

ASSISTANCE TO MOTORISTS

STANDARD(S): NYSLEAP 47.6 & .47.8

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REFER TO: John E. Breese

I. OBJECTIVE:

To establish procedures for the rendering of assistance to those requiring help on the roadways of Seneca County.

II. POLICY:

It is the policy of the SCSO to offer reasonable assistance at all times to the motorist who appear to be in need of aid. Generally, this need is identifiable simply by the presence of a vehicle stopped along a roadway. Unless there is an urgent reason for the SCSO road patrol officer to be elsewhere, it is required that the officer stop to determine if assistance is required. In the event of the former, E-911 Center shall be contacted by radio to report the location of the stopped vehicle so that another patrol car can be dispatched for this purpose.

III. DETAILS:

It is expected that each member assigned to road patrol duties will become thoroughly familiar with the travel routes within and adjacent to Seneca County. Members should be aware of the placement of highway safety features and be able to recognize their removal or lack of operation. Members' familiarity with the patrol area should include a knowledge of the location of facilities able to provide medical assistance, fire suppression, vehicle fuel and/or repair, towing, and aid to travelers.

A. Directions - SCSO members shall freely and cheerfully provide information and directions upon request.

B. Disabled vehicles - Depending upon the location, it may be necessary to arrange for the immediate removal of a disabled vehicle in order to avoid traffic congestion and the possibility of a collision. If, in the officer's judgment, this must be accomplished prior to the arrival of a towing or repair service, the following procedures apply:

1. Provided there is no danger of personal injury, the vehicle may be moved manually to a safe location.
2. Under no circumstances will the patrol vehicle be used to push, tow or electrically jump start a disabled vehicle.
3. If quick removal is impossible, action to minimize the hazard should be

undertaken immediately with the strategic placement of the patrol vehicle with emergency lights flashing, the deployment of flares or traffic cones, and, if deemed necessary, the request for additional units to assist in traffic direction.

C. Towing or roadside repair - At the request of the motorist whose vehicle is disabled, a member of the SCSO will serve as a communications link to the 911 Center in order to obtain the needed service.

1. The motorist should be asked to designate a particular towing or repair service, and then notify the E-911 Center to contact that company at the motorist's request.
2. If the motorist has no preference for a service provider, the member should notify the E-911 Center to contact the appropriate service in rotation for that particular geographical location.
3. The member relaying the request for service shall advise the E-911 Center of the vehicle description, plate number, owner's name, operator's name (if different), the exact location of the vehicle, and any other information which will allow the provider to respond appropriately, e.g., wheel off, car in field, etc.
4. A request for towing or roadside repair is handled in the same manner as any other complaint with a "CR" number assigned enabling later coordination with the officer's report. Where no preference for a particular service is specified, the E-911 Center follows a rotational scheme using the computerized "Tow Truck System" that places the most recent provider at the rear of the succession.

D. Stranded motorists -An operator of a vehicle which has become disabled on the roadways of Seneca County will not be abandoned if exposed to a hazardous situation, taking into account traffic, location, time of day, weather conditions and other priorities. The SCSO member, at one's discretion, may transport a stranded motorist to the nearest convenient location where assistance may be obtained; however, the member should be certain that assistance is available before departing the scene or leaving the motorist at another location.

CAUTION: Members who are about to render assistance to a motorist whose vehicle is apparently disabled should be alert to the following possibilities:

1. The motorist has possession of the vehicle without the owner's authorization;
2. The vehicle is unsafe to operate;
3. The motorist is unlicensed;
4. The motorist is incapable of operating the vehicle safely, or
5. Occupants of the vehicle have engaged in recent criminal activity.

E. Vehicle fires - SCSO patrol cars are equipped with dry chemical fire extinguishers for use by members in suppressing small fires; however, upon encountering a vehicle fire along the roadway, the member should:

1. Immediately contact the E-911 Center and request that the appropriate fire service be notified, giving the location, type of vehicle, nature of cargo (if any) and whatever other details would assure an adequate response;
2. Determine if there are any occupants;
3. Insure that any observers are at a safe distance; and then,
4. If it can be done safely, attempt to suppress the fire.

Upon arrival of the fire service, the member shall relinquish control of the scene to the senior fire official but remain until the emergency is resolved satisfactorily or until relieved by competent authority.

F. Medical Assistance

1. Stranded motorists in need of medical attention should be administered first aid, if possible, consistent with the member's training and experience. If conditions are beyond the capability of the member, the E-911 Center should be requested to have the appropriate emergency medical service respond. The member shall remain at the scene to assist until the emergency has been resolved.

A member encountering a motorist whose vehicle is not disabled, but who is ill or injured, or who is carrying a passenger who is ill or injured, shall offer to summon medical assistance and/or to render first aid consistent with one's training and experience, pending the arrival of medical assistance. A member may also offer, if appropriate, to show or lead the vehicle, without using emergency lights or siren, to the closest emergency medical facility, providing this action appears to be the most expedient under the circumstances.

MEMBERS SHALL NOT ESCORT A CIVILIAN VEHICLE IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.

G. Vehicle lock-outs -Occasionally members of the SCSO will be asked to assist a motorist who has inadvertently locked his car, leaving the keys inside. Patrol vehicles carry devices which will often open a car door; however, these devices are to be used only in accordance with the following procedure:

1. Upon becoming aware of a lock-out, the member shall first verify ownership of the vehicle and the operator's authority to have possession of it.
2. In the event the operator makes such a request, before any actual attempt is made to open a locked door the purpose to unlock said vehicle must be either for the reason of a child locked in the vehicle or for obtaining medication(s) inside the vehicle or the member may offer to request the assistance of a locksmith. Situations and circumstances may arise which the member deems as an emergency or dangerous condition not outlined in this section. In those instances, the member has the discretion to perform such services in accordance with paragraph 1, 3 and 4 of this section.
3. An SCSO member is not to attempt to open a locked car door unless fully confident that it can be done without causing damage to the locking mechanism or the car's electrical system. Under unfamiliar circumstances, where the member is unsure of one's ability, one may offer to relay a request for a locksmith to be called to the scene.

4. If the SCSO member determines that the request meets with SCSO protocol outlined in subsections 1-3 the SCSO member will prior to executing the unlock, complete and fully execute a “Vehicle Entry Authorization” (SCSO-LE-003), which after completed will be forwarded to the duty Sergeant for filing.

5. Also, as a matter of policy, SCSO members may be requested to assist with entry to vehicles within the Villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo in the event their respective police department personnel are engaged in other matters and not available. The SCSO member will contact the respective agency in attempt to determine the timeframe when they would be able to render assistance to the motorist. If the member is satisfied the entry is authorized per SCSO protocol and the time frame availability of the respective agency is deemed by the member to be too lengthy, the member is authorized to affect such entry by following the procedures set forth in subsection(s) 1 – 4 above.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. If the vehicle is legally parked along a Seneca County roadway, or on private property which is generally used for parking by the public and to arrange for the delivery of extra keys would pose an unusual hardship for the operator and at the specific request of the operator, the SCSO member may attempt to assist the operator in gaining entrance to the vehicle provided the member complies with subsections 1, 3 and 4 above.