

CHAPTER 3
DIRECTING TRAFFIC AT INTERSECTIONS
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>SAFETY CONCERNS</u>	3-3
General.....	3-3
Traffic Signals.....	3-3
<u>POSITION</u>	3-3
Position I.....	3-3
Positions II and III.....	3-3
<u>REGULATION OF TRAFFIC</u>	3-4
Simple Interruption.....	3-4
Simple Alteration.....	3-5
Critical Alteration.....	3-6
<u>DIRECTING TURNING MOVEMENTS</u>	3-7
Right Turns.....	3-7
Left Turns.....	3-8
<u>ANTICIPATE CONGESTION</u>	3-9
Exits.....	3-9
Traffic Breaks.....	3-9
Intersection Clearance.....	3-9
Illegal Parking/Stopping.....	3-9
Left Turns.....	3-9
Excess Congestion.....	3-9

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CHAPTER 3

DIRECTING TRAFFIC AT INTERSECTIONS

1. SAFETY CONCERNS.

a. General. Intersections pose a unique safety problem for officers. Traffic enters the intersection from a number of directions at the same time. The officer directing traffic must get traffic through the intersection smoothly and safely. Some points to consider when directing traffic at an intersection:

- (1) Can the officer see and be seen by all approaching lanes of traffic and pedestrians?
- (2) Will the officer interfere with the free movement of traffic and be forced to continually shift position?
- (3) How much regulation is needed?
- (4) Can the officer handle all turning movements from where they stand?
- (5) ***Is the officer safe there?***

b. Traffic Signals. Events, such as parades or complex accident scenes, may require prolonged traffic control at an intersection. During such events, the traffic signals can be used to help control traffic. This is done by opening the control box at the intersection with a master key, located on most departmental enforcement vehicle key rings. Inside the control box is a switch that will operate all the signals on a flashing red. This helps control traffic and minimizes the need for an officer to remain in the intersection for long periods of time.

2. POSITION. Before assuming a position within an intersection, the officer should consider how effective they will be. This starts with the proper position. Illustration 1 shows 3 possible positions:

- a. Position I. The most commonly used location for traffic control.
- b. Positions II and III. These positions may be effective when cross streets do not intersect at 90-degree angles, when more than 2 streets intersect, at one-way streets, or when there are special traffic problems such as parades.

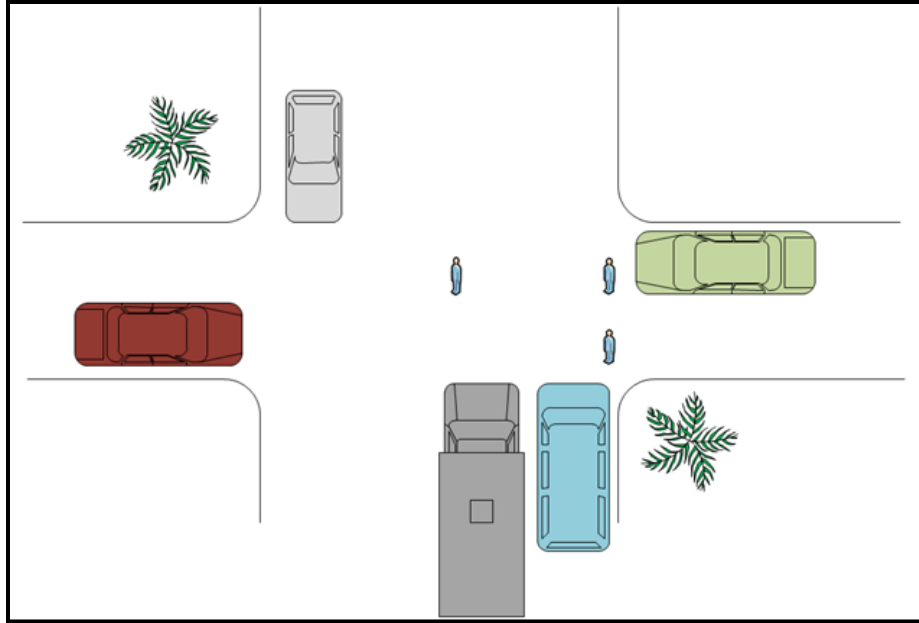


ILLUSTRATION 1

3. REGULATION OF TRAFFIC. How much regulation is needed? Each situation will dictate the amount of regulation needed to safely move traffic through the intersection. The officer directing traffic needs to make that decision based on the type of intersection and the amount of traffic.

a. Simple Interruption.

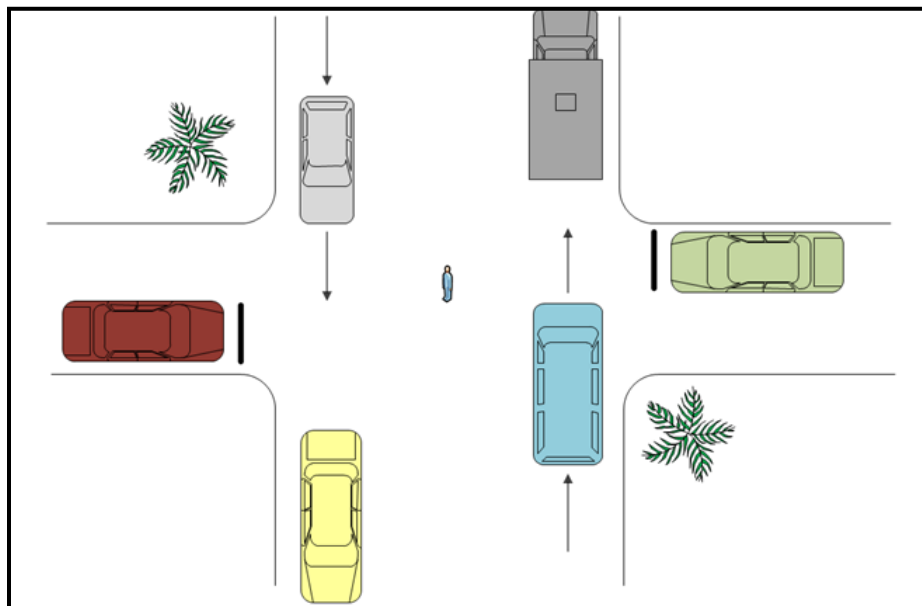


ILLUSTRATION 2

(1) Vehicles on the main street come so often (shown in Illustration 2) that vehicles on the cross street are forced to wait a short period of time for a break in traffic before they can cross the intersection.

(2) The officer should take their position and stop traffic on the main street, allowing vehicles on the cross street to go through the intersection.

b. Simple Alternation.

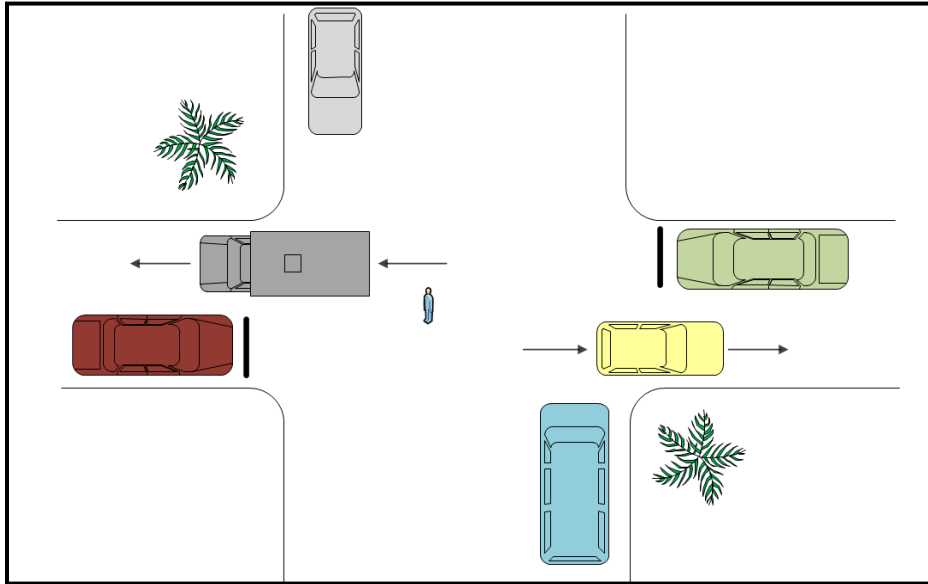


ILLUSTRATION 3

(1) When traffic is continuous and there are several vehicles approaching on the cross street, hold the cross street traffic until a group has been formed.

(2) Stop the main street traffic and allow the cross traffic to go through the intersection.

(3) Once the group has cleared the intersection, allow the main street traffic to continue.

(4) Traffic should be allowed to flow an equal length of time on each street. Do not allow vehicles to wait longer than 1 minute.

c. Critical Alternation.

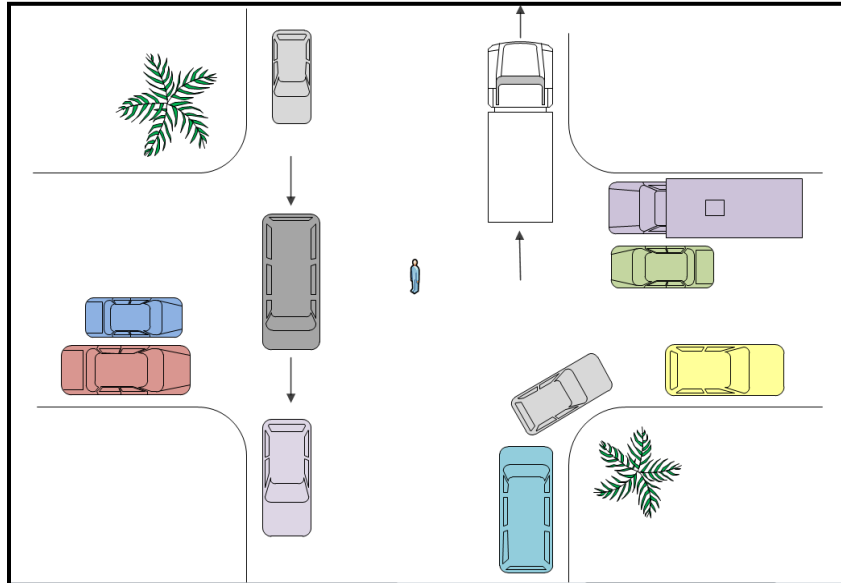


ILLUSTRATION 4

- (1) As traffic on any street gets heavier, it should be allowed to continue for a longer period of time. This is necessary to reduce the time lost for frequent changes in traffic direction.
- (2) Do not let a vehicle enter the intersection unless there is room to leave the intersection.
- (3) The officer must watch the exit lanes where vehicles are going, as well as the lanes from which vehicles are approaching.
- (4) Be alert that traffic does not back up and cause adjacent intersections to be blocked.

4. DIRECTING TURNING MOVEMENTS.

- a. Right Turns. If made from the right lane, vehicles turning right do not cut across the path of other vehicles. Cross traffic rarely has to be stopped to let right-turning traffic merge.

CORRECT

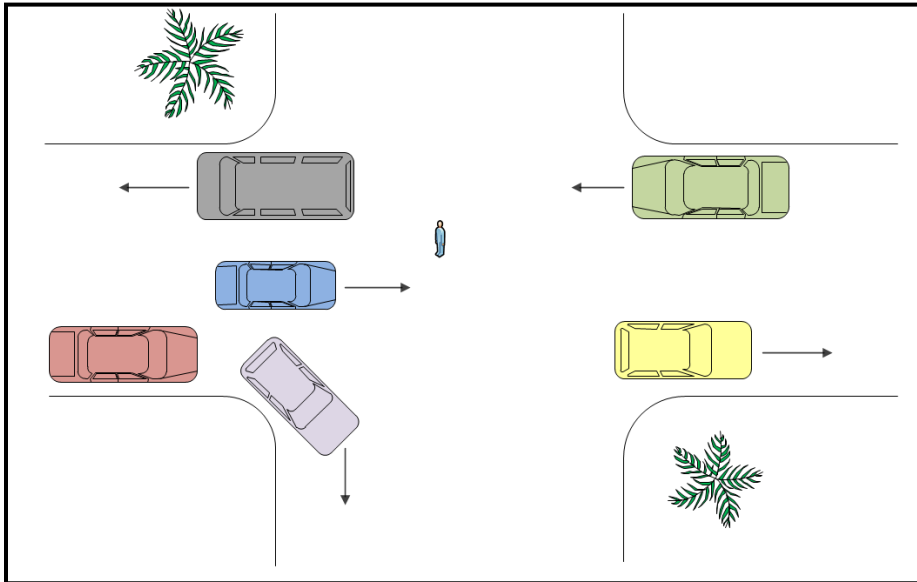


ILLUSTRATION 5

(1) Vehicles turning from the wrong lane present both traffic and safety problems. Do not permit right turns from a lane other than the right lane.

INCORRECT

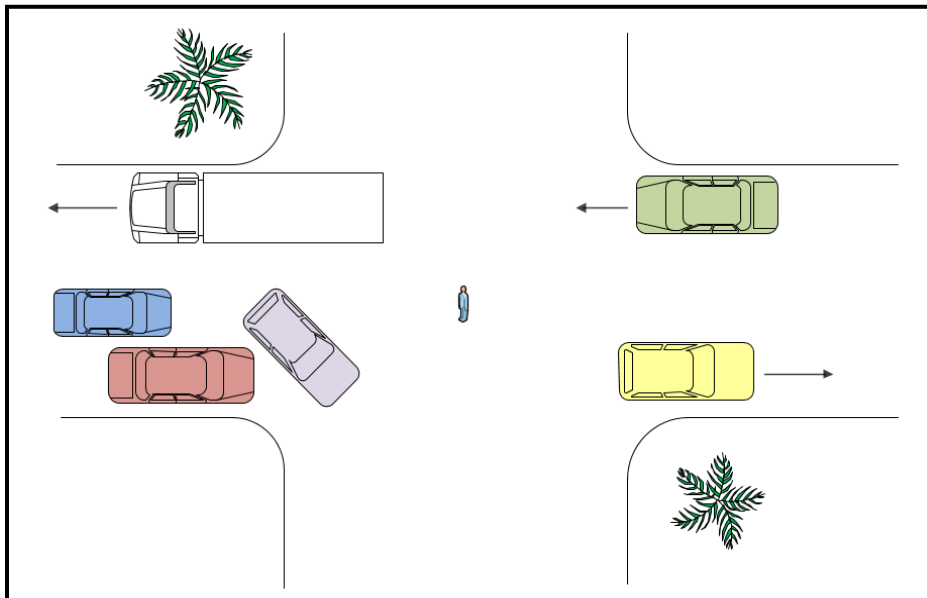


ILLUSTRATION 6

(2) Right turns need to be delayed or prohibited only when:

- (a) The street the turning car enters is filled up.
- (b) The turning vehicle will interfere with pedestrians.
- (c) The cross traffic is very heavy and will not allow the right turn to be completed.

b. Left Turns. Left turns cut across several lines of traffic and offer many possible conflicts. The officer directing traffic must be alert at all times.

(1) When holding cars for left turns, the officer should signal them to stop in the correct position for the turn.

(2) The officer should keep stopped traffic from blocking crosswalks or starting the turn before being directed to do so.

(3) Illustration 7 shows a busy intersection where vehicle 4 wants to turn left. The officer directing traffic must stop vehicle 1, make sure vehicles 2 and 3 stay stopped, then direct vehicle 4 to turn left. After vehicle 4 completes its turn, the officer has a choice of the following:

- (a) Keep vehicle 1 stopped and stop the vehicles in the opposite direction. Allow vehicles 2 and 3 to cross the intersection.
- (b) Keep vehicles 2 and 3 stopped and allow vehicle 1 and traffic in the opposite direction to continue through.

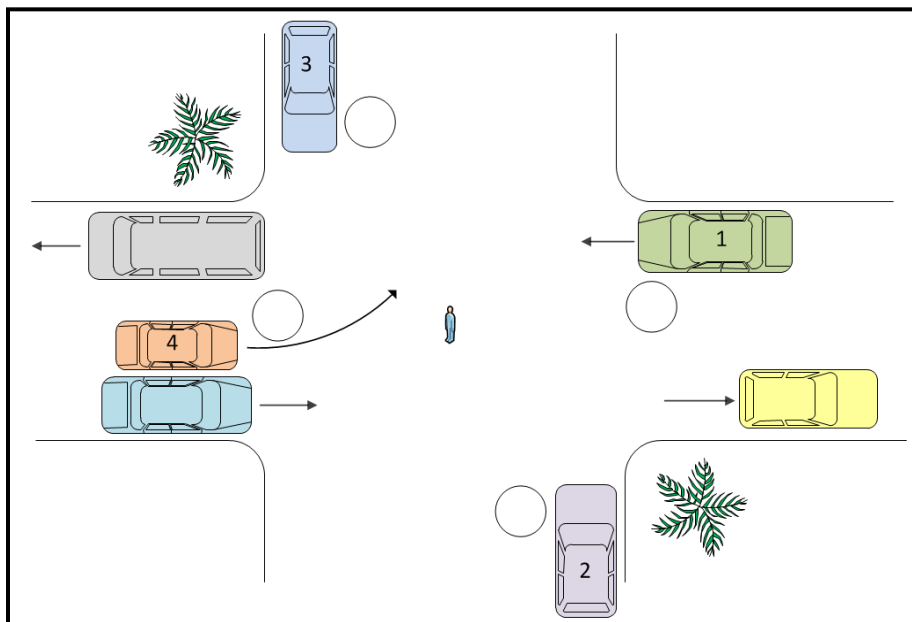


ILLUSTRATION 7

5. ANTICIPATE CONGESTION. When traffic is light, directing traffic is not difficult. However, as traffic gets heavier, the job becomes more complicated. In order to keep traffic flowing and to maintain safety, the officer directing traffic must do all of the following:

- a. Exits. Watch all the exits for the intersection. If one vehicle starts to back up, do not let any other vehicles go in that direction until the lane clears.
- b. Traffic Breaks. Keep checking the traffic on both streets and make certain cross traffic has an opportunity to move. If traffic is too heavy to allow natural breaks, you must make one in order to allow cross traffic an opportunity to get through the intersection. Try to break traffic at natural gaps whenever possible. This helps in the smooth flow of traffic and helps to keep the officer safe by giving vehicles ample opportunity to stop.
- c. Intersection Clearance. Never let a vehicle enter the intersection unless it has ample exit space.
- d. Illegal Parking/Stopping. Keep alert for traffic blocking the space between intersections. Double parking, unauthorized loading, and minor accidents are all causes of this type of congestion.
- e. Left Turns. Make certain motorists making left turns do not hold up one or more lanes of traffic. Help them complete the turn or prohibit the turn as the situation permits.
- f. Excess Congestion. If traffic starts backing up, look for the trouble spot immediately. Make decisions as to what has to be done and do it systematically.

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