



Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



13.030 – Emergency Vehicle Operations

Original Effective Date: 03/01/2018

Revised Effective Date: 10/15/2024

13.030-POL

1. Definition

Emergency Response: when a sworn employee operates an authorized police vehicle in a manner that is substantially outside of a normal traffic pattern.

2. Sworn Employees Are Responsible for the Safe Operation of Their Police Vehicle

When driving in an emergency response, sworn employees are not relieved from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all people, nor is the sworn employee protected from the consequences of their reckless disregard for the safety of others (see [RCW 46.61.035\(4\)](#)).

Sworn employees will drive no faster than their skill and training allows and is reasonably necessary to safely arrive at the scene.

3. Sworn Employees May Drive in an Emergency Response Only When the Need Outweighs the Risk

The preservation of life is the highest priority. Criminal apprehension and the preservation of property are secondary.

Sworn employees should consider the following when making the decision to engage in an emergency response and will modulate their response accordingly:

- The nature of the emergency.
- The priority level of the call.
- The opportunity for others to perceive and react to the sworn employee, and other emergency vehicles.
- Character of the location (i.e., freeway vs. side street).
- Weather and roadway conditions.
- Speed at which the sworn employee is driving.

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- Time of day.
- Traffic conditions (pedestrians and vehicle congestion).
- The sworn employee's skill and training with emergency driving.

Misdemeanor or property crimes do not justify an emergency response unless:

- Responding to an in-progress crime, or
- Where there is a legitimate concern for the preservation of human life.

4. Sworn Employees Will Modify Their Emergency Response When Appropriate

Sworn employees will slow their emergency response with due regard for the safety of all vehicle and pedestrian traffic present, and at all intersections and marked crosswalks.

Emergency driving will be modified, terminated, or slowed as necessary for a safe response:

- As ordered by a supervisor, or
- When the totality of the circumstances indicates the risk of continuing the emergency driving outweighs the need. The sworn employee's decision will be reviewed based on the information available to them at the time.

5. Sworn Employees Will Use Emergency Lights and Sirens for Emergency Response

Sworn employees may cease to use audible signals when necessary due to the nature of the situation to which they are responding.

6. Sworn Employees Will Not Escort Private Vehicles in an Emergency Response

7. Sworn Employees May Use a Police Vehicle Equipped with Emergency Lights and Push Bars to Move a Disabled Vehicle

Sworn employees will update CAD with the driver's information and will use ICV or BWV to record the driver's consent to having their vehicle pushed.