

POLICY 27. EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATION

A. Escorting civilian vehicles

1. Emergency escorts (Code-3)

- a. Emergency escorts may be necessary, and are allowed, during periods of declared emergencies as defined in California Government Code section 8558. (21057 C.V.C.)
- b. Escorting of a private vehicle may be done for the preservation of life in a medical emergency (21057 C.V.C.). This will be done only if:
 1. all other forms of transportation are unavailable
 2. it is impossible to move the subject to an emergency vehicle as defined in 165 C.V.C.
 3. the situation requires immediate movement to preserve life

2. Non-emergency escorts

- a. Escorts may be required to move oversized or hazardous material vehicles through cities that contract for our services.
- b. The Traffic Unit may provide that service with the approval of that supervisor.
- c. Private escort services must conform to the provisions of 25270, 27904 and 27904.5 C.V.C. and be monitored by the Traffic Unit.
- d. Funerals, public officials, and dignitaries may require escorts that require the use of an emergency vehicle's red/blue lights. This must:
 1. meet with the approval of the station commander of the area served
 2. not be construed as an emergency situation that allows any violation of the applicable vehicle code laws

B. Emergency vehicle spotlight usage

1. The spotlight is a tool to assist deputies in night observations and frequently to provide a measure of safety (e.g., illuminating vehicles on stops, etc.).
2. During emergency responses, including pursuits, the spotlight is to be used only when there is no danger to other drivers on the road.

3. The spotlight is not to be directed at unsuspecting on-coming motorists.
4. The spotlight may accompany, but not supplant, the required emergency lights.

C. Hazardous warning lights

1. Hazardous warning light (4-way flashers) usage shall conform to 25251 C.V.C.
2. Hazardous warning lights may be used in conjunction with the red/blue light during an emergency response.
3. Turn signal flashers alone do not provide legal protection if vehicle code laws are violated.

D. Public address (P.A.) system

1. The emergency vehicle's P.A. may be used to:
 - a. amplify the Department's radio traffic for deputies outside the vehicle
 - b. its usage during night time in residential neighborhoods should be avoided
 - c. alert persons inside buildings to possible impending dangers
 - d. substitute for telephonic conversation with suspect if no telephone is available, or suspect refuses to answer
 - e. broadcast crowd control instructions and warnings
2. The vehicle's P.A. system shall not be used frivolously or as a substitute for a traffic stop.
3. Deputies will not advise motorists of their erratic driving via the P.A. system.

E. Applicable vehicle code sections

1. Section 165 C.V.C. - Defines an authorized emergency vehicle to include any publicly-owned vehicles operated by the Department.
2. Section 21055 C.V.C. - Provides that the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle is exempt from the provision of Division 11, Chapters 2 through 10 of the Vehicle Code (these provisions include general driving rules such as speed, right-of-way, passing, etc.) provided:
 - a. the vehicle is being driven in response to an emergency situation or while engaged in rescue operations or is being used in the immediate pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law; and

- b. the driver of the vehicle sounds a siren as may be reasonably necessary and the vehicle displays a red lamp visible from the front as a warning to other drivers and pedestrians.
- 3. Section 21056 C.V.C. - Provides that the exemption of Section 21055 C.V.C. does not release the driver of an emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway, nor does it protect the driver from the consequences of an arbitrary exercise of the privileges granted in that section.

Reference:

Section 6.43 of the Departmental Policy and Procedure Manual

California Government Code

California Vehicle Code