

<p>RABUN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE</p>  <p>General Order Number: 4.21</p>	<p>Date of Issue</p> <p>2/23/2016</p>	<p>Effective Date</p> <p>2/23/2016</p>	<p>Revision Date</p>
<p>Subject: EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS</p>	<p>Amends:</p>	<p>Rescinds:</p>	
<p>Index as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency Vehicle Equipment Emergency Vehicle Operations General Policies and Procedures 	<p>State Certification Standards: 3.11, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.8, 5.12, 5.13</p>		
<p>Special Instructions:</p>			

PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to prescribe the Rabun County Sheriff's Office policies and procedures for personnel in the proper use of emergency vehicle warning devices (emergency lights and siren).

STATEMENT OF POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Rabun County Sheriff's Office to operate all emergency vehicles in strict compliance with all applicable state of Georgia statutes.

DISCUSSION

The members of the Rabun County Sheriff's Office place the highest value on the preservation of life and safety of its employees and the public. The methods used to enforce the laws and to respond to calls for assistance should minimize the risks of injury to officers and citizens alike.

When emergency lights and siren are used, they can invoke a fright or panic reaction among pedestrians and/or motorists, causing them to react in unexpected ways. Such devices can also unnecessarily attract attention and

draw curious individuals to the scene of an emergency, causing traffic congestion and confusion that can detract from the efficient resolution of a situation.

Note: Emergency warning devices will only be used when necessary.

Note: Unmarked vehicles shall not be used for traffic enforcement.

DEFINITIONS

CODE ONE — A response requiring a deputy to proceed to an incident while observing all traffic laws and regulations.

CODE TWO — An emergency response that requires immediate response of a deputy and there is an imminent threat to the safety of others. The deputy shall utilize visible and audible devices (emergency lights & siren) and the speed of the emergency vehicle should not exceed 20 mph over the posted speed limit. On occasion, an incident may arise that would justify a Code Two response, but the use of an audible siren would hinder apprehension or place victims in a more precarious situation if the offender becomes aware of law enforcement response. During such times, emergency equipment should be de-activated prior to arrival. Deputies will need to keep in mind that traffic laws must be adhered to enhance deputy and citizen safety.

CODE THREE — An emergency response for situations in which there is a verified need for immediate law enforcement presence to prevent a forcible felony or injury to any involved persons. The deputy shall utilize visible and audible devices (emergency lights & siren) and the emergency vehicle will be operated at speeds that will allow the quickest, safest response.

DUE REGARD — When a reasonably careful person, performing similar duties under similar circumstances, would act in the same manner.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE — An official Rabun County Sheriff's Office vehicle equipped with warning devices required by Georgia law that emits audible and visual signals to warn others that law enforcement services are in the process of being delivered.

NORMAL DRIVING OPERATIONS — Maintaining the vehicle at a speed concurrent with the normal flow of traffic, obeying all traffic control devices and signals, and complying with posted speed limits.

O.C.G.A. — The Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

O.C.G.A. 16-1-3, which states:

- (1) "Felony" means a crime punishable by death, by imprisonment for life, or by imprisonment for more than 12 months.
- (2) "Forcible Felony" means any felony, which involves the use of or threat of physical force or violence against any person.
- (3) "Misdemeanor" and "Misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature" mean any crime other than a felony.

O.C.G.A. 40-6-66, which states:

- (a) The driver of an 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 in this Code section.
- (b) The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle or law enforcement may:
 - (1) Park or stand, irrespective of this provisions of this chapter;
 - (2) Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as he or she does not endanger life or property; and
 - (3) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.
- (c) The exceptions granted in this Code section to an emergency vehicle shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of an audio signal and use of a flashing or revolving red light visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of 500 feet to the front of such vehicle, except that a vehicle belonging to a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency and operated as such shall be making use of an audio signal and a flashing or revolving blue light with the same visibility to the front of the vehicle.
- (d)
 - (1) The foregoing provisions shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.
 - (2) When a law enforcement officer in a law enforcement vehicle is pursuing a fleeing suspect in another vehicle and the fleeing suspect damages any property or injuries or kills any person during the pursuit, the law enforcement officer's pursuit shall not be the proximate cause or a contributing proximate cause of the damage, injury, or death caused by the fleeing suspect unless the law enforcement officer acted with reckless disregard for proper law enforcement procedures in the officer's decision to initiate or continue the pursuit. When such reckless disregard exists, the pursuit may be found to constitute a proximate cause of the damage, injury, or death caused by the fleeing suspect, but the existence of such reckless disregard shall not in and of itself establish causation.
 - (3) The provisions of this subsection shall apply only to issues of causation and duty and shall not affect the existence or absence of immunity, which shall be determined as, otherwise provided by law.
- (e) It shall be unlawful for any person to operate an authorized emergency with flashing lights other than as authorized by subsection © of this Code section.

I. EMERGENCY VEHICLES

- A. Rabun County Sheriff's Office vehicles used in routine or general patrol service will be conspicuously marked in accordance with current and future state statutes.
- B. Departmental vehicle markings will conform to the following:
 - 1. Reflective letters no less than four inches in height designating the vehicle as "Sheriff" situated on both sides and back of the vehicle in a color which contrasts with the vehicle color for acceptable visibility;
 - 2. A number identifying each marked vehicle;
 - 3. Emergency phone number "911;" and

4. When appropriate, lettering denoting when the vehicle is designated to perform a special service (e.g., traffic, K-9, lake patrol, etc.).
- C. Patrol vehicles used in routine or general patrol service will be equipped with emergency equipment in operational order as specified by O.C.G.A. 40-6-6. This equipment will include:
1. Emergency lights;
 2. Siren; and
 3. Mobile radio transceiver.
- D. Additionally, each patrol vehicle will contain the following minimum equipment:
1. Seat belts that meet or exceed National Safety Council Standards for driver and passenger restraint devices. Seat belts shall be worn at all times when the vehicle is in motion in accordance with Georgia Code or the Rabun County Employee Handbook.
 2. Each vehicle shall contain, for public safety reasons, a minimum of:
 - a. Basic emergency medical supplies;
 - b. One fire extinguisher;
 - c. One rechargeable flashlight
 - d. Communicable disease control supplies
 3. Spotlights

Other than traffic stops, spotlights may be utilized for the following reasons:

 - a. Checking buildings and other areas for possible criminal activity during hours of darkness;
 - b. Locating addresses during calls for service;
 - c. Illuminating suspects.
 4. Public Address Systems

Other than selected traffic stops, the police vehicles public address system may be utilized for the following reasons:

 - a. Crowd control;
 - b. Instructions, orders, or commands to groups of people;
 - c. Emergency warnings to the community (i.e. evacuations, dangerous weather conditions, etc.);
 - d. Selected special situations (i.e. hostage situations, barricaded suspects, etc.).

Note: The Patrol Division Commander shall issue all other equipment to each deputy on an individual basis. The equipment shall include: traffic vest, raincoat, campaign hat & badge, uniform pieces, duty belt and accessories, Crime Scene Tape, ASP baton, Finger Print Kit, Unlock kit, 100' Open Reel Rape Measure, Measure Master Wheel Roller, portable radio, Citation Book, Warning Book, patrol rifle and case, firearm & magazine pouch, hand cuff case, O.C. spray & holster, and ballistic vest. The Patrol Division Commander is responsible for maintaining records of issued equipment, and replacing and/or replenishing any equipment after notification is made by the deputy.

II. EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATION

- A. All emergency vehicle operations will be conducted in compliance with Georgia Statute (O.C.G.A. 40-6-6) and any future amendments or changes.
- B. The vehicle will be driven in a manner not to endanger life or property.
- C. Once the emergency no longer exists, the driver of the vehicle must immediately resume normal driving operations.
- D. When operating a vehicle under emergency conditions (Code Two or Code Three), deputies must exercise due regard for the safety of all persons. Although traffic laws may be violated under emergency conditions, no assignment shall be of such importance and no task shall be expedited with such emphasis that the safe operation and full control of the vehicle become secondary.
- E. Assigning Response Codes.
 1. Deputies shall initially determine which method of response (Code One, Code Two, or Code Three) will be used based upon the information known at the time of dispatch.
 2. Deputies will inform dispatch personnel of the response code selected.
 3. Unless an emergency exists, deputies shall proceed to a routine call for assistance by exercising a Code One response.
 4. When a deputy wishes to initiate a faster emergency response because of a sudden occurrence unknown to the Shift Supervisor or dispatch personnel or wishes to upgrade a routine response assignment due to further information being relayed to the deputy, the deputy will inform dispatch personnel as soon as possible of:
 - a. The nature of the situation;
 - b. The location and destination of the unit; and
 - c. The type of response code being used.
- F. Use of Emergency Warning Devices during Code Two and Code Three Operations
 1. All emergency lights and the siren shall be activated. If either becomes inoperable, the driver must resume normal "Code One".

2. The four-way flashers or "hazard lights" will not be used while the vehicle is in motion because they may interfere with brake lights and turn signals.
3. Vehicles equipped with spotlights will not be directed at the windshield or vision of oncoming traffic.
4. At the discretion of the driver, emergency signal devices may be de-activated at a distance from the incident scene so as not to alert subjects.
5. Deputies may fluctuate or change the mode of the siren so that the emergency vehicle can be heard and observed.
6. When emergency devices are de-activated, the operator will comply with normal driving procedures.
7. Shift Supervisors are responsible for monitoring the response code selected by deputies and will downgrade response codes when:
 - a. The nature of the incident does not justify a Code Two or Code Three response;
 - b. It appears that the safety of deputies responding or the public are in danger; or
 - c. Other "first responder" personnel are closer to the scene or have arrived to handle the incident.

G. Use of Warning Devices during Vehicle Stops

1. Emergency lights, headlights, and/or the siren shall be used to make adequate notice of a deputy's intent to stop a motor vehicle.
2. A safe environment must be provided for the offender, the deputy, and the public when stopping a vehicle.
3. The deputy shall select an area that provides reasonable safety, avoiding hills, curves, heavily trafficked and poorly lit areas and roads without shoulders.
4. Whenever possible, the deputy shall avoid the use of private drives, business locations and areas where a large volume of spectators are likely to gather.
5. Once the violator is properly stopped, the deputy shall continue to operate the emergency lights and will position the vehicle about one-half to one car length behind the violator's vehicle at a slight angle, with the front approximately three feet to the traffic side of the violator's vehicle.
6. Emergency lights will remain in operation until the completion of the law enforcement business and the violator has departed and safely re-entered the roadway.
7. Unmarked vehicles will not be used to make "routine" traffic stops.

H. Discretionary Use of Warning Devices

1. Deputies shall activate emergency warning devices when required to assist in handling any emergency or potentially hazardous situation to the public or fellow law enforcement personnel. Examples of such situations are:
 - a. Offering protection to disabled motorists;
 - b. Using vehicles as a protective barrier;
 - c. When removing an accident-causing object from the roadway; and/or
 - d. While at the scene of a crime or medical or fire emergency.
- I. Deputies may also need to activate non-emergency warning devices, such as four-way flashers, when temporarily parked along a highway or within a public parking area.

III. EMERGENCY ESCORTS

- A. Deputies will not attempt to escort private vehicles on an emergency run.
- B. Deputies may offer assistance by requesting an ambulance.
- C. Funeral Processions will be escorted by activating emergency lights and headlights. Extreme caution will be used before proceeding through regulated intersections. The siren will be used to insure all pedestrians and motorists are clear of the intersection before allowing the procession to proceed (O.C.G.A. 40-6-76).

IV. TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVOLVING EMERGENCY VEHICLES

- A. No matter how minor or serious a traffic accident, the deputy will discontinue driving operations when the accident involves a pedestrian, a civilian vehicle, or whenever the air bag is deployed and:
 1. Immediately notify the dispatcher personnel of the situation;
 2. The deputy will request notification of the Georgia State Patrol to handle the traffic accident investigation;
 3. The deputy will remain at the scene of the accident;
 4. Render first aid (if necessary);
 5. Provide traffic control (until released or if necessary); and
 6. A Rabun County Sheriff's Office or Patrol Supervisor will respond, files a Rabun County Sheriff's Office in-house accident report, and photograph the scene.
- B. Any deputy involved in a traffic accident will notify their immediate supervisor who in turn will notify the chain of command.

V. SAFETY RULES

- A. Occupant safety devices (seat belts) shall be used by all occupants while the vehicle is in operation.
- B. All emergency warning devices, communications equipment, the PA system, and video cameras (if so equipped) will be checked by the vehicle operator at the start of each assigned shift of duty.
- C. Expect the unexpected. Motorist often keep their vehicle closed with air conditioner/heaters running and, along with pedestrians, often use radios and other devices that prevent them from hearing emergency vehicles.
- D. Special caution must be taken when other emergency vehicles are responding to an incident using emergency equipment.
- E. Passing of another vehicle in a curve, on a hill, or when visibility is limited is prohibited.
- F. "Cutting through" a parking lot to circumvent an intersection is prohibited.
- G. When operating a vehicle under Code Two or Three conditions, special care must be exercised when approaching potentially dangerous areas.
- H. Before proceeding through a regulated intersection with a stop sign or red traffic signal, drivers will simultaneously use emergency lights and siren and bring their vehicle to a complete stop.
- I. When approaching an intersection governed by a green traffic signal, deputies will reduce their speed to the posted speed limit or lower (based upon traffic conditions) to insure there is no traffic or pedestrians in the intersections that may be in danger.
- J. When approaching a populated or high traffic area (i.e., school zone especially during opening/closing times; rush hour periods; shopping areas and residential neighborhoods; or a location where a special event or community activity is taking place), extreme driving caution will be used.
- K. No vehicle will be operated at a rate of speed or under weather and/or road conditions that may cause the driver to lose control of the vehicle or in a manner that does not allow for the proper safety of others.



By Order of the Sheriff: **Chad K. Nichols**
Sheriff, Rabun County