

The speed and equipment used in an emergency response will be determined by the officer(s) involved, within the guidelines of this procedure, unless otherwise directed by a supervisor. Officers are expected to use good judgment when responding to any calls for service. Speeds will be limited unless a life-threatening situation exists, and traffic conditions permit a higher speed. Officers will operate vehicles with due care and regard for the safety of other persons.

### **State Statute**

RCW 46.61.035 addresses emergency driving and states:

The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call, or 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 set forth in this section, but subject to the conditions herein stated:

- ❖ The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle may:
  1. Park or stand, irrespective of the provisions of this chapter;
  2. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;
  3. Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as he/she does not endanger life or property;
  4. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions
- ❖ The exceptions herein granted to an authorized emergency vehicle shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of visual signals meeting the requirements of RCW 46.37.190. (For practical purposes use of audible signals will also be required).
- ❖ 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, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his/her reckless disregard for the safety of others.

### **Routine Calls for Service**

Where no emergency exists (i.e., routine calls for service), officers will proceed without the use of emergency equipment and in compliance with all traffic regulations.

### **Emergency Calls for Service**

Officers are expected to use good judgment when responding to any incident. A decision to respond to an emergency call must be reported to the Communications Center by the responding officer(s).

Officers responding to an emergency call shall evaluate the net benefit (giving due regard to the risk) of exercising the emergency vehicle privileges set forth in RCW 46.61.035. The following factors shall be considered by every officer when responding to an emergency call:

- ❖ Seriousness of the crime and its relationship to community safety
- ❖ Safety of the public in the area
- ❖ Safety of the responding officer and other officers in the area
- ❖ Time of day

- ❖ Visibility and visual obstructions
- ❖ Volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic
- ❖ Location, such as school zones, residential or commercial areas
- ❖ Weather conditions, including rain, wind, snow, ice and blinding sunlight
- ❖ Road conditions
- ❖ Speeds involved and posted speeds in the pursuit area
- ❖ The capabilities of the driver and police vehicle

When responding to an emergency call, Officers shall only exercise the privileges set forth in RCW 46.61.035 when the need outweighs the risk. Officers shall drive no faster than reasonably necessary to safely arrive at the scene when responding to an emergency call.

For a crime or situation in progress, which is not life threatening or injury threatening, or in response to injury traffic accidents, the officer is authorized to proceed using emergency lights and siren when exercising the privileges set forth in RCW 46.61.035. The officer shall not proceed through intersections against traffic control devices without first activating emergency lights and siren and coming to a complete stop until all other traffic has yielded to the emergency lights and siren.

For a life threatening situation, or an officer's call for help, the officer shall proceed as quickly and safely as possible using emergency lights and siren, while remaining within the statutory requirements for operation of an emergency vehicle.

### **Use of Emergency Equipment**

There may be circumstances where the utilization of emergency equipment may not be desirable. An example of this would be when a patrol vehicle is in the immediate area of an in-progress call and the officers' use of the emergency equipment may alert the suspect to the approaching police. **If an officer chooses not to use the police vehicle's emergency equipment, the officer will obey all traffic regulations.**

The *Opticom* system will be used to assist officers while operating a police vehicle, equipped with emergency lights and siren, to safely clear intersections during responses to emergency calls for service. The use of the *Opticom* is restricted to emergency responses in accordance with RCW 46.61.035 and all other emergency response provisions of this policy.

The use of the *Opticom* system does not release the officer of the responsibility for the safe operation of a police vehicle with due regard for the safety of all persons. Police officers will first successfully complete training prior to being allowed to use the *Opticom* system.

### **Supervisor Responsibility**

Supervisors are expected to monitor Police Radio activity and when necessary, upgrade or downgrade the response to a call based on available information.

### **NORCOM Responsibility**

NORCOM personnel are expected to relay all pertinent information to responding units so responding officers and supervisors may exercise good judgment in their decision as to the level of emergency, or lack thereof, in a call for service.