
LAURENS COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP # P-195

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SUBJECT: USE OF EMERGENCY VEHICLE WARNING DEVICES

INDEX AS: EMERGENCY VEHICLE WARNING DEVICES

EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/01/2005

REVISED DATE:

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of emergency vehicular warning devices.

II. POLICY

It is the purpose of this policy to ensure that all members of this law enforcement agency adhere to statutory restrictions on the use of emergency warning devices and that such devices are employed only in prescribed conditions and circumstances and in ways that will minimize the risk of accidents or injuries to employees or the public.

III DEFINITIONS

- A. Emergency Vehicle: An authorized law enforcement vehicle equipped with emergency lights, siren, and other emergency warning devices required by law and used for emergency response situation.
- B. Emergency Warning Devices: Devices placed in/on each agency emergency vehicle that emit audible or visual signals in order to warn others that law enforcement services are in the process of being delivered.

IV PROCEDURES

- A. Assigning/Determining Response Modes to Calls for Assistance.
 - 1. Field supervisors assigning officers to respond to calls for assistance shall authorize which response mode will be utilized.
 - 2. Field supervisors and/or the commanding officer are responsible for monitoring response modes for calls for assistance and shall have the authority to upgrade or downgrade assigned response modes.

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3. In instances where a field officer wishes to initiate the emergency vehicular response mode in response to a sudden occurrence unbeknown to communications personnel, field supervisors, or the commanding officer, or to upgrade a routine response assignment, the field unit shall inform communications personnel as soon as possible of:
 - a. The nature of the situation, and
 - b. The location and destination of the field unit.

- B. Use of Emergency Warning Devices while in Emergency Response Mode.
 1. During an emergency response, emergency lights and/or siren and other emergency signal devices shall be activated as required by law.
 2. When responding in an emergency response mode, emergency signal devices may be deactivated at a distance from the scene (to be determined by the vehicle operator) so as not to alert subjects to law enforcement proximity.
 3. When emergency signal devices are deactivated, the operator of the emergency vehicle shall comply with posted speed limits, obey all traffic control devices and signals, and proceed in a manner consistent with normal traffic flow.

- C. Use of Emergency Warning Devices While Conducting Vehicle Stops.

Visible and/or audible warning devices shall be used to make adequate notice of intent to stop a motor vehicle and to provide a safe environment for the vehicle operator, officer, and public.

- D. Discretionary Use of Emergency Warning Devices.
 1. Officers may activate emergency signal devices when required to assist in handling any perceived emergency situation. . The officer shall advise communications personnel of the nature of the emergency and the emergency response mode that has been taken.
 2. In other than emergency situation, when expediency is required to effectively eliminate a potential hazard to the public or fellow officers, law enforcement officers may activate emergency warning devices to allow orderly and safe transit through heavily congested roadways. Examples of permissible uses of emergency warning devices during non-emergency response situations include, but are not limited to:

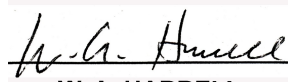
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- a. Using emergency lights as "beacons" to protect disabled motorists; or
 - b. Using emergency lights when it is necessary to use agency vehicles as protective barriers.
3. Operators of emergency vehicles shall deactivate emergency warning devices as soon as possible.
- E. Discretion From Experience:
1. Use of emergency equipment creates an extremely liable situation for the Officer.
Officers must evaluate the **TRUE NEED** for utilizing emergency equipment. Many times the safest and most prudent measure is to refrain from activating emergency equipment. Safe arrival at the scene is important to all parties.
 2. Caution at wrecks and other roadway emergencies is paramount. Officers need to be careful to not blind oncoming motorist with emergency equipment.
 3. Officers must drive defensively at all times and use **Due Regard**. Many times the public will be unaware of your vehicle and your intentions. Never assume a motorist will yield to your emergency equipment.


W. A. HARRELL
SHERIFF

12/01/2005

EFFECTIVE DATE