INCIDENT SCENE SAFETY

REDUCED EMERGENCY LIGHTING

Memorandum of Understanding

Collier-Lee
Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee
Florida
Traffic Incident Management Teams

2007

The Collier-Lee and Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee Traffic Incident Management Teams have been strong proponents of reducing emergency lighting at incident scenes, especially forward-facing lights on divided highways. Excessive emergency lighting detracts from visibility of (and by) responders, reduces the effectiveness of traffic control devices (such as traffic cones and arrow boards) and confuses motorists.

NFPA 1901 requires two different signaling modes during operation. One is for when the apparatus is responding to an emergency and the other when the apparatus is stopped at the emergency scene blocking the right-of-way. The modes are selected by the application of the parking brake or putting the automatic transmission in park. The blocking mode turns off all forward facing clear lights.

Sources of official language about first responders turning off their front strobes and flashing lights when on accident scenes:

Collier-Lee and Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee TIM Team Emergency Lighting MOU

The use of emergency-vehicle lighting devices is essential at traffic incidents, particularly in the early stages, for the safety of responders, persons involved in the incident, and highway users approaching the incident scene. Emergency-vehicle lighting, however, provides warning only and does not provide traffic control. Multiple flashing emergency lights are often confusing to highway users, especially at night.

Motorists approaching a traffic incident from the opposite direction on a divided facility are often distracted by emergency-vehicle lighting and slow down, sometimes abruptly, to look at the traffic incident as they pass, posing a hazard to themselves and other travelers. The lingering effect of this distraction contributes to increased congestion and resulting delay.

Emergency-vehicle lighting at a traffic incident scene can be reduced once effective traffic control has been established. This is especially true for major incidents with multiple response vehicles. Response agencies can perform their tasks on-scene with minimal emergency-vehicle lighting when good traffic control is established through the use of warning signs, arrow boards and traffic cones to alert and re-direct traffic.

THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY AGREED:

That Public Safety and other Traffic Incident responders will:

- **Examine their policy and actual practice for the use of emergency-vehicle lighting;**
- **Set a goal of reducing the number of emergency lights at secured incident scenes; and**
- **Give special consideration to reducing or extinguishing all forward-facing flashing or wig-wag emergency lights, especially on divided highways.**

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

Section 6I.05 Use of Emergency-Vehicle Lighting

Support:

The use of emergency-vehicle lighting (such as high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights) is essential, especially in the initial stages of a traffic incident, for the safety of emergency responders and persons involved in the traffic incident, as well as road users approaching the traffic incident. Emergency-vehicle lighting, however, provides warning only and provides no effective traffic control. It is often confusing to road users, especially at night. Road users approaching the traffic incident from the opposite direction on a divided facility are often distracted by emergency-vehicle lighting and slow their vehicles to look at the traffic incident, posing a hazard to themselves and others traveling in their direction. The use of emergency-vehicle lighting can be reduced if good traffic control has been established at a traffic incident scene. This is especially true for major traffic incidents that might involve a number of emergency vehicles. If good traffic control is established through placement of advanced warning signs and traffic control devices to divert or detour traffic, then public safety agencies can perform their tasks on scene with minimal emergency-vehicle lighting

Guidance:

Public safety agencies should examine their policies on the use of emergency-vehicle lighting, especially after a traffic incident scene is secured, with the intent of reducing the use of this lighting as much as possible while not endangering those at the scene. Special consideration should be given to reducing or extinguishing forward facing emergency-vehicle lighting, especially on divided roadways, to reduce distractions to on-coming road users. Vehicle headlights not needed for illumination, or to provide notice to other road users of the incident response vehicle being in an unexpected location, should be turned off at night.

Don Olson FDOT T I M Team	**Date**

Phoenix Regional SOP
Safe Parking While Operating in or near Vehicle Traffic
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7. For NIGHTTIME operations, turn OFF fire apparatus headlights. This will help reduce the blinding effect to approaching vehicle traffic. Other emergency lighting should be reduced to yellow lights and emergency flashers where possible.
(Marco Island Fire Rescue also uses this verbiage.)

I-295 / I-76 / RT. 42 Incident Management Task Force
Policy and Procedures Manual

4 ARRIVING ON SCENE
4.3 Apparatus operators shall cancel any warning lights, which impair the vision of approaching traffic (i.e. headlights, spotlights, clear warning lights).

Broward Sheriff's Office
Department of Fire Rescue and Emergency Services
On Scene Personnel / Apparatus Safety
Standard Operating Guidelines
DRAFT

III. Safety Benchmarks
7. Turn off all sources of vision impairment to approaching motorists at nighttime incidents including vehicle headlights and spotlights.

V. Incident Command Benchmarks
6. Command shall assure that all forward facing white light systems are turned OFF and that other emergency lighting remains ON.

Modified Text from NFPA 1901

The optical warning system on the apparatus shall be capable of two separate signaling modes during emergency operation. One mode shall signal to drivers and pedestrians that the apparatus is responding to an emergency, and is calling for the right-of-way. The other mode shall signal that the apparatus is stopped, and is blocking the right-of-way.

There shall be a switch that senses the position of the parking brake. When the master warning system switch is closed, and the parking brake is released, the warning devices signaling the call for right-of-way shall be energized. When the master warning system switch is closed, and the parking brake is on, the warning devices signaling blockage of the right-of-way shall be energized.