



POLICY BULLETIN

Bulletin 01-04

Effective: On Receipt

Emergency Vehicle Warning Devices Volunteer Rescue Group

Note: The following guidelines supersede those contained in PEP Policy Bulletin 01.01 Emergency Vehicle Operation Guidelines dated March 15, 2001. Changes are sidelined in the right margin.

GENERAL

The Motor Vehicle Regulations Section 4.28 enables the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) to issue a permit to volunteer rescue groups¹ for the purpose of operating emergency warning devices² on rescue vehicles.

Where there is an imminent threat to a person's life, it may be necessary for a volunteer rescue group to respond using flashing lights and siren, the primary purpose of the flashing emergency lights being to clear a path through traffic. A response which utilizes emergency warning devices is routinely referred to as a Code 3 response.

The driver of every rescue vehicle must clearly understand that the activation of flashing emergency lights does not provide a licence to disobey traffic regulations and that the driver must continue to be responsible and is accountable for the safe operation of the vehicle.

A volunteer rescue group may respond Code 3:

- only with the prior approval of the requesting police or British Columbia Ambulance Service (BCAS) authority; and
- there is an imminent threat to life.

These guidelines were developed in consultation with: ICBC; Police Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General; Office of the Fire Commissioner; BCAS; and RCMP "E" Division.

1 Includes both Search and Rescue (SAR) and Road Rescue Groups

2 Defined as an audible signal bell, siren or exhaust whistle and a flashing red light

POLICY

No PEP supported³ volunteer rescue group shall install or operate a vehicle with emergency warning devices without a valid permit from ICBC.

Conditions:

The following condition must be met by volunteer rescue groups before undertaking a Code 3 response:

1. The local Chief of Police or RCMP Detachment Commander must support (in writing) the application⁴ for a permit.
2. Vehicles must be registered to the group providing road rescue or search and rescue. Groups must be either:
 - a. a society registered under the B.C. Society Act; or
 - b. sponsored by their local government ,i.e., improvement district, municipality or regional district.
3. Vehicle(s) must meet the semi-annual inspection requirements of the ICBC Commercial Vehicle Inspection Program.
4. Approval must be given for the use of flashing lights and siren by ICBC in the form of a permit.

Procedure:

1. Code 3 response, which includes the use of red flashing lights and siren, shall be activated only when travel in an emergency mode is specifically requested by police, BCAS or fire department during a response.
2. Vehicle(s) shall be operated only by qualified drivers who must:
 - a. possess valid drivers licence appropriate to the vehicle being operated;
 - b. have completed a recognized⁵ emergency vehicle operator training program; and
 - c. meet Emergency Vehicle Driving Regulations requirements/standards⁶ (when finalized).

3 Authorized to respond on a PEP approved task.

4 MV3097 Application for Flashing Red Lamp for Emergency Response Vehicles available from ICBC Compliance Programs & Standards (250) 414-7852.

5 Training equivalent to that provided local fire department personnel or acceptable to the local police authority, e.g. defensive driving for rural fire departments.

6 Training requirements/standards will be as per those approved by the Attorney General for fire apparatus operators.

3. Vehicles must be operated in accordance with the attached Emergency Vehicle Operating Guidelines (Annex A).

Yellow/Amber Flashers

1. ICBC may also issue a permit that authorizes the use of yellow/amber flashing lights. Yellow/amber flashers can be used only when the vehicle is stationary, in the interest of responder and public safety, and only when engaged in a response task.
2. Vehicle(s) must be registered to the volunteer rescue group as per Requirement #2 above.
3. Vehicle(s) must meet maintenance certification as per Requirement #3 above.
5. The local Chief of Police or RCMP Detachment Commander must support the application for a permit in writing.
4. ICBC must approve the use of the lights and issue a permit.

Mervin W.C. Harrower
Director

May 25, 2001

Attachment: Annex A – Emergency Vehicle Operating Procedures

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Annex A

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATING GUIDELINES

GENERAL

An emergency response that utilizes flashing red lights and siren is known as a Code 3 response.

Flashing red lights and sirens are used to alert other drivers and pedestrians that an emergency vehicle is approaching and to make way for their passage. Because safety is at risk, this kind of driving should be reserved for emergencies where:

- there is an actual threat to life and/or limb; and
- an emergency (Code 3) response has been requested by the police or BCAS.

Definition:

Emergency Response: A response required when an emergency situation poses a threat to life/limb and that the time difference can substantially alter the victim's prognosis; or when requested by police, ambulance or fire service.

PROCEDURE

1. The Motor Vehicle Act and the Emergency Vehicle Driving Regulation require vehicles responding on a Code 3 basis to operate all emergency warning devices continuously. While the Act and Regulation provide privileges for drivers of emergency vehicles, they also requires drivers to maintain safety under all circumstances, particularly in regard to:
 - a) the nature, condition, and use of the roadway;
 - b) the amount of traffic that is on, or might reasonably be expected to be on, the roadway; and
 - c) the nature and use being made of the emergency vehicle at the time.
2. Drivers should not exceed the posted speed limit without due consideration for road conditions and urgency of the response.
3. When approaching traffic control devices such as stop signs or going against a red light, the driver will:
 - a) come to a complete stop before entering an intersection;

- b) check for clearance and safety; and
 - c) proceed with caution.
4. When approaching a green light, the driver will:
- a) slow down;
 - b) check for clearance and safety; and
 - c) proceed with caution.