

Cobb County Police Department

Policy 3.03

DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

Effective Date: August 21, 2023	Issued By: Chief E.S. VanHoozer
Rescinds: Policy 3.03 (November 27, 2022)	Page 1 of 7
The words “he, his, him,” which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

This policy is issued for the purpose of providing guidelines and establishing rules governing the operation of Department vehicles. The provisions of this policy are applicable to every employee of the Department who operates a Department vehicle in the performance of official duties.

I. DEFINITIONS

As used in this policy, the following words and terms shall have the meaning ascribed:

- A. Code 1:** Emergency response to a call for service using blue lights and siren.
- B. Code 2:** An expedited response, using blue lights and siren only when traffic or other factors would cause extraordinary delay.
- C. Code 3:** A non-emergency response, without blue lights and siren.
- D. Emergency Call:** A call for service which requires immediate action to prevent loss of life, reduce bodily injury, and/or prevent or reduce loss of property.
- E. Emergency Signaling Devices:** Devices placed in/on vehicles that emit audible or visual signals in order to warn others that public safety services are in the process of being delivered (OCGA 40-8-92; 40-8-94).
- F. Emergency Vehicle:** An authorized emergency vehicle (OCGA 40-1-1(5)) equipped with emergency signaling devices as required by law, and used during emergency response situations.

II. BASIC EQUIPMENT FOR PATROL VEHICLES

- A.** The amount and type of equipment carried in Department vehicles depends on the task at hand. Generally, patrol officers need certain equipment to handle emergencies and preliminary investigations effectively.
 - 1. Mandatory equipment for all patrol vehicles:
 - Emergency signaling devices
 - 800 MHz radio

- Public address system
- Car video recording equipment
- Road flares
- First aid kit
- Fire extinguisher
- Bio-hazard bags

2. Optional equipment:

- MDT
- Traffic cones
- Fingerprint kit
- Jumper cables/battery pack
- Polaroid/35 mm/digital camera
- Spotlight
- Map book

- B.** When an officer discovers that he is in need of replenishing any of the mandatory items listed, he will obtain the equipment from the unit/precinct supplies. If the officer has a need for optional equipment, he will notify his chain of command so the items may be requisitioned. It is the responsibility of the unit commander to maintain sufficient supplies of vehicle equipment at the unit level to conduct day to day operations.

III. GENERAL OPERATING PROCEDURES

Safe operation of motor vehicles, including proper recording of maintenance and repair activities is the responsibility of all personnel who drive vehicles belonging to the Department.

A. Inspection

Prior to driving a Department vehicle, employees will check the exterior for damage and will also check the operation of all equipment (lights, seat belts, etc.) and emergency signaling devices if equipped. The results of the inspection will be noted on the pct./unit Daily Work Roster.

1. Vehicles not permanently assigned will be inspected by the operator each time the vehicle is checked out, prior to departure from the unit's parking facilities.
2. Vehicles assigned to individuals on a permanent basis will be inspected by the assignee on a daily basis.
3. All vehicles used to transport any person(s) in custody, will be thoroughly searched prior to being operated as well as prior to and after each transport situation.

In the event that any damage is noted, contraband and/or weapons are found, or any deficiency is noted in the vehicle, the operator will immediately notify his supervisor.

B. Seat Belts

Seat belts must be worn by drivers and passengers.

C. Passenger Restrictions

Employees operating a Department vehicle will not permit persons other than authorized Department personnel to ride in the vehicle except in the performance of duties or in conjunction with Departmental programs. Exceptions may be made by supervisors for certain assigned vehicles.

1. Ride-alongs

Ride-alongs are governed by Policy 6.09 "Ride-Along Program".

2. Courtesy Transports

- a. When transporting someone who is not a prisoner, the individual will be subject to standard searching procedures before being allowed to enter the transport vehicle. If the subject refuses to be searched the courtesy transport will not take place until the individual submits to searching procedures.
- b. At the beginning of the transport, Communications will be advised of the starting location, the final destination, the number and sex of those being transported, and if any are juveniles.
- c. If anyone being transported is of the opposite sex of the transporting officer, or is a juvenile, the odometer reading will be given at the beginning and at the end of the courtesy transport.

D. Parking

1. Prior to the time at which the vehicle will no longer be used by the operator, it will be the responsibility of the operator to refuel and inspect the unit.
 - a. The operator shall check the oil level of the vehicle they are driving every time the vehicle is fueled. Oil shall be added as needed.
 - b. The operator will also replace any expended equipment or supplies.
 - c. If the vehicle is not operating properly, the operator will be responsible for having the vehicle turned in for maintenance.

- d. No operator will knowingly leave a vehicle available for another Department employee to drive that is unsafe, or that contains any weapon or contraband.

2. When feasible, vehicles will be backed into parking spaces.

E. Backing

Whenever any large truck/vehicle/RV is operated in reverse mode (backing) a spotter should be used to guide the movements of the vehicle, even if the vehicle is equipped with electronic equipment to assist in backing.

F. In-Use Vehicle Malfunctions

In the event of mechanical/electrical trouble with a vehicle/equipment when in use, the vehicle shall be stopped immediately and a supervisor notified.

1. If the vehicle can be safely driven the supervisor shall make a decision as to the disposition of the vehicle.
2. If the vehicle must be towed the county authorized wrecker service will be called to take charge of the vehicle.
3. The employee in charge of routine maintenance for the vehicle should be notified of the issue.

G. Alteration of Parts and/or Equipment

Any alteration or addition of any vehicle part, equipment, tag, or sticker must be approved by that employee's Deputy Chief.

H. Vehicle Spotlight

The spotlight is primarily utilized to facilitate building and stationary vehicle checks and shall at no time be directed at the windshield or vision of oncoming traffic.

IV. NORMAL DRIVING CONDITIONS

Employees on regular patrol, responding code 3 to an assigned call, engaged in administrative activities, or otherwise operating in a non-emergency status will obey all traffic laws.

- A. Most calls for police service require only a code 3 response. However, an officer may change his response code (code 1 or code 2) if the situation justifies a heightened response.

- B.** A supervisor has the authority to change the response code of units.

V. RESPONSE TO PRIORITY CALLS

The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle or law enforcement vehicle, when responding to an emergency call, when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law, or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in, and in accordance with, OCGA 40-6-6.

A. Response to Incidents

1. Officers may activate emergency signaling devices when required to assist in handling any perceived emergency situation. During an emergency response emergency signaling devices shall be activated as required by law. Four-way flashers should not be used when the emergency vehicle is in motion, because they may interfere with brake lights and turn signals.
2. The nature of certain crimes in progress may call for the use emergency signaling devices to be discontinued upon close approach to the location of the occurrence and, although such action is permitted by authority of this order, vehicle operation under these conditions requires extreme caution.
 - a. Officers may deactivate emergency signaling devices at a reasonable distance from the scene (to be determined by the vehicle operator) so as to not alert subjects to law enforcement proximity.
 - b. When emergency signaling 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.
3. When a situation no longer requires an emergency response, operators of emergency vehicles should deactivate emergency signaling devices as soon as possible.
4. Non-sworn personnel should not operate emergency equipment unless directed to do so by a sworn officer.

VI. OTHER USE OF EMERGENCY SIGNALING DEVICES

In other than emergency situations law enforcement officers may activate emergency signaling devices for a variety of reasons. Such examples include, but are not limited to:

A. Traffic Congestion

Officers may activate emergency signaling devices to allow orderly and safe transit through heavily congested roadways when expediency is required to effectively eliminate a potential hazard to the public or fellow officers.

B. Emergency Beacons

Examples of when emergency lights may be used as “beacons” are, but are not limited to, the following

- To protect disabled motorists;
- To protect traffic crash/crime scenes or other perimeter; or
- When necessary to use emergency vehicles as protective barriers.

C. Vehicle Escorts

1. Funeral escorts are provided when requested, and when personnel are available. Escorts will only be provided by marked uniform patrol cars or motorcycles which will utilize emergency signaling devices at all times during the escort. The marked vehicle, with its escort, may proceed past a red traffic signal or a stop sign in accordance with applicable law. If possible, assistance should be obtained by other police officers to block traffic. Approval for funeral escorts will be made by the unit commander affected by the escort.
2. Oversize vehicle escorts will be performed by marked Department vehicles equipped with operational emergency signaling devices.
 - a. Oversize vehicle escorts requested by or through Cobb County Code Enforcement, Cobb County DOT, or Georgia DOT are pre-approved by the Department, whether performed in an on-duty or off-duty status.
 - b. All other oversize vehicle escorts must be approved by the appropriate Deputy Chief.
3. Requests to escort public officials or dignitaries will be directed to Special Operations.
4. Should an officer desire to perform a vehicle escort off-duty, he will submit a secondary employment request for this purpose.
5. Police vehicles should not be used to escort an emergency vehicle which has its own emergency signaling devices, unless authorized by a supervisor, or the failure to do so could result in the potential loss of life or extensive

property damage. This policy shall not prohibit police officers from facilitating the movement of other emergency vehicles by assisting with traffic control.

6. Private vehicles will not be escorted in emergency escorts. Officers will request EMS personnel for medical emergencies.

VII. SPEEDOMETER CALIBRATION

All vehicles used for routine patrol will have their speedometers certified annually. Precinct/unit commanders will be responsible for vehicles assigned to their precinct/unit/personnel. Certification can be completed on a dynamometer, or by using the distance per time method in accordance with the procedures listed below:

- A. Two officers will be in the car conducting the check. One officer will drive the vehicle and the other officer will operate the stopwatch, calculate and record the results, and ensure the instructions are properly followed.
- B. The calibration check will be conducted on the one-mile course on Ernest Barrett Parkway set up by the Cobb County Department of Transportation. Two passes will be recorded at 30 mph, and two passes will be recorded at 45 mph.
 1. The driver will reach and maintain the target speed prior to reaching the starting point (green marker). The timing officer will start the stopwatch as soon as the vehicle begins to pass the green marker.
 2. The driver will maintain the target speed until after the vehicle has passed the ending point (red marker). The timing officer will stop the stopwatch as soon as the vehicle begins to pass the red marker.
- C. The calibration sheet will be completed and submitted to the precinct/unit commander. The precinct/unit commander will maintain calibration records for the current calendar year plus the preceding three calendar years.