


<b>FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>  <b>GENERAL ORDER</b>	SUBJECT: <b>RESPONSE DRIVING</b>		NUMBER: <b>503</b>
	EFFECTIVE DATE: August 12, 2022	REVIEW: August 2025	
RESPONSIBLE ENTITY: CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMY			<input type="checkbox"/> New Directive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Replaces: 501.1 <input type="checkbox"/> Revised
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS	CALEA: 41.2.1, 41.3.3	VLEPSC: OPR.01.01	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines for all officers when making the determination to response drive.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Fairfax County Police Department that under certain emergency circumstances, and in other situations where the preservation of human life and control of a potential crime scene are paramount, sworn officers are permitted to operate Department vehicles beyond the traditional limits of normal driving. The Code of Virginia requires officers to drive with due regard for the safety of others, thus except in circumstances clearly beyond the operator’s control, officers are strictly responsible for the manner in which they operate a police vehicle.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Controlled Intersection: Any location of intersecting streets or highways where vehicular traffic is controlled by signal lights or signs.
- B. Normal Driving: That driving which relates to the maintenance of vehicle speed concurrent with the normal flow of traffic, the obedience to motor vehicle laws and requirement of posted vehicular control signs, and the practice of being a courteous, responsible driver.
- C. Response Driving: Driving in an expeditious manner in a County-owned police vehicle to the location of an emergency or to apprehend violators of the law, in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Va. Code Ann. [§ 46.2-920](#), to include the usage of emergency lighting equipment, siren, and having due regard for the safety of persons and property.

#### IV. GENERAL RESPONSE DRIVING

A. **Response Driving:** Police calls for service are often dynamic and constantly evolving; thus, police driving responses should be governed by the nature of situation, the amount of information a call for service or complainant provides, and the reasonably perceived credibility of that information. Preservation of life, property, and evidence is of paramount importance, hence, officers and detectives may response drive to any call for service where there is (1) a known and articulable threat to the life or safety of another and/or (2) to preserve the integrity of a crime scene. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. All Priority 1 calls either in progress or just occurred.
2. Active CPR calls.
3. Domestic violence incidents in progress.
4. Persons presenting a threat of immediate harm to themselves or others.
5. In-progress destruction of property crimes.
6. Assaults (of any nature) in progress, and
7. Motor vehicle accidents with injury and/or entrapment.

B. **Modified Response:** Officers are expected to modify their response level to the location of a call depending upon the dynamic nature of the call, seriousness of the circumstances, and variable roadway conditions to include traffic congestion and weather. Officers should consider and be able to articulate both response driving and normal driving measures as they approach the scene of a call for service, based upon the fluctuating degrees of imminent danger to any person, as more information becomes available.

1. **Initial Response and Arrival:** For any emergency, any officer assigned to or near the location may response drive and advise the dispatcher that they are enroute. Arriving officers should update responding officers in a timely manner of the circumstances as they become known and recommend slowing or cancelling response driving as necessary. All responding officers that are told to slow or cancel their response shall resume normal driving in a safe and expeditious manner.

C. **Death or Serious Bodily Injury Investigations:** In situations where there is a known or reasonably anticipated high probability of death or serious bodily injury to any person, officers should make efforts to arrive at the location in an expeditious manner and as safe as possible. All Department employees should ensure that any relayed information over the radio or other electronic means of communication as it pertains to a call for service are accurate, timely, and contains known and verified information so responding officers can make informed decisions about the need to response drive.

- D. **Emergency Equipment:** In accordance with Va. Code Ann. [§ 46.2-920](#), response driving shall require the use of full emergency equipment (lights and sirens). Whenever approaching a controlled intersection or other location where there is a reasonable possibility of vehicle collisions, officers shall be granted an exemption as explained in Va. Code Ann. [§ 46.2-920](#), when utilizing their emergency equipment lights and:
1. Sounding the vehicle siren, **or**
  2. Where not utilizing the siren, slows the vehicle down to a speed reasonable for existing conditions and yields the right of way to the driver of approaching vehicle or vehicle entering the intersection from any direction, or, where required for safety purposes, brings the vehicle to a complete stop prior to proceeding with due regard for the safety of all persons and property.
- E. **Officer Safety:** Where certain crimes in progress (ex: burglary in progress) necessitate discontinuing use of the siren for officer safety purposes while approaching the scene of the incident, officers may discontinue or intermittently use their emergency equipment but must follow all traffic laws.
- F. **Restrictions:** While response driving, officers shall not be distracted by personal or issued electronic communication devices. Vehicle operators and passengers shall wear seat belts whenever a police vehicle is in motion.
1. **Transports:** Officers shall not response drive while transporting a prisoner.

V. **RESPONSE DRIVING VEHICLES**

- A. **Response Driving Vehicles:** Only those Department vehicles with a “Response Driving Rated Vehicle” or “Pursuit Driving Rated Vehicle” sticker affixed to the driver’s door frame may be used for response driving purposes by officers. All other vehicles must be operated in accordance with [FCPD General Order 502](#), Normal Vehicle Operations.
- B. **Truck Chassis Vehicles:** Only those officers authorized by the Chief of Police and who have received training from the Criminal Justice Academy may engage in response driving while operating a Department Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) or truck chassis platform vehicle in accordance with their training. The Academy shall maintain a list of all officers who are currently certified to use such vehicles for response driving purposes.

VI. TRAINING

All sworn officers shall receive Criminal Justice Academy emergency vehicle operation training every six (6) years. Where an officer does not receive training within six years, that officer shall not engage in response driving.

VII. LEGAL REFERENCES

- A. [Va. Code Ann. § 46.2-920](#); Certain vehicles exempt from regulations in certain situations; exceptions and additional requirements.

General Order 503 becomes effective on the above date and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subjects.

ISSUED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Quinn", written over a horizontal line.

Chief of Police

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Bell", written over a horizontal line.

County Executive