




# COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

*“Policing Excellence through Community Partnerships”*

<b>Directive Type:</b> General Order	<b>Effective Date:</b> 09-18-2016	<b>General Order Number:</b> 06.05
<b>Subject:</b> Auxiliary Traffic Services		
<b>Amends/Supersedes:</b> Section 06, Chapter 05, Auxiliary Traffic Services 2008	<b>Chief of Police:</b> 	
<b>Distribution:</b> All Personnel	<b>Review Date:</b> July 1	<b># of Pages:</b> 4

## 1.0 DIRECTIVE

The Columbia Police Department recognizes the responsibility for the safety of the public using the roads and highways within the City of Columbia. The Department recognizes the responsibility to assist motorists in non-emergency and emergency situations that may develop on the city's streets and highways. This includes providing information and directions whenever possible upon citizen request.

## 2.0 DISABLED MOTORISTS

When an officer observes a stranded or disabled motorist, the officer shall render assistance, if possible.

An officer may render the following types of assistance:

1. Calling for wrecker service that the vehicle operator has requested. If no particular service is identified, then the wrecker service designated for that area shall be dispatched.
2. Owing to the increase in on-board electronics, gasoline containers will not be transported in police vehicles.
3. Transporting motorists to the nearest service station for mechanical assistance or to shelter until they can contact further assistance, after approval from the shift supervisor.

An officer may attempt to make mechanical repairs, jump start, or change a tire on a disabled vehicle only under exigent circumstances with the approval of a supervisor. Under no circumstances shall an officer use a Departmental vehicle to push, pull or tow a disabled vehicle.

If an officer observes a disabled vehicle while en route to a call, the officer should make an attempt to advise the motorist that Communications will be notified of the vehicle's location and assistance will be dispatched. If the vehicle is in a particularly hazardous location the officer will stop to render assistance if not en route to a crime in progress call and shall notify Communications of the delay.

### **3.0 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

In situations where assistance rendered to a stranded or disabled motorist is of an emergency nature, the officer shall contact the Columbia-Richland Communications Center and request assistance from the appropriate agencies.

In emergency situations officers may render first aid and/or utilize fire suppression equipment in an attempt to alleviate the situation.

### **4.0 HAZARDOUS ROADWAY CONDITIONS**

While on duty, officers shall be alert to the existence of potential hazards such as:

- Debris in the roadway;
- Defects in the road itself;
- Lack of, or defects in, highway safety features;
- Lack of, improper, visually obstructed, or down or damaged mechanical traffic control signals;
- Lack of, or improper traffic control or informational signs;
- Defective roadway lighting systems; and
- Any other situation that may be hazardous to pedestrians or motorists.

When an officer observes any of the above hazardous situations, he shall immediately notify the Columbia-Richland Communications Center of the nature of the problem and location. The Columbia-Richland Communications Center shall notify the appropriate agency. If necessary, the officer will protect the scene, and bystanders, and direct traffic or take any action deemed necessary to correct the situation.

### **5.0 ABANDONED AND DERELICT VEHICLES**

An abandoned vehicle is defined as a motor vehicle that is inoperable or is left unattended on public property for more than seventy-two (72) hours, or a motor vehicle that has remained illegally on private or public property for a period of more than seven (7) days without the consent of the owner or person in control of the property (§56-5-5810 S.C. Code).

A derelict vehicle is defined as a motor vehicle that meets one of the following criteria (§56-5-5810 S.C. Code):

- Whose certificate of registration has expired and the registered and legal owner no longer resides at the address listed on the last certificate of registration on record with the Highway Department
- Whose major parts have been removed so as to render the motor vehicle inoperable
- Manufacturer's serial plates, motor vehicle identification numbers, license number plates and any other means of identification have been removed so as to nullify efforts to locate or identify the registered and legal owner
- Whose registered and legal owner of record disclaims ownership or releases his rights thereto
- Which is more than seven (7) years old and does not bear a current license as required by the Highway Department.

Motor vehicles meeting any of the criteria for abandoned or derelict vehicles may be towed by members of the department in accordance with the procedures set forth in this directive.

### **6.0 TOWING OF ABANDONED OR DERELICT VEHICLES**

When any motor vehicle is abandoned or derelict, an orange abandoned vehicle tag will be completed and placed on the vehicle windshield.

The abandoned vehicle tag will serve the only notice required, that if the vehicle is not removed within seven (7) days from the placing of the tag, the vehicle will be removed by a member of the Department.

In all cases of abandoned or derelict vehicles an officer may, before towing the vehicle and if circumstances permit,

attempt to contact the owner to allow him an opportunity to retrieve the vehicle.

In all instances where an abandoned or derelict vehicle is towed, the officer initiating the tow will complete a "Record of Stored Vehicle" form that will be filed and maintained by the Records Unit.

The officer initiating the tow will be responsible for completing a "Letter of Notification of Towed Vehicle" and mailing the form to the registered owner of the vehicle. The officer will ensure that the return address on the envelope is the Records Unit.

If the registered owner's information is not readily available, the officer will exhaust all avenues to obtain the owner's information.

In the event the owner's information cannot be obtained, the officer will notify the Records Unit detailing the means that used to locate the owner's information. The records clerk will document this information on the top margin of the original "Record of Stored Vehicle".

## **7.0 OPERATIONAL VEHICLES REQUIRING TOWING**

### **7.1 Improperly Stopped, Standing or Parked Vehicles**

Members of the Department may tow a vehicle meeting the following criteria:

- Any unattended vehicle outside a business or residential area parked on a paved or main traveled part of the highway, when it is practical to stop, park or leave the vehicle off the roadway (§56-5-2510 S.C. Code).
- Any vehicle left so as to prevent an unobstructed width of highway opposite the vehicle for other vehicles to pass (§56-5-2510 S.C. Code).
- Any vehicle left so that it cannot be seen clearly from a distance of two hundred (200) feet in both directions (§56-5-2510 S.C. Code).
- Any unattended vehicle illegally left standing upon any highway, bridge, causeway or in any tunnel in such a position or under such circumstances as to obstruct the normal movement of traffic (§56-5-2520 S.C. Code).
- Any vehicle left unattended in a metered parking space for a period of twenty-four (24) hours will be considered a public nuisance and will be subject to towing (12-52 City Code).

### **7.2 Vehicles Taken Into Police Custody**

Departmental personnel may also tow the following vehicles:

- Any vehicle from which an officer makes an arrest and there is no responsible party to whom the arrestee can turn over the possession of the vehicle (§56-5-2520 S.C. Code).
- Any vehicle on which a report has been made that the vehicle has been stolen or taken without the consent of the owner (§56-5-2520 S.C. Code).

Any officer towing a vehicle according to any provision in Sections 7.1 or 7.2 will complete a "Record of Stored Vehicle" and a "Letter of Notification of Towed Vehicle" if the owner cannot be notified by telephone or verbally.

The officer shall ensure the security of all items of value obtained in the passenger compartment of the vehicle. If possible, the officer shall store all items of value in the trunk of the vehicle. The vehicle's trunk key will be stored in the Property Room under the owner's name. If the vehicle does not have separate ignition and trunk keys, all items of value shall be stored in the Property Room under the owner's name. The officer should identify each item and its storage location on the "Record of Stored Vehicle".

## **8.0 APPEAL PROCESS FOR VEHICLE REMOVAL**

Citizen questions concerning the appropriateness or legality of the removal of any vehicle will be considered as a complaint against the officer initiating the removal. The complaint will be forwarded to the Region Commander for investigation and action (if any).

## **9.0 ESCORT SERVICES**

### **9.1 Law Enforcement Escorts**

Officers assigned to the Traffic Unit will engage in police escorts on a limited basis per unit SOP. These escorts will be approved through the Traffic Unit's chain of command or the Chief of Police.

### **9.2 Escort of Civilian Vehicles in Medical Emergencies**

The emergency escort of a private vehicle is extremely hazardous and will not be allowed, except under exigent circumstances.

## **10.0 TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

The Traffic Unit will obtain brochures that pertain to traffic safety issues of public concern, such as Driving Under the Influence of alcohol/drugs, Safety Belt Usage, and Child Restraint Laws. The brochures will be made available to the community at Police Headquarters, during presentations and other organized events.