an individual officer or forwarded to the appropriate department for attention. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Small, moveable debris in the roadway
 - (2) Small dead animals in the road
 - (3) Missing street signs

- (4) Minimal potholes
- (5) Traffic signal outage (If more than one indicator is displayed and one is working correctly.)
- b) The responding officer shall:
 - (1) Notify **DECPR** of *the* defect;
 - (2) Notify a police supervisor for follow-up if repairs are not made in a timely manner; and,
 - (3) Use the Mobile Data Computer to notify **DECPR** of minor defects.

F. Unmarked Vehicles:

If unmarked vehicles are to be utilized for traffic enforcement, they must be equipped with a siren, emergency lights in operational order and constant radio communication.

G. Special Events:

Regulation of traffic for special events will be conducted in accordance with the specific written ***Incident Action Plan (IAP)*** created on a case-by-case basis.

1. Speed Trailers, Electronic Messaging Board, Light Towers, ***and*** Camera Surveillance Systems should meet the following ***criteria***:
 - a) Trailers should, whenever possible, be placed in on-street parking spaces or ***areas with*** sufficiently wide shoulders.
 - b) When parking trailers, particular care should be taken not to obstruct sidewalks, bus lanes, bus stops, bike lanes, ADA ramps, or any other defined pedestrian pathway.
2. ***Flock Safety Mobile Trailer sites must be selected based on crime data, operational need, line-of-sight, power availability, community impact, and safety equipment. See General Order 08-13, Flock Safety Mobile Trailers, for additional information on movement, deployment criteria, weather protocols and more.***

H. Reporting Hazards or Defects:

[CALEA 61.3.1a]

1. Department members will notify **DECPR** dispatcher of the location of a traffic signal defect. The dispatcher has a list of major intersections that Traffic Engineering considers as needing emergency repair. If the location is on the list, the dispatcher will notify the traffic signal emergency repair person on call.
2. If an intersection is not listed for immediate repair and the traffic controls operate abnormally and may, in the opinion of the police officer, create a hazard, the signals may be placed in the flashing mode of operation. The traffic signal red indication

lamps will face side street traffic, whereas the amber indication lamps will face the main street. The officer shall notify **DECPR** to report when and why the signals were placed in flashing operation.

3. At any intersection, the following traffic signal defects should be reported immediately to **DECPR**:
 - a) All traffic signals are non-functioning.
 - b) The traffic signal red indication lamp is non-functioning in a location where only one traffic signal faces traffic movement. Officers should-notify **DECPR** of minor defects *via radio transmission*.
 - c) At the discretion and direction of a supervisor, **DECPR** personnel shall notify the traffic signal emergency repairperson to respond to any location determined to need emergency repair.
4. *In accordance with Code of Virginia § 15.2-1714*, at any location of civil disturbance, man-made disaster, natural disaster or emergency situations, officers shall establish traffic control detours to continue the orderly flow of traffic around the situation so as not to interfere with any law enforcement action. Officers shall remain in the assigned location until replaced by another officer, a traffic control device or until relieved by a supervisor.

I. Police Officers shall:

1. Arrive on the scene, assess the situation, and remain on the scene until services are no longer needed or advised by a supervisor.
2. Notify **DECPR** of roadway or traffic signal defects, and, during emergency situations, request proper emergency services and the **agencies** responsible for correcting the hazardous highway situation.
3. Direct traffic using appropriately issued safety equipment, i.e., flashlight, traffic cones, flares department-issued *reflective* outerwear, whistle, or temporary traffic control devices, when necessary.
4. Establish a safety zone for disabled vehicles as conditions dictate utilizing police vehicle emergency lights and appropriate hand signals;
5. Provide enforcement by controlling traffic in emergency situations (natural disaster, civil disturbance, man-made disaster) by closing highways and evacuating citizens from the area or establishing traffic control detours; and

[CALEA 61.3.2b]

6. During emergencies and adverse road conditions involving defective or non-functioning traffic signal lights(s), handle the location as a four-way traffic stop.

J. Supervisors shall:

1. If called to the location, assess the situation, and notify their chain of command, if needed.
2. Implement follow-up procedures by notifying the **DECPR** if repairs, as reported by an officer, are not made in a timely manner.
3. Discern the necessity of emergency repairs on location; and,
4. Relieve officers, if necessary, during emergencies, disturbances, or disasters.

K. **DECPR** shall:

1. Notify a traffic signal repair person when informed by an officer or supervisor of a traffic signal defect requiring repair; and,
2. **Promptly notify** fire, rescue, hazmat, sign shop or other unit(s) to respond as needed.

VI. **FORMS**

A. ***Incident Action Plan***