Rockville City Police Department
GENERAL ORDER

Subject **TRAFFIC CONTROL AND DIRECTION**		Procedure **G.O. # 4 - 21**
Authorizing Signature	**Effective** **08/15/03**	**Total Pages** **10**

I. POLICY

This Department performs traffic direction and control functions, when necessary, to ensure the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians and vehicles. The public relies upon the police for assistance and advice when faced with many routine and emergency traffic situations, therefore, this Department shall respond to such traffic-related incidents where an arrest or unlawful activity may not be involved. The Department expects officers to perform such services diligently and responsibly.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish uniform procedures for traffic direction and control and to establish guidelines for other related services.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Point traffic control

The control of vehicular and pedestrian movement at a particular place on a roadway, such as an intersection.

B. Traffic control device

All signs, signals, markings and devices placed on, over, or adjacent to a street or highway by authority of a public body or official having jurisdiction to regulate, warn, or guide traffic.

C. Traffic control signal

Any device, whether manually, electrically, or mechanically operated, by which traffic is alternately directed to stop and permitted to proceed.

III. TRAFFIC CONTROL FUNCTION

A. The Department will maintain a close working relationship with the Traffic Engineering Division and other officials to plan and implement traffic direction and control services for the community.

B. Police officers shall be assigned to carry out identified traffic direction and control functions only at those times and places where law enforcement authority and/or human intervention is required to ensure safety and efficiency, and until such time that the problem is resolved or traffic control apparatus can be installed.

C. Situations which may require traffic control by officers:

1. Accidents, fires and other emergencies, special public attractions or activities such as parades, sporting events, funeral processions, etc.

2. Major street excavation, particularly at intersections adjacent to the construction and during periods of peak traffic flow.

3. Any condition which causes congestion of traffic in a particular location.

4. Traffic signals that are temporarily out of service. (i.e., when they are being worked on).

IV. <u>POINT TRAFFIC CONTROL</u>

A. Currently, there is no requirement in the City of Rockville for a permanently assigned, manually controlled, point traffic control. Frequently, however, during construction, at accident scenes, or at other points of traffic obstruction, at special events, or when existing signals are malfunctioning, it is necessary to establish temporary manual point traffic control, where a police officer manually controls traffic flow.

B. Times and locations, identified as requiring point traffic control, will be analyzed to determine whether manual direction of traffic is necessary.

C. Factors to be considered in this analysis will include, but not be limited to:

1. Traffic volume.

2. Traffic speed.

3. Number of pedestrians present.

4. Duration of congestion periods.

5. Presence and type(s) of traffic control devices.

6. Special circumstances of the location.

D. The decision to assign personnel to carry out traffic direction and control will be made only if the analysis indicates that unmanned signals/devices cannot adequately ensure the safe and efficient movement of traffic.

V. <u>TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES</u>

A. Traffic signals have been strategically positioned throughout the City of Rockville to aid in the uniform control and systematic movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

B. In the case of a malfunctioning signal, officers should notify the dispatcher of the location of the light and the malfunction.

1. The dispatcher has a list of every traffic signal in the City and which agency is responsible for that signal.

2. The dispatcher will contact the responsible agency, and advise them of the problem.

3. The dispatcher will then notify the officer of the response of the agency.

C. The officer may attempt to place the signal back on the normal cycle by opening the control panel and pressing the reset button. This button should <u>not</u> be held, just pushed.

1. If the signal does go back to its normal cycle, the officer should monitor the signal for a few cycles, to make sure it is operating properly.

2. If the signal only operates on the flash cycle, the officer may, depending on traffic volume and circumstances, assist traffic with manual traffic direction.

3. In the case of a complete failure of the device, the officer will manually control traffic.

D. Temporary traffic control devices may be utilized during peak hours, if road hazards exist, if an accident occurs, or during parades and other special events.

1. The following may be used as temporary traffic control devices:

   a. Barricades (City of Rockville).

   b. Detour signs and other descriptive signs, as applicable (City of Rockville).

   c. Traffic cones or flares (City of Rockville).

   d. Police vehicles (in emergency situations) (City of Rockville).

   e. Arrow board signs (Montgomery County Department of Transportation or State Highway Administration).

   f. Message board signs (Montgomery County Department of Transportation or State Highway Administration).

2. On-duty shift supervisors shall be responsible to ensure the proper placement and removal of such temporary traffic control devices should they be used.

3. When available, City of Rockville maintenance personnel shall be contacted to install and remove barricades.

VI. PROCEDURES FOR MANUAL TRAFFIC DIRECTION

A. Position in Roadway

The position selected to direct traffic must be suited to the particular intersection and traffic patterns. It must command a full view of the intersection and the approaches; the officer must be visible to the motorists, as well as to the pedestrians. Usually, officers assigned to traffic control will select a position in the center of the intersection, or at one of the corners.

1. The center of the intersection position:

   a. Gives greatest visibility.

   b. Is the most hazardous.

   c. Is usually selected when the signals are not working or the flow of traffic is slow.

   d. Should be avoided if it places the officer in the flow of traffic or leaves little clearance between the vehicles.

2. The corner position:

   a. Should be used where there is heavy pedestrian crossing or where an officer standing a few feet off the curb line can regulate the flow of traffic.

   b. Affords the officer greater personal safety and better pedestrian control.

B. Signals and Gestures for Directing Traffic

1. Posture communicates the fact that the officer is in command of the situation. The officer must assume a military bearing, with weight evenly distributed on both feet. When not engaged in signaling motorists, the officer must stand at ease facing traffic and with hands at the side. When directing traffic, the shoulders must be in line with the flow of traffic, and the officer's attention must be directed to the vehicular movements.

2. Prompt compliance to hand signals are dependent upon the officer's ability to use uniform, clearly defined, and understandable gestures. Intersection control does not call for complicated choreography or wild arm movements. Improper hand signals, although highly entertaining to bystanders, cause confusion, hesitation, and lead to violations. Unusual movements undermine the purpose of traffic control and direction. The following will describe the standardized signals and gestures used in directing traffic:

a. The first general rule of traffic control is for the officer to stand with the sides of the body parallel with the traffic being allowed to move. The officer's face and back will then be toward the stopped traffic.

b. To stop traffic, two motions are used. First, point with the arm and finger straight at the driver who is to stop. Watch the driver and hold this point until the driver sees the signal, or at least has had plenty of time to do so. Then raise the pointing hand (not the entire arm) so that the palm is toward the driver. Hold this position until the driver stops.

Stop traffic from both directions to give traffic on the cross street a chance to move. Stop the traffic coming from one side first, then that from the other. After traffic has been halted with one hand, hold that hand on the stop position and turn to the other side and repeat the process. Do not lower either arm until cars coming from both directions have stopped.

c. To start traffic, be positioned so that the side is toward the traffic to be started. Point with the arm and finger toward the car you want to start. Hold it until the driver's attention is attained. Then, with the palm up, swing the hand up and over the chin. Bend the arm only at the elbow. If the driver does not move, make the signal a second time. After traffic has been started from one side, drop the arm and start traffic from the other side in the same way. Use the signals to give the "go ahead" to slow and timid drivers.

d. Right turn: Signals for rights turn usually are not required at an intersection. When it is necessary, the arm to be signaled with will be determined by the car's direction. If the car approaches from the right, point toward the driver with the right arm. Give the driver time to see the gesture and then swing the arm and finger to point in the direction the driver is to go. Keep pointing in that direction until the driver begins the turn.

e. Left turn: In helping a driver make a left turn, the vehicle may need first to be stopped. Next, hold the opposing flow of traffic. If the turning vehicle is approaching from the officer's left, the stop signal to opposing traffic should be given with the right arm and such stopped vehicles should be kept out of the path through which the turning vehicle will travel. When safe to do so, the turning gesture should be given with the left arm. Clearly indicate to the driver turning left, to pass in front or inside of the officer and not to turn out and around.

(1) If the car approaches from the right, turn around and face toward the direction the car making the turn is to go. Halt the traffic with the right arm and give the turning gesture with the left, as described above.

(2) If opposing traffic from both directions is to make left turns, indicate so by swinging the other arm in the direction of the turn. However, such turns are

dangerous and must be watched carefully by the officer to see that no conflict arises from the straight-through traffic or pedestrians.

C. Signaling Aids

1. The whistle.

a. The whistle is used to get the attention of drivers and pedestrians. It is used as follows:

(1) One long blast with a STOP signal.

(2) Two short blasts with the GO signal.

(3) Several short blasts to get the attention of a driver or pedestrian who does not respond to a given signal.

b. Be sensible in the use of the whistle at all times. Whistle blasts directed to pedestrians, usually need not be as shrill as those to command attention of motorists.

2. The voice.

a. The voice is seldom used in directing traffic. Arm gestures and the whistle usually are sufficient. There are numerous reasons why oral commands are not used. Oral orders are not easy to give or understand, and often lead to misinterpretations, which are dangerous. An order, which is shouted, can antagonize a motorist.

b. Occasionally, a driver or pedestrian will not understand arm signals. When this happens, move reasonably close to the person and politely and briefly explain the command. In all instances, address such people properly as "sir", "madam", or "miss". Do not shout or exhibit a loss of temper, even though provoked.

3. The illuminated baton.

a. The baton is helpful in making signals and gestures at night, or during bad weather when visibility is low.

b. To STOP a vehicle with the baton, face the moving line of traffic, standing slightly aside from its direct path. Hold the baton in the right hand in front of you with the elbow bent. The baton now is in a vertical position, and should be swung or wig-wagged from the left to the right side of the body in an arc of about 45 degrees.

c. The GO signal is given in the normal manner. Turn the body parallel to traffic that is to be moved and give the normal GO arm movement. When executed properly, the signal will give added STOP emphasis to opposing cross traffic.

d. To permit a left turn movement after stopping opposing traffic, point the lighted end of the baton to the car, which is to make the turn. Next, swing the baton in an arc, toward the direction of the left turn movement. This signal also may have to be repeated. The light in the baton should be turned off when signals are not being made.

4. The flashlight.

The flashlight can be used to halt traffic in an emergency, but it is a poor substitute for a baton. To stop traffic, slowly swing the flashlight at arm's length across the path of the approaching car. The beam from the flashlight strikes the pavement as an elongated spot of moving light, which is seen by the motorist. Do not stand directly in front of the approaching car. After the motorist has stopped, give signals in the usual manner with the flashlight.

D. Use of Highway Flares

1. Many times, improper use of highway flares at a disaster scene have caused vehicles to become involved in accidents. By giving approaching traffic ample warning and allowing sufficient distance in which to start taking defensive measures, hazards can be reduced at an accident scene.

2. Caution must be used with flares at an accident scene, due to the possibility of flammable or combustible material being present.

3. The following table is the MINIMUM distance away from the disaster scene at which a line of flares should be started. Note that the distance at which oncoming traffic receives its first warning, is dependent upon the speed limit on the roadway being traveled.

a. 55 mile zone - 375 feet warning - then every 40 feet to scene.

b. 45 mile zone - 300 feet warning - then every 40 feet to the scene.

c. 35 mile zone - 200 feet warning - then every 30 feet to the scene.

4. In any speed zone where flares are used to channel traffic from one lane to another, place them 20 feet apart. This eliminates any doubt in the mind of the motorist as to what is expected, and it will lessen the possibility of any motorist driving between flares into the wrong traffic lanes.

5. The primary objective is to ensure that oncoming traffic has ample warning of danger ahead so that defensive tactics may be employed to negotiate the scene safely.

6. Handle flares carefully. The flare burns at 1500 degrees Fahrenheit and can damage uniforms and burn flesh severely. Also, plastic lane dividers will melt if a flare is placed on or near them.

E. Two Officers Signaling

1. Sometimes there is a need for more than one officer at a busy intersection.

2. One of the officers must originate all signals and gestures. One officer is the leader and makes all the decisions, while the other officer assists by coordinating with and extending signals.

VII. HIGH VISIBILITY CLOTHING

A. The Department provides Department personnel with high visibility vests, to be kept in the assigned vehicle.

B. Personnel will wear high visibility vests, in addition to the full prescribed uniform, whenever performing traffic direction in the following instances:

1. Weather conditions are such that--without the use of high visibility clothing--the person(s) performing traffic direction will endanger their own safety unnecessarily.

2. Traffic direction control is prearranged and will be performed for an extended period of time.

3. A supervisor deems it necessary.

VIII. TRAFFIC CONTROL AT FIRE SCENES

A. When directing traffic at fire scenes, be concerned with keeping traffic from entering the fire area, as well as assisting trapped vehicles from behind the established fire lines. Once traffic has been cleared from the fire area, permit no vehicles, other than emergency vehicles, public utility repair trucks, or fire department personnel in private vehicles, to enter.

B. Fires attract large numbers of spectators; plan where this traffic is to be detoured. For those spectators who arrive on foot, keep them beyond the established fire line, so that firefighters will have room to work.

C. The firefighters will be busy fighting the fire. It is up to the law enforcement officer to protect fire engines from traffic and spectators. Pay particular attention to the fire hoses laid in the street; allow no traffic to cross over them.

D. Coordinate enforcement and traffic direction activities with the fire department official in charge. This official will usually be located next to the fire vehicles with the green light on top. This is an indication of a command officer.

IX. ADVERSE ROAD AND/OR WEATHER CONDITIONS

A. Adverse road and weather conditions may include, but not necessarily be limited to:

1. Accidental hazards, such as debris that has fallen onto the roadway.

2. Acts of nature, such as fog, snow, storms, flooding, ice on the roadway, etc.

3. Engineering hazards, such as an exposed guardrail end, downed power lines, or other objects that might cause unnecessary additional damage or injury, should a vehicle impact with such objects, for any reason.

B. Upon discovering an adverse road or weather condition, Departmental personnel shall make notifications to the appropriate agencies, provide traffic control as needed, and protect the scene as appropriate.

X. VEHICLE ESCORTS

A. Escorts to be provided by this Department will normally be processed well in advance to plan for needed personnel and equipment.

B. Shift supervisors, using their discretion, may authorize emergency and non-emergency escorts.

C. Ambulances and other emergency vehicles

Police officers will escort ambulances and/or other emergency vehicles in emergency situations under the following circumstances:

1. When an operator of an ambulance or fire apparatus is unfamiliar with the route to the destination; or

2. When the emergency equipment of an ambulance or fire apparatus is inoperative.

D. Privately-owned vehicles

Officers may escort privately-owned vehicles, when such action is deemed necessary, to prevent the loss of life and/or serious injury and only when, in the opinion of the officer, calling for an ambulance is impractical or the injured person cannot be transferred to the police vehicle without aggravating the patient's condition.

E. Emergency deliveries

Emergency deliveries of blood, critically needed medication or other items may be made only with the authorization of a supervisor.

F. Notifications

In all incidents involving emergency escorts or deliveries, the officer will notify the Communications Division upon starting and completing the escort.

XI. ROADBLOCKS

A. Roadblocks may be used for the following situations:

1. During natural disasters, cruisers may be used temporarily for roadblocks, using all emergency lights on the vehicle, until more permanent warning devices and barricades are put in place.

2. Cruisers may be used as roadblocks at accidents, using all emergency lights on the vehicle, and placed in such a manner as to be noticed by other traffic.

3. If the roadway is going to be closed for an extended period of time, other barricades should be used.

B. The use of police vehicles to barricade a roadway for the purpose of stopping the subject of a pursuit is specifically prohibited, whether it is a stationary or a running roadblock.