

CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

GENERAL ORDER 100.51

REVISED DECEMBER 2025

NUMBER OF OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO FIELD PATROL UNITS

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this General Order (GO) is to provide guidelines for Division and Area commanders for determining the number of officers assigned to a field patrol unit.

2. POLICY.

a. Normally, one officer shall be assigned to a field patrol unit between 0600 and 2200 hours.

b. Normally, two officers shall be assigned to a field patrol unit between 2200 and 0600 hours.

c. Enforcement motorcycle riders shall not be assigned to work night/graveyard shifts for enforcement purposes. In the event an enforcement motorcycle rider chooses to work a night/graveyard shift, they shall not ride their departmental motorcycle during their time assigned to night/graveyard shift. Exceptions shall include special assignments (e.g., civil disturbances, emergency incidents, and Protective Services Division responsibilities). Motorcycle officers shall be assigned to ride solo or in pairs pursuant to the field patrol unit criterion of this order.

3. SPECIFIC QUALIFIED EXCEPTIONS.

a. 0600 to 2200 Hours. Two or more officers may be assigned to a field patrol unit between 0600 and 2200 hours under the following circumstances:

(1) For officer safety. The Area commander's primary consideration when determining the number of officers assigned to a field patrol unit should be officer safety. The efficiency of field operations is a secondary concern.

(2) For training or field orientation purposes.

(3) When there are insufficient patrol cars available for officers on the shift, such as when motorcycle officers use patrol cars on rainy days.

b. 2200 to 2400 and 0400 to 0600 Hours. Division Chiefs may authorize the assignment of one-officer field patrol units between 2200 and 2400 or 0400 and 0600 hours. Division Chiefs shall exercise discretion when approving this type of assignment to ensure it is the exception rather than the rule. In addition, Division commanders may require Area commanders to submit specific written justification for the deployment of one-officer field patrol units during these hours.

(1) Hours of Canine Deployment. Generally, the hours for deploying a canine officer and canine in one patrol vehicle without another officer will be consistent with policy as addressed in this GO. However, in order to maximize the availability of canine teams, specific qualified exceptions have been developed and are contained in Highway Patrol Manual 70.7, Departmental Canine Program Manual, Chapter 4, Enforcement Operations.

c. Emergency/Fixed-Post/Nonenforcement Assignments. This order does not preclude the assignment of one-officer field patrol units at any time during a temporary emergency, for a fixed-post traffic control assignment, or for a nonenforcement assignment if the safety of the officer is reasonably assured. This exemption does not include Construction/Maintenance Zone Enhanced Enforcement Programs. Examples of Emergency/Fixed-Post/Nonenforcement assignments include, but are not limited to:

(1) When escorting vehicles through hazardous areas during heavy fog or other situations of limited visibility.

(2) For fixed-post traffic control at the scene of major fires or movie details, provided that there are at least two fixed-post locations in close proximity to one another.

NOTE: A two-officer field patrol unit should be used for traffic control between 2200 and 0600 hours when only one fixed-post assignment is required unless the beat environment affords reasonable safety for the officer.

(3) On call-outs for specific assignments in locations where 24-hour coverage is not provided.

(4) When units are assigned primarily to nonenforcement duties.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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GO 100.51