


<b>NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>		
<b>Administration &amp; Operations Manual</b>		
<b>Policy: Police Assistance to Motorists &amp; Roadway Safety</b>		<b>AOM:O-320</b>
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [61.4.1.a], [61.4.1.b], [61.4.1.c], [61.4.1.d], [61.4.3.a], [61.4.3.b], [61.4.3.c], [61.4.2]		Issuing Authority <hr/> John D. Cartledge Chief of Police
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**I. Introductory Discussion**

- A. As part of their function as community caregivers, it is expected that Northampton Police Officers will render aid to motorists in need of assistance. This directive establishes departmental policy regarding such assistance.

Generally, this assistance shall include, but not be limited to the transportation of stranded motorists and the provision of communications assistance for towing, lockouts and any other emergency assistance appropriate to the situation.

## II. General Motorist Assistance [61.4.1, a]

- A. Unless responding to emergency calls for service, officers shall stop to offer services whenever they encounter a motorist that is in apparent distress.

Officers' responding to emergency calls for service or engaged in priority activity may not always be able to immediately stop to assist motorists. In these cases, officers should notify the dispatcher of the vehicle location and request another unit check on the vehicle or subject.

- B. Officers shall provide whatever assistance is reasonable to help the motorist resolve their difficulties. Officers are not authorized to provide the following services:
1. Push, pull, tow, or jumpstart any vehicle with a department vehicle. [61.4.1,b]
  2. Physically push another vehicle, unless this action is the result of an emergency lifesaving situation;
  3. Motor vehicle lockout service by police is prohibited, except in those extreme circumstances when authorization may be obtained from a supervisory officer (i.e. child locked within the vehicle with engine running).

In all other cases, upon receiving a lockout call for service the dispatcher shall refer the individual to a licensed locksmith or service station to assist the individual at their own expense.

- C. Officers, who stop to provide assistance to persons that are broken down or stopped in hazardous locations, or who pose a road hazard by their presence, shall ensure that the vehicle is removed from the location prior to clearing the scene. Officers shall not leave stranded motorists in hazardous locations or weather conditions. [61.4.1,c]

## III. Provision of Emergency Services

- A. Officers shall ensure that emergency services are provided in those cases where there is a need for immediate medical or other such care. [61.4.1, d]
1. In these cases, ambulance services should be notified to provide transportation of injured persons to the hospital unless otherwise directed by the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) or Patrol Supervisor. See *AOM 0321 Police Escort and Relay Services* and *AOM 0105 Handling Injuries/Illnesses*.

## IV. Transportation of Stranded Motorists [61.4.1, c]

- A. Officers may transport stranded motorists to the nearest convenient location where assistance may be obtained.

1. Officers shall utilize appropriate care in ensuring the safety of citizens that they assist or transport.
2. Officers shall notify the communications center whenever they are transporting a stranded motorist. The start location, finish location and mileage shall be reported.
3. Officers shall not leave stranded motorists in any situation that is hazardous.

## **V. Directions to Motorists [61.4.1, a]**

Officers shall courteously provide information and directions upon request, and should become familiar with the streets and highways in this city, and the various services, facilities, and tourist attractions available not only within the jurisdiction, but also in those places within a reasonable distance to which many persons can be expected to travel.

## **VI. Vehicles Abandoned on Roadways [61.4.3, a]**

- A. In those cases where an officer discovers a vehicle along the roadway that has been apparently abandoned due to mechanical breakdown or other reason, the officer shall determine if the vehicle location presents a hazard to other persons or motorists.
  1. If the vehicle is legally parked and poses no hazard, then no further action is necessary provided the officer is satisfied that the vehicle is not stolen and the owner is aware of its presence.
  2. If the vehicle continues to remain on the street the officer shall complete a *72 Hour Notice* and attach the notice to the vehicle's windshield. The notice informs the owner that if the vehicle is not removed in 72 hours from the date and time indicated on the notice, it will be towed at the owner's expense.
    - a. If the vehicle is not removed prior to the termination of the 72-hour period, the officer shall notify the dispatcher and request the services of a tow company. [61.4.3, b]
    - b. Once the vehicle is towed, an AVR will be attached to the vehicle stored in the towing company yard. The officer responsible for the tow will make every effort to contact the owner.
    - c. If attempts to locate the owner result in no owner for said vehicle, the Parking Enforcement Office shall be contacted and shall make a determination as to the disposition of the vehicle. The Northampton Police Department shall assist Parking Enforcement Office personnel in any action taken.
    - d. The officer in charge of towing the abandoned vehicle shall complete the appropriate computer entry screen in the Department computer system. All records of vehicles removed, stored or towed by this department shall be maintained within the department computer system.[61.4.3, c]

## **VII. Wrecker and Repair Service [61.4.1, b]**

- A. In those cases where a motorist requests the services of a wrecker or service company, the officer shall first request that the person provide the name of the wrecker service of their choice.
  - 1. In cases where the subject has no preference, the next wrecker from the service list shall be utilized.
  - 2. A request for an out-of-town wrecker may be honored as long as the time frame of response will not be so extensive as to tie the officer up unnecessarily, and the vehicle is not a hazard or traffic hindrance.

## **VIII. Reporting and Correction of Hazardous Road Conditions [61.4.2]**

- A. Hazardous road conditions are defined as those environmental, structural, mechanical, or other conditions that create a potentially dangerous condition for people using public roads and highways. The following procedures will be used in identifying, reporting and correcting hazardous or environmental conditions that pose an immediate danger to the public:
  - 1. When a hazard is identified and in the officer's opinion such hazard requires immediate correction (such as an electrical wire across any part of the roadway), the officer shall immediately notify the dispatcher and request any assistance or special equipment required.
    - a. The officer should remain on the scene, protecting the scene and any bystanders from potential harm. In certain cases, officers may be forced to reroute traffic away from a hazard.
    - b. The officer shall complete a report of all actions taken prior to the end of their tour of duty.
- B. When a potential hazard is identified, but is not such that danger is immediate, the officer shall notify the dispatcher and request that the appropriate authorities be notified.
- C. Whenever a report is made regarding any damage to personal property or personal injury resulting from or involving a defect of city property, the responding officer shall make a complete report documenting the defect. If pictures can be taken, then efforts shall be made to do so. A copy of said report will be made and submitted to the Administration Division Commander.