Traffic Control

Introduction

Officers responding to traffic collisions, disasters or civil disturbances may be called upon to perform traffic control. Therefore, it is important to be prepared for the job by having a basic knowledge of proper traffic control techniques. Uniform signals are necessary to let people know what you want them to do. You must pay attention to drivers of vehicles and pedestrians to ensure that they are given an opportunity to move.

Your primary objective while directing traffic is to effectively communicate to drivers and pedestrians what you want them to do. If they don't understand you, they will have trouble and so will you. The result is a potential hazard. The instructions that follow are concerned only with how to make your meaning clear to motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. Officers should familiarize themselves with the basic traffic control signals listed in this bulletin to assure uniformity. Equally important, the gestures should be made where the driver or pedestrian can see them from a distance.

I. Directing Traffic By Hand

While directing traffic you want people to know that you are the one who will tell them what to do. You must also know how to stop, start, and direct turning movements by using gestures alone. At major intersections of multi-lane roadways, it is helpful to work with a partner. In such cases it is imperative to constantly let each other know what you are doing and coordinate your efforts. Miscommunication could lead to tragic results.

II. Stopping Traffic

(Two motions are used)

Point with your arm and finger and look straight at the driver you want to stop. Hold this point until he sees you. Raise your pointing hand (but not your whole arm) so that the palm is toward the driver. Hold this until he stops.
III. Starting Traffic

Position your body so that your side is toward the vehicle or pedestrian that you want to proceed. Point with your arm and finger(s) toward the car you want to start. Hold this position until you gain the person’s attention. With the palm up, swing your hand up and over to your chin. Bend the arm at the elbow only. Use the same signals to give the go-ahead to slow and timid drivers.

IV. Left Turn

Directing a vehicle to make a left turn will require traffic in the lane or lanes through which the turning vehicle must cross to be stopped. If the vehicle waiting to make the left turn is
approaching from your left, give the stop signal with your right arm to stop traffic in the lane through which the turning driver is to pass. Hold the stop signal with your right arm and give the turning gesture with your left arm. If the vehicle approaches from your right, position your body so that you face the direction the car awaiting the turn is to go. Stop traffic with your right arm and give the turning gesture with your left arm.

V. Signaling Aids

The whistle is used to gain the attention of drivers and pedestrians. It is used as follows:

1. **One long** blast with a STOP signal.
2. **Two short blasts** with the Go signal.
3. **Several short blasts** to gain the attention of a driver or pedestrian who fails to respond to a given signal.

A flashlight can be used to stop traffic in an emergency. To stop traffic, slowly shine the flashlight at arm's length across the path of the approaching car. The beam from the flashlight strikes the pavement as an elongated spot of light that can be seen easily by the motorist. After the motorist has stopped, give arm signals in the usual manner.

**VI. General Rules for Smooth Operation**

Improve the continuity and safety of the traffic flow by applying the following rules:

1. Maintain a constant scan of your surroundings and be prepared to move out of harm's way at any moment. Also watch pedestrians carefully and maintain positive control of them.
2. Use uniform signals and gestures.
3. Try to break traffic at natural gaps whenever possible.
4. When no normal break appears in the line of traffic you wish to stop, try to create a break behind a slow moving vehicle such as a large truck.
5. Make sure all traffic in all directions is at a complete stop before switching directions or reactivating signal lights. Initiate eye contact with approaching drivers to be certain they see and understand your directions.
6. Keep stragglers and daydreamers alert. Three sharp blasts on your whistle will usually wake them up.
7. Don't get excited. Remain calm.
8. Don't leave your position to confront a driver.
9. Look cheerful. Be courteous, but firm. Don't argue with drivers or pedestrians. You will be surprised at the level cooperation you will receive.
10. Develop CONFIDENCE

11. Do not leave the assignment until the situation is stabilized i.e. signal lights are functioning properly, blockage is removed from roadway or 4-way stop signs have been set up for long term signal repairs.

**Summary**

While conducting traffic control remember that your safety and that of pedestrians and motorists is most important. This bulletin contains techniques and suggestions that can help you accomplish the task safely, professionally and with minimum liability to the City. With practice you can become proficient and develop confidence in situations requiring traffic control.

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