

NEW CANAAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: TRAFFIC ANCILLARY SERVICES

GENERAL ORDER NUMBER: 90-3-79

FILE: SRVS 5

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

I PURPOSE/POLICY

The purpose of this general order is to provide guidelines for the many diverse traffic related ancillary services that are performed by the the New Canaan Police Department. These services may include general or emergency assistance, providing public information and directions, identifying and reporting roadway or roadside hazards, checking abandoned vehicles, locating and recovering stolen vehicles.

II RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all departmental personnel to adhere to this general order. It is the additional responsibility of supervisory and command staff to ensure compliance.

III PROCEDURES (ANCILLARY SERVICES)

A Due to the inherent dangers which exist when a motorist is stranded, officers will be constantly alert for motorists and/or pedestrians who appear to need assistance. Officers shall provide assistance, information or directions upon request. This assistance may be accomplished by either direct participation or by obtaining the necessary services.

1. Officers should be familiar with the streets, services and facilities within the town.

B In order to adequately meet the needs of the motorist requiring mechanical or towing assistance, the police department will maintain a towing agreement with one or more private towing companies.

1. Only towing company services, who meet the requirements established and/or approved by the Chief of Police shall be selected.

2. When more than one towing company have been approved, companies will be dispatched on a specified rotational basis.

3. All requests for towing or mechanical assistance will be directed to the desk officer/dispatcher who shall notify the towing service "on call."

a. When a motorist requests a specific towing company that is not "on call," a reasonable effort shall be made to honor such request.

- C** When an officer discovers a stranded motorist, every reasonable effort should be made to ensure their safety. Such motorists should never be abandoned or exposed to a hazardous situation.
1. When determining what assistance is appropriate, officers should consider the following factors;
 - a. Traffic hazards
 - b. Location
 - c. Time of day
 - d. Weather conditions
 - e. Priority of calls for service
 - f. Other factors that may jeopardize the safety of the motorist.
 2. Officers should remain at the scene and/or place warning devices to warn traffic of the hazard as necessary.
 - a. Officers who leave the scene prior to removal of the hazard, shall when practicable, periodically check to ensure the condition does not deteriorate.
 3. Officers may, at their discretion, transport stranded motorists to the nearest convenient location where assistance may be obtained.
 4. When it is necessary to obtain mechanical or towing assistance, officers shall notify the desk officer/dispatcher who will relay the information to the towing service "on call."
- D** Officers shall render all practical assistance, as defined by the scope of their training, to users of the roadway, who are involved in emergency situations. Emergency situations may include, but are not limited to:
1. Medical Emergencies
 - a. Upon discovery of a medical emergency, the officer at the scene shall immediately notify the desk officer/dispatcher and request the Emergency Medical Service. When making this request, the officer shall relay as much information as possible about this situation. This may include;
 - 1) Type of emergency
 - 2) Location
 - 3) Condition of patient
 - 4) Any other pertinent information
 - b. After notifying the desk officer/dispatcher of the nature of the emergency, officers shall render as much first-aid assistance as possible.

2. Vehicle Fires

- a. Officers shall immediately notify the desk officer/dispatcher upon discovery of a vehicle fire and request the fire department. The location, type of vehicle, location of fire, and cargo (if applicable) shall also be relayed. The desk officer/dispatcher will notify the fire department of these facts so an appropriate response can be made.
- b. Officers primary concern shall be to ensure the safety of those at the scene. Officers should only attempt to extinguish the fire if it can be reasonably assured that such action will not endanger themselves or others.

3. Traffic Accidents

- a. Reference General Order 90-9-85, Traffic Accident Investigation

E Emergency escorts of civilian vehicles during medical emergencies is a potentially dangerous practice and should be used only after all reasonable alternatives have been exhausted.

1. If such a request is made and the officer receiving the request has reasonable grounds to believe a very real emergency does exist, the patient should be transferred to an ambulance. If extenuating circumstances exist, and with supervisory approval, the patient should be transferred to the patrol unit and transported to the medical facility. The driver of the civilian vehicle will be directed to proceed to the medical facility in compliance with all traffic regulations.
2. If in the opinion of the officer, and with supervisory approval, the delay or transfer would jeopardize the patients life, the officer may escort the civilian vehicle to the medical facility.
 - a. During such escort, the officer shall use a Code III response.
 - b. The officer shall not proceed through traffic control devices without stopping and ensuring that both vehicles can safely proceed.
 - c. The two vehicles shall be operated a reasonable distance apart.

F The police department recognizes that there are legitimate instances where it should, in the interest of public safety, provide civilian escort services. These escort services shall consist of non-emergency functions which will be, whenever possible, scheduled in advance. Such functions include;

1. Funerals
2. Oversized vehicles
3. Highway construction/maintenance vehicles
4. Motorcades of dignitaries, public officials
5. Vehicles with hazardous or unusual cargo

6 Other situations as necessary

G Roadway and roadside hazards are contributing factors in many traffic accidents. For this reason, officers on patrol must be alert for such hazards in order to mitigate their effect on the motorist.

1. Roadside hazards include, but are not limited to;
 - a. Debris in the roadway
 - b. Defects in the roadway itself
 - c. Lack of, or defects in, highway safety features (e.g; impact alternation devices, reflectors)
 - d. Lack of, improper, visually obstructed, or down or damaged mechanical traffic control devices and/or traffic control and informational signs.
 - e. Lack of, or defective roadway lighting systems
 - f. Other roadside hazards, including vehicles parked or abandoned on or near the roadway.
2. When a hazard is detected that represents a potential accident situation, but the threat of such is not imminent (ie: discarded muffler, tree limb etc.), the officer will notify the desk officer/dispatcher. If the officer can correct the situation safely, he/she shall take the appropriate action. If not, the desk officer/dispatcher shall relay the information to the proper authority so that the situation may be corrected.
3. When a hazard is identified and requires immediate attention (ie: fallen tree, electrical wires on roadway, etc), the officer will notify the desk officer/dispatcher of the situation and request the appropriate assistance. The officer shall protect the scene, direct traffic or take any other action necessary to control the situation.

H There are many hazardous materials being transported throughout the state each day. While many of these materials are commonly used, accidents or spills present a serious threat to the health and safety of the general public, especially the officer who happens to be first on the scene. It is of extreme importance that officers be aware of what constitutes a hazardous material and the procedures they should follow during a hazardous material emergency.

Definition: **HAZARDOUS MATERIAL** - Any element, compound, or combination thereof which is flammable, corrosive, explosive, toxic, radioactive, an oxidizer, or is highly reactive and which, because of handling, storing, processing, and packaging may have detrimental effects upon operating and emergency personnel, the public, equipment and/or the environment.

1. Officers involved in a hazardous materials incident shall immediately forward preliminary information concerning the incident to the desk officer/dispatcher. This information will include:
 - a. Basic description (ie: fire, explosion, spill etc)
 - b. Exact location

- c. If possible, all information contained on the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) label or labels.
2. When investigating/approaching a hazardous materials' incident, officers shall:
 - a. **APPROACH CAUTIOUSLY** - Resist the urge to rush in, you cannot help others until you know what you are facing. If possible, approach the incident from upwind. Avoid inhalation of fumes, smoke and vapors, even if no hazardous materials are known to be involved. Do not assume that gasses or vapors are harmless because of lack of smell. Eliminate all sources of ignition, such as flares, flames, sparks, flashers, flashlights, gas and diesel engines. Do not drive, walk through or touch spilled material. Park at a safe distance.
 - b. **IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS** - Placards, container labels, shipping papers and/or knowledgeable persons on the scene are valuable information sources. Evaluate all of them using the D.O.T. Emergency Response Guidebook.
 - c. **SECURE THE SCENE** - Without entering the immediate hazard area, attempt to isolate the area and assure the safety of people and the environment, move and keep people away from the scene and the perimeter.
 - d. **OBTAIN HELP** - Advise the desk officer/dispatcher to notify responsible agencies and if necessary, call for assistance from trained experts, through CHEMTREC or the Fairfield County Hazmat Team.
 - e. **DECIDE ON SITE ENTRY** - Any efforts you make to rescue persons, protect property or the environment must be weighed against the possibility that you could become part of the problem. Enter the area with the appropriate protective gear.
 3. Upon being notified of a hazardous materials emergency, the desk officer/dispatcher shall dispatch the fire department and the New Canaan Fire Marshalls Office to the scene.
 4. Following investigation of the incident, the desk officer/dispatcher may be requested, by personnel at the scene, to notify one or more of the following:
 - a. State Department of Environmental Protection (D.E.P.)
Oil-Chemical Spills Division, (860) 566-2211.
24-Hour D.E.P. (Nights & Weekends) (860) 566-3338 (If no answer, have State Police request contact through their Communications Officer in Hartford, 1-800-842-0200).
 - b. Chemical Transportation Emergency Center (CHEMTREC)
1-800-424-9300 CHEMTREC provides technical expertise in handling hazardous material emergencies. It can also provide additional phone numbers for emergencies, such as accidental poisonings. When calling CHEMTREC, attempt to provide as much of the following information as possible:
 - 1) Name of caller and call-back number
 - 2) Nature and location of incident

- 3) Guide number you are using from the D.O.T. Emergency Response Guidebook.
- 4) Shipper or Manufacturer
- 5) Container type
- 6) Rail car or truck number
- 7) Carrier name
- 8) Consignee
- 9) Local conditions

c. Association of American Railroads - Hazardous Materials

24 Hours - 202-639-2222

d. Stamford Police Department

Hazardous Materials Response Team - 323-3131

5. Representatives from the New Canaan Fire Marshall's Office shall be the local "Spill Director" and be responsible for coordinating the activities of state and local personnel at the scene.

I The handling of abandoned vehicles shall be in accordance with C.G.S. 14-150. An officer locating or receiving a complaint regarding an abandoned motor vehicle shall adhere to the following procedures.

1. Any officer who discovers a motor vehicle that appears abandoned or without proper registration, which is not a hazard to traffic, public health or safety, shall affix a vehicle Red Tag Sticker to the vehicle, so that it is clearly visible.
 - a. The sticker will contain the following information:
 - 1) Date and time sticker was affixed to vehicle
 - 2) A statement pursuant to C.G.S. 14-150 stating that if the motor vehicle is not removed within 24 hours from the time the sticker was affixed, it shall be removed and stored at the owner's expense.
 - 3) Location and telephone number where additional information may be obtained.
 - 4) The affixing officer's signature and badge number.
 - b. If the motor vehicle is not removed within the 24-hour period, the police department shall be authorized to have the vehicle towed and stored by the appropriate towing service.

2. Upon discovery of a motor vehicle which is a hazard to traffic, public health, safety or has been red tagged for a period exceeding 24 hours, the officer shall, with supervisory approval, authorize the towing and storage of the vehicle by an appropriate towing service.
3. Officers shall complete a Case/Incident Report and/or Notice of Motor Vehicle Tow form. Information contained on the report should include owner and vehicle information. It is important that the report reflect any significant damage to or accessories missing from the vehicle.

J The following procedures shall apply when removing and/or towing a vehicle.

1. An officer is authorized to remove or tow a vehicle under the following circumstances;
 - a. When authorized by state statute or local ordinance.
 - b. When a vehicle is reported to have been stolen or taken without the owners permission.
 - 1) In such cases, the desk officer/dispatcher shall identify and contact the reporting agency, notify said agency as to recovery and establish if the vehicle is to be held by the police department for processing.
 - a) If processing is required, and it can be accomplished at the scene, then it should be processed there and then towed from the scene. Otherwise, the vehicle shall be towed to a designated area for processing (ie: headquarters, forensic lab, etc).
 - b) As a general policy, if the vehicle is not to be held for processing or other reasons, the vehicle will be towed by the towing service.
 - c. When a vehicle, located on a public highway, is so disabled as to constitute a hazard and/or obstruction to traffic and the person(s) in charge of said vehicle is unable to provide for it's custody or removal.
 - d. When the driver of a vehicle is taken into custody by the officer and said vehicle is left unattended.
 - 1) Situations may arise where it is possible, with supervisory approval, to safely secure the vehicle at the scene until removal by a responsible person.
 - e. When a vehicle is found being driven on a public roadway and is not in proper condition to be driven.
 - f. When removal is necessary in the interest of public safety due to fire, flood, storm, snow or other emergency.

- g. When, in the judgement of the officer, it is necessary to protect the safety and integrity of a vehicle or property contained in the vehicle.
 - h. When a vehicle is abandoned (Re: Section 66.1.8).
2. Before a motor vehicle is removed by a towing service, the officer will be required to:
- a. Complete a State of Connecticut Notice of Motor Vehicle Tow Form, H-114. When filling out the form the Officer should do the following:
 - 1) Fill out all required fields.
 - 2) Note any damage to the vehicle on the form.
 - 3) Obtain the signature from the Towing Service employee.
 - 4) Provide the appropriate color-coded copies to the Towing Service and Owner/Operator.
 - b. Inventory the contents of the vehicle for valuables. Items of value should be taken into custody and secured in Property Management. All secured property should be entered into LEAS under Safekeeping in the Property field. (Re: General Order 88-1-44, Property Management).
 - 1) When conducting an inventory, officers shall open only those closed containers whose contents cannot be determined from merely examining the exterior of the container. When a container is secured and cannot be opened without being damaged, it shall remain closed.
 - c. Officers are exempt from this requirement when;
 - 1) The vehicle is towed as a result of a traffic accident, and
 - 2) The vehicle does not contain property which would require an inventory.
3. Circumstances which may require special considerations include:
- a. Vehicles Parked Unlawfully - If parked in such a manner that there is no immediate traffic hazard, the officer will take the appropriate enforcement action. Although parked in violation, the vehicle will not be towed.
 - b. Unregistered Motor Vehicles - If a vehicle is operated with a registration which has been expired for a year or longer, or there is a misuse of registration plates, the officer will take the appropriate enforcement action and have the vehicle towed from the scene.
 - c. Vehicles Involved in a Traffic Accident - If a vehicle is damaged and can not be safely driven from the scene, said vehicle shall be towed from the scene.

ONLY THOSE VEHICLES, THAT ARE INVOLVED IN AN INCIDENT WHICH REQUIRE THEM TO BE HELD FOR PROCESSING, SHALL REMAIN IN THE CUSTODY OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

- K** The owner of a vehicle ordered towed by an officer at this department shall be afforded the opportunity to contest the validity of said tow pursuant to C.G.S. 14-150(e). This will be accomplished by;
1. Filing an application (MVD A-25) and submitting it to a hearing officer who shall be appointed by the town's First Selectman. The application will be available at police and motor vehicle departments and must be submitted within ten days of receiving written notice of the tow.
 2. Upon receipt of the application, the hearing officer shall determine whether said tow was authorized under the provisions of C.G.S. 14-150.
 - a. If it is determined at such hearing that the vehicle was not a menace to traffic, abandoned or unregistered, the owner of said vehicle shall not be liable for any expenses incurred as a result of the removal and storage of said vehicle. In such cases, the police department shall be liable for all expenses incurred, as a result of the tow.
 - b. Any person aggrieved by the decision of the hearing officer may, within fifteen days of the notice of such decision, appeal to the superior court in the judicial district where the hearing was held.
 3. Officers initiating said tow shall be responsible for compiling all pertinent information regarding the incident and for testifying at the hearing as necessary.
- L** The desk officer/dispatcher shall enter all vehicles removed or towed at the direction of an officer into the CAD system under the Tow field.
1. Information contained on this database shall include:
 - a. Date
 - b. Time of Towing Agency Notification and Arrival
 - c. Incident Number
 - d. Location
 - e. Requesting Officer
 - f. Towing Service
 - g. Reason for Tow
 2. Towed vehicle information may be accessed using the automated records system.

IV DISTRIBUTION

This general order will be reproduced in electronic and traditional media. All sworn personnel shall have access to Department general orders through a read-only file on their individual domain of the Department's computer network. Printed copies and/or CD's will also be placed in locations throughout headquarters so that they are easily accessible to all personnel.

V EFFECTIVE DATE

This general order approved by the Police Commission on July 18, 1990 and is effective August 17, 1990.
Revised February 1991
Reviewed April 2000
Reviewed July 2006

Per Order,

Edward J. Nadriczny
Chief of Police