

CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

GENERAL ORDER 100.45

REVISED DECEMBER 2025

**ASSISTANCE TO PEDESTRIANS AND OCCUPANTS OF DISABLED VEHICLES,
AND INVESTIGATION OF UNOCCUPIED VEHICLES**

1. PURPOSE. To establish policy and procedure for:
 - a. Provide assistance to pedestrians and occupants of disabled vehicles, including an arrestee's passengers, passengers in traffic crashes, and passengers in disabled vehicles who express concern for their safety and/or have an obvious, compelling need for assistance.
 - b. Check on unoccupied vehicles which appear to be abandoned, suspicious, unlawfully parked, or disabled within the geographical area of the Department's primary jurisdiction.
 - c. Apply response protocols for incidents involving vehicles off-roadway due to crash or unattended suspicious vehicles on bridges or elevated structures (whether or not suicide is suspected). For this policy, an elevated structure is defined as any structure that if a person were to abruptly leave said structure, by accident or their own volition, it would be reasonable to assume they more than likely sustained life-threatening or fatal injuries.

2. GENERAL.
 - a. The Department's commitment to providing Safety, Service, and Security shall be a primary consideration in implementing the policies and procedures of this General Order.
 - (1) Personnel must be cognizant of the public's trust in, and reliance on, uniformed employees of the Department. It is incumbent upon uniformed employees to investigate all incidents identified in this General Order to conclusion and to communicate the outcome of the investigation to the affected party(ies). For those investigations initiated by the Department but ultimately investigated by the appropriate allied agency, every attempt should be made to communicate the outcome of the investigation to the affected party(ies), either by the Department or allied agency.

(2) Motorists expect that roadway hazards (including vehicles) will be removed in a timely manner.

b. Officers assigned to patrol duties shall be aware of the Department's lawful and moral obligation to provide public assistance. Failure to provide or carry through with this assistance has resulted in lawsuits being filed, some of which have concluded in findings against the Department. See Highway Patrol Manual (HPM) 100.86, Risk Management Manual, Chapter 8, Special Relationships, for a further discussion of issues involving the failure to provide or carry through with assistance to pedestrians and occupants of disabled vehicles.

3. POLICY.

a. Uniformed personnel operating enforcement vehicles while assigned to patrol duties shall:

(1) Stop to assist persons who are in apparent need regardless of geographical location.

(2) Provide reasonable assistance (including transportation) to persons who express concern for their safety or have an obvious, compelling need within the geographical area of the Department's primary responsibility.

b. Officers performing patrol duty shall check all vehicles that appear to be unoccupied, suspicious, or disabled upon state highways (including freeways), unincorporated roadways, and other major traffic arteries within the geographical area of the Department's primary responsibility, as such vehicles may be occupied or disabled. Vehicles should be promptly removed from the freeway or roadway whenever authorized by law.

c. Upon notification of a vehicle off-roadway due to a vehicle crash or otherwise, officers shall practice due diligence to locate the vehicle or parties by conducting a thorough physical search of the area.

d. Upon locating unoccupied vehicles involved in a crash or on a bridge or elevated structure (whether or not suicide is suspected), officers shall conduct a thorough investigation and search of the area and attempt to contact the registered owner of the vehicle to determine the whereabouts of the vehicle's occupants.

e. Requests for assistance from outside the Department's jurisdiction should be referred to the responsible agency. If an investigation initiated by the Department is turned over to the responsible allied agency, departmental personnel shall confirm allied agency assumption, ensure they are aware of all investigative steps taken, and shall record the steps taken in the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) log.

(1) This policy shall not preclude the Department from rendering assistance to individuals when resources are available.

(2) Public Safety Dispatchers shall relay requests for service to the appropriate service provider (Department or allied agency) without unnecessary delay. If, for any reason, there will be an excessive delay in providing service, the applicable officer or field supervisor shall be notified.

f. Departmental personnel operating enforcement vehicles are not required to provide transportation when other forms of transportation are reasonably available, and based upon professional judgment there is no foreseeable danger to the person making the request.

4. PROCEDURES, PATROL OFFICERS.

a. Pedestrians and Occupants of Disabled Vehicles. Officers shall provide or summon assistance as necessary when a person appears to need help.

(1) Officers shall take all reasonable steps to accommodate the transportation needs of persons who have expressed an immediate concern for their personal safety and who are actually in need of transportation assistance.

(a) The most important consideration in providing such assistance is the immediate physical welfare of pedestrians, motorists, and the public, as well as the officer.

(b) Officers shall use sound professional judgment to determine when assistance should be provided. Officers should not only rely on a request to determine if assistance is needed, but should also consider, among other things, the person's maturity and mental and physical condition, weather, and traffic conditions.

(c) Officers shall transport or remain with occupants of disabled vehicles if the officers believe a foreseeable danger exists and no higher priority emergency requiring their attention exists.

(2) Requests for transportation other than those provided within normal patrol activities should be referred to a supervisor. Determining whether transportation will be provided requires assessment of:

(a) The person's compelling need.

(b) Available alternatives.

- (c) The potential for hazard to the person if transportation is not provided.
 - (d) Availability of departmental personnel to provide service.
- (3) When transportation assistance is not indicated for a pedestrian or occupant of a disabled vehicle or a higher priority emergency precludes providing them with immediate transportation assistance, officers shall:
- (a) Warn them of any reasonably foreseeable hazards.
 - (b) Inform them of precautions that may be taken to lessen their exposure to those hazards.
- (4) When officers are delayed in providing assistance within departmental jurisdiction because of other duties, assistance should be coordinated with other service providers such as allied agencies, juvenile authorities, or public or private social service organizations.

b. Response Protocol.

- (1) When an officer receives a report of a vehicle off-roadway due to a crash or otherwise, or is not visible due to terrain or topography, the officer shall make every reasonable effort to locate the vehicle.
- (2) In the event the vehicle is unable to be located, officers shall:
- (a) Conduct a thorough physical search of the area.
 - (b) Consider the use of air support and forward-looking infrared (FLIR).
 - (c) Immediately notify a supervisor and advise final disposition when the incident has concluded.
 - (d) Attempt to obtain available GPS location information regarding the vehicle occupants' last known position. Sources for gathering this information may include the reporting party, dispatch, bystanders, or family, friends, or associated parties who might be able to provide voluntary access to technology, such as Apple's Find My app.
 - (e) Once obtained, a search of the identified GPS location shall be completed. If this search does not provide positive results, or if GPS location data cannot be obtained, dispatch shall be notified of the information, and these actions shall be recorded in the CAD log.
- (3) Officers should also consider:

(a) Recontacting the reporting party, family, or friends, to obtain more specifics of the reported incident.

(b) Utilizing other resources (e.g., air support, canines, adjacent Area personnel, and search and rescue teams).

(4) A follow-up search of the area shall be completed. Ideally, the Area command and responsible officer(s) will complete a follow-up search of the area within 24 hours, unless documented extenuating circumstances exist. In the event extenuating circumstances exist, a follow-up search shall be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 72 hours after the incident occurred, unless the area is inaccessible due to weather conditions, natural disaster, etc. When conditions allow, a search of the area shall be completed, and the officer shall note all additional information directly into a new CAD log or update the original CAD log upon completion of the follow up search.

(a) Prior to the search, if available, the GPS location data shall be reverified (use process described in paragraph 4.b.[2][d]). Ideally, the delay may allow for a weak cellular signal to possibly upload a last known GPS location.

(b) Once the follow-up search has been completed, this information shall be related to the on-duty supervisor and added to the new or original CAD log.

c. Unoccupied Vehicles.

(1) A CHP 422, Vehicle Check/Parking Warning/Highway Damage Report, shall be completed and attached to all unoccupied vehicles which appear to be abandoned, unlawfully parked, or disabled within the area of the Department's primary jurisdiction. (See HPM 100.9, Enforcement Documents Manual, Chapter 7, CHP 422, Vehicle Check/Parking Warning/Highway Damage Report, for instructions on the completion of the CHP 422.)

(2) Upon locating an unoccupied vehicle involved in a crash or suspiciously parked on a bridge or elevated structure (as defined above and whether or not suicide is suspected), officers shall conduct a thorough investigation and search of the area, and attempt to contact the registered owner of the vehicle to determine the whereabouts of the vehicle's occupants.

(a) If necessary, departmental personnel shall coordinate search efforts with the appropriate allied agencies.

(b) Officers may consider having a residence check conducted on the registered owner.

(c) If an investigation initiated by the Department is turned over to the responsible allied agency, departmental personnel shall confirm allied agency assumption, ensure they are aware of all investigative steps taken, and record the steps taken in the CAD log.

(d) Generally, reports of missing persons should be referred to the appropriate local law enforcement agency with investigative authority. Follow policy outlined in HPM 100.69, General Law Enforcement Policy Manual, Chapter 6, Missing Persons.

(3) If a vehicle is in a hazardous position, officers shall immediately move the vehicle to a safer location or store it.

5. PROCEDURES, OTHER UNIFORMED PERSONNEL.

a. Uniformed personnel operating enforcement vehicles but not assigned to patrol duties shall, using sound professional judgment, either:

(1) Stop and assist pedestrians or occupants of disabled vehicles.

(2) Ensure the need for departmental assistance is relayed in a timely manner to the appropriate departmental personnel responsible for providing such assistance.

b. In determining the appropriate course of action, factors to be considered include:

(1) The degree of hazard to the pedestrian, motorist, or the public.

(2) The frequency of beat coverage.

(3) The nature of the uniformed officer's current assignment.

(4) Accessibility of service providers to the pedestrian or motorist.

(5) The availability of radio or emergency equipment in the vehicle.

6. PROCEDURES, COMMUNICATION CENTER PERSONNEL.

a. Response Protocol.

(1) An available beat unit shall be dispatched to civilian-reported traffic crashes or vehicles off the roadway.

(2) In an effort to diligently locate the vehicles off-roadway or vehicle crashes, dispatchers shall query the responding officer regarding recontacting the reporting party. When requested by an officer, dispatchers shall recontact the reporting party to obtain more specifics of the reported incident.

(3) Refer to HPM 60.1, Communications Operations Manual, Chapter 7, Dispatch Radio Communications.

b. Highways/Freeways With Call Boxes.

(1) An available beat unit may be dispatched to an occupant of a disabled vehicle or pedestrian when neither the person nor the disabled vehicle is in a hazardous location or foreseeable danger, and a reliable tow service or other appropriate nondepartmental service has been dispatched to the scene.

(2) An available beat unit shall be dispatched to an occupant of a disabled vehicle or pedestrian when either the person or the disabled vehicle is in a hazardous location or in foreseeable danger, or if nondepartmental assistance cannot be obtained.

c. Other Highways, Including Freeways without Call Boxes. An available beat unit shall be dispatched to a motorist with a disabled vehicle or pedestrian unless a timely and reliable tow service or other appropriate nondepartmental service has been dispatched to the scene.

d. Public Safety Dispatchers who have relayed a request for nondepartmental service to a service provider shall attempt to determine an estimated time of arrival (ETA). Public Safety Dispatchers should advise the appropriate officer of the ETA of the service provider and any other pertinent information.

e. Public Safety Dispatchers will place a telephone request for assistance to a private party or service provider for an occupant of a disabled vehicle or pedestrian when requested by an officer.

7. PROCEDURES, OTHER NONUNIFORMED PERSONNEL.

a. Nonuniformed employees driving marked vehicles or unmarked state vehicles with departmental radios who become aware of a pedestrian or a motorist in need of assistance shall ensure the need is relayed to the appropriate departmental personnel having responsibility for providing or arranging such assistance.

b. Nonuniformed employees who drive marked vehicles or unmarked state vehicles with departmental radios shall be trained in procedures and protocols for using those radios.

8. AREA AND DIVISION COMMANDERS' RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. Area commanders should discuss these policies and procedures with allied law enforcement agencies and other service providers. Area commanders may enter into written agreements of understanding for the purpose of carrying out their intent.

b. Area commanders shall:

(1) Incorporate departmental and Area transportation policies and procedures into their standard operating procedures (SOP).

(2) Incorporate response and unoccupied/suspicious vehicle protocols into their SOP based on the Area's unique needs related to geography, bridges, elevated structures (as defined above), etc.

(3) Incorporate steps to be placed into SOP for those investigations initiated by CHP but ultimately handled by an allied agency. Those steps should include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Understand the scope of the allied agency response and search efforts to determine if any further departmental actions need to be taken or assistance provided.

(b) Advise the allied agency of all investigative steps taken.

(c) Make a concerted effort to coordinate with the allied agency, if possible, on the following:

1 Receive notification of investigative findings to the Department by the allied agency.

2 Ensure notification of investigative findings are made to the involved parties, if applicable.

(4) Notify and coordinate with the appropriate dispatch/communications center of Area's SOP.

(5) Ensure all employees under their command are familiar with the procedures required by this policy and review their Area's SOP annually.

c. Division Chiefs are responsible for ensuring all communications center facilities within their Division are aware of and utilize the Area procedures developed pursuant to this policy.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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