

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT STUDY GUIDE 2010

SECTION 5



This study guide is designed to provide the law enforcement Explorer with basic principles. The guide is not all inclusive, and does not delineate specific techniques that must be used. The focus of this guide is to provide principals that are flexible and adaptable to various law enforcement situations.

Following the basic principals in this guide should allow the law enforcement Explorer to successfully handle various law enforcement training activities safely and professionally.

The study guide was developed through the cooperation of International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.



SECTION FIVE

GETTING TO THE SCENE QUICKLY AND SAFELY

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SYLLABUS

COURSE TITLE: GETTING TO THE SCENE QUICKLY AND SAFELY

LENGTH OF PRESENTATION:

LECTURE	LAB	PE	TOTAL	PROGRAM
1:00			1:00	

DESCRIPTION:

This course of instruction introduces the student to the hazards involved in responding to emergency situations with particular emphasis on responding to traffic accidents. The student will become familiar with different parking positions, which provide accessibility to equipment as well as optimum protection of the scene, and need for recognition of and compliance with individual state law and departmental policy.

TERMINAL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Given a presentation encompassing tactics of responding to and arriving at an emergency scene quickly and safely, as well as protection of that scene, the student will identify the proper actions and responsibilities required of a Law Enforcement officer.

ENABLING PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify the three components/equipment required to constitute an “emergency” vehicle.
2. Identify safety factors that must be considered when responding to motor vehicle accidents.
3. Identify responsibilities of the officer once at the accident scene.
4. Given an accident scene scenario, the student will identify the proper location to park the patrol vehicle for optimum safety and control of the scene. (This EPO to be discussed in class and demonstrated during the PE, which is in the Diagramming lesson plan.)

STUDENT SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. Take notes as desired
2. Participate in class discussion

Instructor Guide

METHODOLOGIES:

1. Lecture
2. Discussions

TRAINING AIDS:

1. Instructor:
 - a. Classroom and lesson plan.
 - b. Magnetic props (cars, people, flares).
 - c. Overhead monitor, transparencies, computer program.
2. Student:
 - a. Note taking materials.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

NONE

Outline of Instruction

I. INTRODUCTION

A. ESTABLISH RAPPORT AND OPENING STATEMENT

Responding to and handling emergency situations such as traffic accidents is a particularly hazardous aspect of the law enforcement officer's duties. Many people are killed or injured each year through traffic accidents with law enforcement personnel responding to emergency situations. More law enforcement officers die in traffic related incidents than any other work related situation. Therefore the first priority must be to get to the scene safely.

In addition to the responsibility of arriving at the scene safely, the investigating officer or the first one on the scene is responsible for the protection of the scene and all individuals and evidence in that area. It is the responsibility of the law enforcement officer to be familiar with the local (state) laws as well as departmental policy with regards to traffic regulations and the emergency response to any given situation or incident. It must be remembered that YOU are responsible for the safety of all individuals on the road and for your actions in executing your duties.

B. LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW

Given a presentation encompassing tactics of responding to and arriving at an emergency scene quickly and safely, as well as protection of the scene, the student will identify the proper actions and responsibilities required of a Law Enforcement officer.

II. PRESENTATION

A. EPO #1: IDENTIFY THE THREE COMPONENTS/EQUIPMENT REQUIRED TO CONSTITUTE AN "EMERGENCY" VEHICLE.

1. Law Enforcement officers are governed by the same traffic codes as any other individual on the road. Due to the unique nature of Law Enforcement duties and responsibilities, exceptions are usually granted in the response to emergency situations, such as motor vehicle accidents. Remember that these exceptions are a privilege contingent upon the exercise of "due regard" on the part of the officer for the safety of others. They are not rights to violate traffic laws. The designation of Emergency Response status for Law Enforcement vehicles can vary from state to state. It is imperative that the

individual officer become familiar with the requirements in his or her area.

2. In order to receive the right of way during response to emergency situations, other operators must be able to recognize the Law Enforcement vehicle and understand the intentions of the officer, i.e., the desire to pass. This requires the use of certain equipment, which is generally understood to mean, when activated, that there is an emergency and this vehicle (the patrol car) is in an expedite mode.
 - a. Most jurisdictions require at least three components of equipment be activated when responding to an emergency:
 - 1) EMERGENCY OVERHEADS/LIGHT BAR (visible 360 degrees). (Some agencies and jurisdictions do not consider "Kojak" lights to be Emergency response equipment.)
 - 2) HEADLIGHT ACTIVATED (some headlights may be wig-wag equipped).
 - 3) SIREN ACTIVATED
 - b. When at the accident scene, certain equipment must be activated to alert other motorists of the situation and any dangers. This serves to also protect the scene and any victims and evidence.
 - 1) EMERGENCY OVERHEAD LIGHTS. These may be amber caution flashers on the light bar, or the entire light system on the overhead light bar. It is acceptable in some jurisdictions to have only the rear light system activated if you are parked on the same side of the road as the accident. If in doubt or you are at all concerned about visibility, activate the entire light bar.
 - 2) EMERGENCY FOUR WAY FLASHERS - This helps to increase your visibility to others, especially at night or in poor visibility area such as a dangerous curve.

B. EPO #2: IDENTIFY SAFETY FACTORS THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED WHEN RESPONDING TO MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS.

1. Responding to a motor vehicle accident, as with any emergency response situation, can illicit certain emotional and physiological responses in the officer. The officers' attention may be diverted to thinking about what they will find at the scene, what tools they may

need, listening to radio traffic. There may also be an increase in pulse, respiration and blood pressure. These normal reactions can result in a narrowing of peripheral vision, known as tunnel vision, which prevents the officer from being fully aware of his or her surroundings. Keep in mind that the sights and sounds of emergency equipment may trigger the same effects in motorists as well as momentary panic and confusion.

2. One of the easiest ways to assist an officer and to help minimize his or her difficulty in responding to an accident scene is, knowing the area. Be aware of any detours, shortcuts and areas and periods of congestion.
3. States may have laws or regulations requiring motorists to respond to emergency vehicles in a certain manner. *(These vary from state to state, and even if your jurisdiction has such requirements, it is always best not to expect other motorists to do what they are supposed to. EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!!!). The most typical requirements include:
 - a. PULL TO THE RIGHT AND LET THE EMERGENCY VEHICLE PASS.
 - b. STOP FOR EMERGENCY VEHICLE.
 - c. SIGNAL INTENTION AND PULL INTO A NON - OCCUPIED TRAFFIC LANE OR ROAD SHOULDER.
4. Some of the unexpected behavior that may be encountered when responding to a scene with full emergency equipment activated includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. REFUSING TO MOVE FROM YOUR TRAFFIC LANE.
 - b. STOPPING SUDDENLY IN FRONT OF YOU.
 - c. PULLING INTO YOUR LANE.
 - d. VEHICLE IN PASSING LANE PULLING ONTO MEDIAN AND STOPPING.
 - e. CHANGING LANES WITHOUT LOOKING FOR OTHER TRAFFIC.

It is best to wait until you are absolutely sure what the other motorists are going to do before executing your pass.

5. Other factors to consider when responding to an emergency include the effectiveness of your siren and lights. There are many situations that reduce the effectiveness of a siren and light bar.
 - a. NOISES WITHIN OTHER VEHICLE (air conditioning, radios, people talking and improved insulation of vehicles).
 - b. PATROL VEHICLE OUT RUNNING SIREN - Be aware that a vehicle outruns a siren at approximately 55 miles an hour. You may get to the object in front of you BEFORE your siren does, i.e. before the person realizes you are approaching from behind.

NOTE: As you approach the vehicle, watch the operators' reaction. Observe if they appear to notice you. **DO NOT GET RIGHT UP ON THEIR REAR BUMPER.** THIS IS JUST INVITING A PROBLEM. Remember, you do no good to anyone if you get into an accident. ARRIVE ALIVE!

- c. MORE THAN ONE PATROL CAR RESPONDING:
 - 1) Different siren tones.
 - 2) Special care for second vehicle at intersections.

C. EPO #3: IDENTIFY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICER ONCE AT THE ACCIDENT SCENE.

1. Upon arriving at the scene, the officer must take certain precautions to protect him or herself, the scene, and any victims or evidence. These responsibilities will be covered in greater detail in Accident Scene Procedures, however, it is necessary to review some of the basic concepts and procedures here.
2. It should be noted that some agencies may have S.O.Ps regarding the particular use of a patrol vehicle in the protection of an accident scene. It is incumbent on the officer to be aware of those guidelines.
3. PARK TO PROTECT THE SCENE - Park the patrol vehicle so as to protect any victims who may be in the roadway or still in the accident vehicle. These people should not be removed until Emergency Medical Services arrive or the scene becomes unsafe.
 - a. Gear shift in park

- b. Set the Emergency Brake
 - c. Emergency lights activated to alert oncoming traffic in one or both directions
 - d. Set out flares, cones or reflective triangles to maneuver traffic around or away from the accident. Be sure not to place flares downhill of potential fire or explosive situations such as spilled fuel.
 - e. If accident is around blind curve or crest of a hill, put out flares before passing the view obstruction.
4. PROPERTY DAMAGE ACCIDENTS - the officer's responsibility is still to protect the scene; trying to create the least amount of hazard to individuals at the scene as well as oncoming traffic. Place warning devices far enough back to provide motorists time to react properly.
- a. If the scene permits, park the patrol car legally, on the same side of the highway as the accident.
 - b. Set out traffic flares, cones or triangles to divert traffic. Be careful not to place flares downhill of possible fuel leaks.
5. PARK TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBILITY TO EQUIPMENT - If the situation allows, it is helpful to have your patrol vehicle parked in such a manner as to allow quick and easy access to the tools and equipment that will be needed. There will be times, however, when this may not be possible. As the first responding officer on the scene, you will have to make the decision as to where the priority will lay. Equipment which is necessary to have accessible includes:
- a. Radio - particularly if you do not have a portable or you are in an area that requires a strong signal.
 - b. Flares – they will need to be replaced in 20 or 40 minute increments or may be damaged or knocked away.
 - c. First aid kit
 - d. Fire extinguisher
 - e. Emergency blanket
 - f. Measuring devices (accident investigation equipment)

6. KEEP THE ACCIDENT SCENE FROM BECOMING WORSE –
 - a. Place warning devices far enough back from the scene to provide time for motorists to react.
 - 1) Bridges
 - 2) Curves in roadway
 - 3) Dips in roadway
 - a. Avoid covering emergency lights with open trunk. Get in, get what is needed, and get out.

D. EPO #4: GIVEN AN ACCIDENT SCENE SCENARIO, THE STUDENT WILL DEMONSTRATE THE PROPER LOCATION TO PARK THE PATROL VEHICLE FOR OPTIMUM SAFETY AND CONTROL OF THE SCENE. (This EPO will be discussed in class and demonstrated during the PE.)

III. SUMMARY

A. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

1. EPO #1: Identify the components/equipment required to constitute an “emergency” vehicle.
2. EPO #2: Identify safety factors that must be considered when responding to emergency situations.
3. EPO #3: Identify responsibilities of the officer once at the accident scene.
4. EPO #4: Given an accident scene scenario, the student will demonstrate the proper location to park the patrol vehicle for optimum safety and control of the scene.

Getting to and securing an emergency/accident scene is an integral part of most law enforcement jobs. It is imperative that the responding officer(s) recognize the emotional and psychological effects that may be encountered by both the officers and the public. The responding officer(s) must be aware of and prepared to act accordingly to prevent “becoming part of the problem”.

Once at the scene, the officer(s) must make rapid decisions as to vehicle placement with respect to protection of life and property and the accessibility of equipment.

B. REVIEW OF TEACHING POINTS

REFERENCES

Unknown. Getting to the Scene Safely and Quickly. Lesson Plan, Course 7027, Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, Glynco, Ga. Original date and author unknown.

Baker, J. Stannard and Fricke Lynn B. (1986). The Traffic-Accident Investigation Manual, At-Scene Investigation and Technical Follow-up. Evanston, Il: Northwestern University Traffic Institute.