



**Baltimore County Sheriff's Office
Towson, Maryland**

**Sheriff
R. Jay Fisher**

General Order

**Subject:
Agency Vehicle Operation**

**Effective Date
09/01/12**

**Number
B-4**

Purpose:

To establish policy and procedure for operating Sheriff's Office vehicles, both under normal and emergency conditions.

Contents:

- I. Definitions**
- II. Policy**
- III. General Operating Procedure**
- IV. Emergency Vehicle Operation**
- V. Pursuit of a Motor Vehicle**
- VI. Responding to Calls for Service**

I. Definitions

- A. Emergency Vehicle** - Vehicles as defined in Sections 11-118 and 21-106 of the Maryland Transportation Article and includes all Sheriff's Office vehicles.
- B. Supervisor** - A sworn member the rank of Sergeant or above, or the senior ranking member on duty.
- C. Pursuit Driving** - An active attempt by a member operating an authorized emergency motor vehicle and utilizing emergency lights and siren to apprehend one or more occupants of another moving motor vehicle when the member reasonably believes the driver of the fleeing vehicle is aware of the member's attempt to stop the vehicle and is resisting apprehension by maintaining excessive speed, increasing speed or using evasive tactics.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Baltimore County Sheriff's Office to encourage its members to be professional, courteous, defensive drivers. Additionally, the operation of Sheriff's Office vehicles under emergency circumstances requires the consideration of two basic issues. First, a procedure must be developed to provide an expedited response to emergency situations. Secondly, consideration must be given to the hazards involved in an expedited response. Responding to an emergency situation does not justify endangering motorists, pedestrians or fellow members. Maryland law does not relieve the operator of an emergency vehicle from driving with due regard for the safety of all persons. This policy is designed to protect members and the public from the hazards involved in the operation of vehicles in emergency situations and attempts to establish a balance between a quick and safe response to emergencies.

General Order B-4
Agency Vehicle Operation

III. General Vehicle Operation

All members operating Sheriffs Office vehicles shall:

- A.** Before driving an office vehicle, members must inspect the vehicle for damage and contraband. Additionally, members shall check the operation of all safety equipment (lights, seat belts, etc.) and must check the operation of all emergency equipment (siren, emergency lights). Members discovering damage, contraband or defects that may impair the safe operation of the vehicle must report same immediately to his/her supervisor. The vehicle should not be operated until any deficiency has been corrected.
- B.** Drive defensively at all times.
- C.** Obey all motor vehicle laws.
- D.** Not operate a vehicle in excess of a reasonable and prudent speed for existing conditions.
- E.** Make all reasonable actions to avoid or prevent an accident.
- F.** Ensure the use of furnished restraint systems by all in the vehicle.
- G.** Transportation of juveniles will be in conjunction with existing state laws. Juveniles under age 8 are required to utilize an approved child safety seat. If the juvenile is under age 8, but is taller than 4' 9", and/or weighs more than 65 pounds the juvenile may be restrained by lap belt and shoulder harness. The member shall contact a road squad Sergeant and request he/she respond to the scene with a child safety seat.
- H.** Take home vehicles shall be utilized for official use only. Transport of individuals and family members off duty is forbidden. **EXCEPTION:** Command members Lieutenant and above.
- I.** Properly park the vehicle, using the parking or emergency brake and properly turning the front wheels inward when on an incline.
- J.** Avoid parking vehicles in hazardous or restricted areas, when practical. If this must occur, emergency lights or warning flashers must be used.
- K.** Will not leave the engine of a vehicle running and/or the keys in the ignition while the vehicle is unattended. When it is necessary to leave a vehicle unattended, except in an emergency, all doors will be locked.
- L.** Yield the right-of-way, at all times, to Fire Department and Police Department vehicles on emergency duty.

General Order B-4

Agency Vehicle Operation

- M. Will not drive over any fire hose unless given permission to do so by a member of the Fire Department.
- N. Will not use an agency vehicle to tow or push another vehicle, except in extreme emergency and with supervisor's approval.
- O. Passenger Restrictions:

Members operating an office vehicle may not permit persons other than authorized office personnel to ride in or drive the vehicle except:
 - 1. In the performance of their duties;
 - 2. In conjunction with authorized office programs; or
 - 3. As otherwise authorized by a Command member, Lieutenant or above.
 - 4. The 911 Center (Central Communications Center) shall be notified whenever a member transports juveniles or a person of the opposite sex. The member shall notify the dispatcher of his/her mileage when beginning and ending transport. Members shall also indicate the number of persons in transport, and the destination.
- P. Members transporting prisoners shall refer to General Order B-3 *Prisoner Transportation* for proper procedures.
- Q. Whenever a K-9 Deputy leaves his/her dog unattended in an Agency vehicle the member shall ensure that the vehicle is adequately ventilated and secured.

IV. Emergency Vehicle Operating Procedures

- A. When operating an emergency vehicle during an emergency response or escort, the primary concern of the operator of the vehicle must be the safety of other motorists, pedestrians and fellow members. Members are given a qualified privilege by state law from complying with traffic regulations while operating an emergency vehicle with appropriate emergency equipment activated. However, it is the policy of the Sheriff's Office that during an emergency response or escort members must stop at all intersections where their direction of movement is controlled by a stop signal or stop sign. After stopping, members may proceed when it appears such movement can be made safely. Members are not relieved of the responsibility of driving with due regard for the safety of all persons and are **not** protected from the consequences of failing to exercise reasonable care under these circumstances despite the operation of emergency equipment.

General Order B-4
Agency Vehicle Operation

B. Vehicle Escorts:

Prior to commencing an emergency escort, members must advise the operator of the vehicle being escorted of the Sheriff's Office policy of stopping at all intersections where the direction of movement is controlled by a stop signal or stop sign. Additionally, members must notify the 911 Center (Central Communications Center) upon starting and completing any emergency escort.

1. Ambulances and Other Emergency Vehicles

- a.** Members may, if requested, escort ambulances or other emergency vehicles in emergency situations under the following circumstances:
- b.** The operator of the ambulance or fire apparatus is unfamiliar with route to the destination; or
- c.** The emergency equipment of an ambulance or fire apparatus is inoperative.

2. Privately-Owned Vehicles

Members may escort privately owned vehicles when such action is required to prevent the loss of life or serious injury and only when:

- a.** The calling for an ambulance is impractical; and
- b.** The injured person cannot be transferred to the Sheriff's Office vehicle without aggravating his/her condition.

3. Prisoners Transported by Ambulances

Members assigned to follow ambulances transporting prisoners to the hospital may not exceed the response code of the transporting ambulance. Additionally, members must advise the operator of the ambulance of the Sheriff's Office policy of stopping at all intersections where the direction of movement is controlled by a stop signal or stop sign.

4. Funerals and Special Escort Details

Funeral and other special escort details will be at the direction of the Sheriff, the Undersheriff, or the Chief Deputy.

C. An Administrative Report Fmm 125 is to be completed for any emergency response or vehicle escort.

General Order B-4
Agency Vehicle Operation

V. Pursuit of a Motor Vehicle

- A.** Members are prohibited from engaging in pursuit driving. The Sheriff's Office recognizes that it is better to allow a suspect to temporarily escape apprehension than jeopardize the safety of citizens and members in a vehicular pursuit.
- B.** If an attempted vehicle stop evolves into a pursuit, members must:
 - 1.** Terminate their immediate effort to stop the vehicle; and
 - 2.** Notify the 911 Center (Central Communications Center) of the vehicle's description, direction of travel, and of the charges.
- C.** Other law enforcement agencies that may operate in Baltimore County have separate policies regarding pursuit driving. Members may provide assistance to other agencies in Baltimore County during pursuits. However, this assistance may not involve any pursuit driving.
- D.** Ramming - The intentional striking of a suspect's vehicle by a Sheriff's Office vehicle is prohibited.
- E.** An Administrative Report Form 125 is to be completed if assistance is provided to another agency engaged in a pursuit.

VI. Responding to Calls for Service

- A.** The Baltimore County Police Department is the primary agency responsible for responding to calls for law enforcement services in Baltimore County. Members are expected to respond to incidents and provide assistance to the Police Department in the following circumstances:
 - 1.** The proximity of the member to an incident scene may prevent the loss of life or serious injury to any person; or
 - 2.** There are insufficient police units available to respond to the incident.
- B.** Members **must** respond to any Signal 13 (officer needs assistance) occurring in the police precinct where the member is located regardless of the number of police units responding until they are advised there are sufficient units on the scene.
- C.** Members may remain on any incident scene only until sufficient units of the agency handling the investigation have arrived. Members must relay any and all information gathered at the scene to the investigating agency after which time they are to resume their normal duties.
- D.** Upon responding to calls for bombs and bomb threats ensure that you turn off radio transmitters, any personal electronic equipment that transmits a signal (e.g., cellular phones, pagers, etc.) and activate the GPS/KDT "kill switch" 500 feet

General Order B-4
Agency Vehicle Operation

from the location of the threat. Ensure that GPS/KDT "kill switch" is inactivated when the call is complete and record the times that the device was activated and inactivated on the daily activity sheet.

- E. An Administrative Report Foml 125 is to be completed if a member responds to a call for service or a Signal 13.

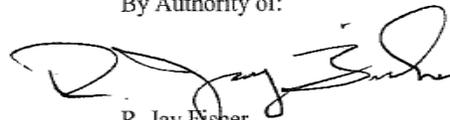
Rescissions

Remove from manuals/files and rescind:
General Order B-4, Agency Vehicle Operation, dated 03/22/10

Distribution

Sworn Members

By Authority of:



R. Jay Fisher
Sheriff