

**FREDERICK POLICE DEPARTMENT  
GENERAL ORDER**

**Section 2:** Traffic Operations **Order Number:** 220  
**Topic:** TRAFFIC CONTROL AND DIRECTION **Issued by:** Chief of Police  
**Approved:** 01/19/18  
**Review:** Annually, in December, by the Patrol Commander  
**Supersedes:** G.O. 220 approved 12/12/2016

**.01 PURPOSE:**

To establish uniform procedures for traffic direction and control and to establish guidelines for other related services.

**.02 CROSS-REF:**

G.O. [222 - "School Crossing Guards"](#)  
G.O. [230 - "Traffic Accident Investigation"](#)  
G.O. [234 - "Fatal Collisions"](#)  
CALEA STANDARD: 61.3.2

**.03 DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of traffic direction is to provide for the maximum flow of traffic, in the minimum amount of time, with the least amount of congestion, and with the greatest amount of safety. The public relies upon the police for assistance when faced with emergency traffic situations.

**.04 POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Department to provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Any officer encountering an emergency traffic safety/hazard concern will take all reasonable actions to control the problem by requesting whatever assistance the officer deems appropriate to restore the flow of traffic.

**.05 DEFINITIONS:**

**.10 TRAFFIC CONTROL FUNCTION:**

1. The Department will maintain a close working relationship with the Department of Public Works, the State Highway Administration, Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS), and other officials to plan and implement traffic direction and control services for the community.
2. Police officers and/or Auxiliary personnel will be assigned to carry out identified traffic direction and control functions only at those times and places where law enforcement authority and/or human intervention is required to ensure safety and efficiency, and until such time that the problem is resolved or traffic control apparatus can be installed.
3. Situations which may require traffic control by officers include, but are not limited to:
  - A. Accidents, fires and other emergencies, special public attractions or activities such as parades, sporting events, funeral processions, etc.
  - B. Major street excavation, particularly at intersections adjacent to the construction and during periods of peak traffic flow.
  - C. Any condition which causes congestion of traffic in a particular location.
  - D. Traffic signals that are temporarily out of service.

#### **.15 TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL PROCEDURES:**

1. When directing traffic, officers will use standardized gestures and signals (as taught by the Department during training) to have motorists, pedestrians, and/or bicyclists stop, start or turn.
2. Before beginning to direct traffic, the officer should attempt, when feasible, to utilize the traffic signal pattern and direct traffic with the signal. If this cannot be done, the traffic signal (if present) should be placed on flash and Communications notified. Officers are authorized to enter the traffic signal light boxes to activate the signal manually by utilizing the skeleton key that they were issued.

Officers may also utilize the manual signal when there is a need to change the computerized traffic signal flow such as for special events when there is a large volume of traffic exiting an area onto a specific roadway.

3. Officer(s) directing traffic should position their police vehicle in such a manner that it is highly visible to highway users yet does not unnecessarily impede or hinder the flow of traffic, unless the road is shut down.
4. **Officers will wear high-visibility traffic vests or reflective clothing at all times while they are in the roadway directing or controlling traffic; and will be positioned so that they will be clearly seen.**

#### **.20 SIGNALS AND GESTURES FOR DIRECTING TRAFFIC:**

Prompt compliance to hand signals is dependent upon the officer's ability to use uniform, clearly defined, and understandable gestures. Improper hand signals cause confusion, hesitation, and lead to violations. The following will describe the standardized signals and gestures used in directing traffic:

1. To STOP traffic, two motions are used:
  - A. First, point with the arm and finger straight at the driver who is to stop. Watch the driver and hold this point until the driver sees the signal, or at least has had plenty of time to do so. Then raise the pointing hand (not the entire arm) so that the palm is toward the driver. Hold this position until the driver stops.
  - B. Stop traffic from both directions to give traffic on the cross street a chance to move. Stop the traffic coming from one side first, then that from the other. After traffic has been halted with one hand, hold that hand on the stop position and turn to the other side and repeat the process. Do not lower either arm until cars coming from both directions have stopped.
2. To START traffic:
  - A. Point with the arm and finger toward the person to be started and hold it until the driver's attention is attained.
  - B. With the palm up, the pointing arm is swung from the elbow only, through a vertical semi-circle until the hand is adjacent to the chin. If the driver does not move, make the signal a second time. After traffic has been started from one side, drop the arm and start traffic from the other side in the same way.
3. Motorists TURNING RIGHT:
  - A. Signals for a right turn usually are not required at an intersection, however when

necessary, the officer should extend his right arm and index finger toward the motorist (if the motorist is approaching from the officer's right) and swing the extended arm in the direction of the motorist's intended turn.

- B. If the motorist approached from the officer's left, the same procedure can be followed, except using the left arm.
4. Motorists TURNING LEFT:
- A. Motorists intending to turn left should, at all times, be directed to do so by the officer when the movement can be made safely.
  - B. Officer(s) should stop or hold on-coming traffic and then direct left-turning motorists to execute their turns by extending his arm and index finger toward the motorist and swinging the extended arm in the direction of the motorist's intended turn.

**.25 SIGNALING AIDS:**

- 1. The WHISTLE:
  - A. Is used to get the attention of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
  - B. One long blast, with the appropriate hand signal is a STOP signal.
  - C. Two shorts blasts, with the appropriate hand signal is a GO signal.
  - D. Several short blasts are used to get the attention of a person who does not respond to a given signal or to warn of the approach of an emergency vehicle.
- 2. VERBAL COMMANDS:
  - A. The voice is seldom used in directing traffic. Oral orders are not easy to give or understand, and often lead to misinterpretations, which are dangerous.
  - B. Occasionally, a person will not understand arm signals. Approach the person and politely and briefly explain the command.
- 3. Use of a FLASHLIGHT:

A flashlight, equipped with the red plastic tip, is required in low-light and/or adverse weather conditions and should be used in conjunction with the arm gestures previously described. Flashlights without cones will not be used except in emergencies.
- 4. Use of FLARES:
  - A. Caution must be used with flares at an accident scene, due to the possibility of flammable or combustible material being present.
  - B. Officers are discouraged from physically holding flares to direct traffic, as their ashes and embers can be harmful to the officer, highway user, property, etc.
  - C. Improper use of flares at a disaster scene has caused vehicles to become involved in accidents. By giving approaching traffic ample warning and allowing sufficient distance in which to start taking defensive measures, hazards can be reduced at an accident scene.

- D. In any speed zone where flares are used to channel traffic from one lane to another, place them 20 feet apart. This eliminates any doubt in the mind of the motorist as to what is expected, and it will lessen the possibility of any motorist driving between flares into the wrong traffic lanes. The primary objective is to ensure that oncoming traffic has ample warning of danger ahead so that defensive tactics may be employed to negotiate the scene safely.
5. Use of TRAFFIC CONES:
- A. Traffic cones are excellent for diverting traffic from one lane to the next and are often more appropriate than flares since the cone won't spark any further damage at a hazardous condition.
  - B. Traffic cones may be obtained at the Department of Public Works.
6. TWO OFFICERS signaling:
- When more than one officer is needed at a busy intersection, one of the officers will be responsible for originating all signals and gestures. The other officer assists by coordinating with and extending signals.

**.30 USE OF TEMPORARY TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES:**

- 1. If a flashing signal will adequately and safely control traffic, temporary signs should not be used because they may confuse motorists. Officers must use good judgment when determining if traffic at an intersection can proceed safely without human intervention.
- 2. Before a temporary traffic control device is placed into service, any traffic signal present should be placed on flash and/or taken out of service - whichever is appropriate.
- 3. Officers should make every effort to notify, or have notified, the State Highway Administration to furnish temporary traffic control devices on streets maintained by the State. Currently, City DPW will not furnish temporary traffic control signs at any location within the City because they do not have signs compliant with Department of Transportation standards. However, City DPW will furnish road closure signs if a section of a City maintained road must be closed temporarily.
- 4. When temporary devices are no longer needed, the officer should remove, or have them removed, and make arrangements to have them returned to the appropriate agency. If the respective agency cannot pick up the temporary signs in a timely fashion, the signs should be laid face-down, out of the way if possible, so as not to confuse motorists.

**.35 TRAFFIC CONTROL AT FIRE SCENES:**

- 1. Officers will direct and control traffic at or around fire scenes, as needed, and will coordinate their traffic direction and control efforts with the Fire/Rescue Incident Commander insofar as:
  - A. Establishing a perimeter,
  - B. Streets to be closed,
  - C. Designating alternate routes and detouring traffic, etc., and
  - D. What persons/vehicles are authorized to drive across any hoses that are in the roadway.

2. Officers will be concerned with keeping traffic/pedestrians from entering the fire area, as well as assisting trapped vehicles/pedestrians from behind the established fire lines.
3. Vehicles that interfere with Fire Department or rescue operations may be towed as necessary.

**.40 ADVERSE ROAD AND/OR WEATHER CONDITIONS:**

1. Acts of nature such as fog, snow, storms, flooding, ice on the roadway, etc., engineering hazards such as downed power lines, broken gas or water mains, etc., or accidental hazards such as debris in the roadway, may all require additional attention by officers to alleviate the hazard. Whenever an officer discovers a hazardous situation that would affect street or highway users, the officer, using his best judgment, training, and discretion is authorized to close a road or portion thereof to traffic until the situation has been resolved.
2. When called upon to direct and control traffic during adverse weather and road conditions, officers will:
  - A. Consider requesting barricades, temporary traffic control devices, etc., to slow traffic and/or establish a safe traffic pattern,
  - B. Consider requesting a salt/sand truck/snow plow or other equipment as deemed appropriate to respond,
  - C. NOT leave a hazardous situation they have discovered or responded to, unless the hazard has been alleviated or lessened, or until relieved by a supervisor, and
  - D. Notify all appropriate agencies that may assist in alleviating the problem.
3. Officers will consider all downed power lines to be energized and will treat accordingly.

**.50 CLOSING ROADS:**

1. If a road will be closed for any length of time, the officer closing the road will notify Communications of the closure, the estimated length of time that the road will be closed, and what alternative routes are available.
2. Officers will also request that Communications notify the Frederick County Division of Fire/Rescue Services and the news media so that the information can be passed onto highway users via radio and television.
3. Officers will notify Communications when the road is re-opened.

**.60 TRAINING AND SUPERVISION:**

Officers will receive training in the proper use of hand signals and gestures, as well as the use of flares, while in the Academy and during field training. Supervisors will ensure their subordinates are wearing their traffic vests and utilizing appropriate traffic direction and control techniques at the scene of any situation brought to their attention.