

BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order
No.228

Effective Date
10-01-1999

Revised Date
10-30-2006

Subject: Failed Traffic Signals

Reviewed 9/1/16

POLICY

It is the policy of this department to activate a contingency plan for such times when traffic signals fail. Accordingly, the following procedure has been established for officers operating marked police vehicles to ensure a safe orderly flow of traffic when signals do not operate properly.

Officers operating unmarked vehicles that discover or become advised of a failed traffic signal are required to notify communications as soon as possible.

PROCEDURES

I. Types of Signal Failure

- A. Malfunctioning Signal occur when a signal no longer cycles from street to street, shows multi-colors for one direction, flashes during hours it is supposed to be cycling or operates outside its normal manner.
- B. Power Failure is when a signal goes dark on all faces; it is because of either loss of supplied power or total signal failure.

II. Officer's Responsibility

- A. City Ordinance Title 11, Section 45 (6) states: "A motorist approaching a traffic signal which does not have any signal lens illuminated shall come to a full and complete stop before entering the intersection and shall proceed through the intersection only after being sure it is safe to do so."
- B. Once an officer has learned of a signal failure, either by observation or dispatch, it becomes his responsibility to ensure that some control is properly placed at that intersection. This may be accomplished by:
 - 1. Manual control of traffic signal by hand control.
 - 2. Placing the signal in "Flash Mode."
 - 3. Manual direction of traffic.
 - 4. Installation of temporary stop signs.
- C. An officer may abandon an intersection with a failed signal only if one of the above solutions has been put in place, except;
 - 1. When authorized by a supervisor.
 - 2. When an officer is on a Code 2 or Code 3 call.
 - 3. A civil or weather emergency of such proportion exists that precludes the adherence to this policy.

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III. Accessing the Traffic Signal Control Box

- A. Each officer in Traffic Division will be issued a skeleton key to open either the small "police door", or if none, the large main door to the traffic signal control box.
- B. The officer shall take one of the following actions, upon opening the traffic control box:
 - 1. Turning the signal completely off and work traffic by hand signals.
 - 2. Placing the signal in "Flash" mode.
 - 3. Place the signal in "Manual Mode" and operate the signal by the hand control device it by hand.
- C. Should the officer find it necessary to leave the signal in an amended signal mode or due to mechanical failure cannot return the traffic signal to its original mode, the officer shall notify the appropriate radio dispatcher and his immediate supervisor, who in turn will notify the City Parish Traffic Engineer's Office.
- D. Officers are specifically prohibited from turning dials, changing adjustments, etc., within the traffic signal box.
- E. **Officers should use great care if they open the main door to the traffic signal control box, as high voltage electricity will be present.**

IV. Stuck Signals

- A. Traffic signals that are stuck may sometimes be operated by hand control, allowing for safe, one-man control of traffic.
 - 1. After opening the small police door (if present) or the large main door, look to see if a coiled cord with a button on the end is present.
 - 2. If so, place the "Auto / Manual" or "Auto / Hand" switch in the "Manual" or "Hand" position.
 - 3. Most lights will cycle once with each push of the button.
 - a. After depressing the switch once, observe the light to note changes.
 - b. Officers should be aware that nothing may happen for several pushes, or light faces that the officer cannot see may change.
 - c. Officers should wait approximately 4 seconds between pushes to allow for yellow phases, if activated.
 - 4. Some lights are semi-automatic and will cycle completely through a phase. After depressing the switch once, observe the light to note changes. The light may go to yellow, then cycle to red and green for the side street by itself.

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- B. Signals that either do not have hand control or do not respond to hand control.
 - 1. These signals should have a switch marked "Flash." Engage the switch and observe the light to ensure that it flashes red for one direction and yellow for the other, or red in all directions.
 - 2. If it still does not respond, turn the signal "Off" and direct traffic by hand.
- C. Flash Mode
 - 1. Many signals may handle the traffic volume in flash mode.
 - 2. The location, time of day and traffic present will influence the decision to allow the light to remain on flash without an officer directing traffic.

V. Power Failures

Traffic signals will go dark if supplied fails or there is a total signal failure. If power can not be restored, then manual control of traffic must be performed or temporary stop signs placed.

VI. Temporary Stop Signs

- A. Supply of temporary stop signs
 - 1. The Traffic Division will have 16 signs.
 - 2. Each Patrol District will have 8 signs.
 - 3. The Sign Shop has a supply of signs.
- B. Determining need for temporary stop signs
 - 1. A list of all signalized intersections will be kept at each district and the Traffic Office listing whether an intersection will be signed as two-way stop or all-way stop. It cannot be emphasized enough that just because an intersection may have stop signs, that it should have stop signs and not police traffic control. (For example, if the signal for Airline Hwy. and Old Hammond Hwy. fails at 4:00 p.m., in most every circumstance, stop signs cannot handle the volume of traffic present).
 - 2. Shift supervisors will ultimately be responsible for ensuring the proper control is in place.

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C. Procedure for placing stop signs

1. If an officer and/or his supervisor determine that an intersection may be controlled by stop signs only, then the following procedure shall be followed:
 - a. If the Traffic Office is in normal operation (0530 to 2130 Monday through Saturday) they will be called to bring signs to the failed intersection.
 - b. If the Traffic Office is not in operation, or not able to comply, then the supervisor should have signs from his own Precinct brought to the location.
2. Each District has a pickup truck that may be used to transport the signs.
3. Similarly, if there is a widespread problem and the Traffic Office would be unduly delayed or is out of signs, then the Precinct signs should be used.
4. Placement of signs:
 - a. Every intersection that has temporary stop signs in place must have 2 signs facing each approaching direction.
 - b. The standard position for a stop sign is on the driver's right. However, temporary stop signs must be placed so that traffic approaching it will have a clear line of sight.
 - c. Supplied sandbags must be placed on the base of the sign to prevent it from tipping over.
 - d. Because standards prohibit signs and active signals from being in place at the same intersection, the signal should be placed on "Flash" so that if it comes back on it will not conflict with the stop signs.
5. Retrieval of signs
 - a. The Signal Shop will respond to all intersections that have been reported as out.
 - b. When the Signal Shop repairs the signal outage, they will return the signs to the proper location.
 - c. If the signal outage is due to a power failure, then the officer should make periodic checks to determine if the power is restored. The signal should be placed back into normal operation and the signs removed from the intersection. Signs should be returned to their precinct or notify the Traffic Office to pick their signs up.

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VII. Interagency Communications

- A. If the officer needs to contact the Signal Shop technician, he should notify Headquarters who will arrange for the officer to contact the technician via radio on Mutual Response 3 (Zone B).
 - 1. This will allow for pertinent information to be relayed to the technician to speed repairs.
 - 2. The technician will be aware of the problem in general and will respond as quickly as possible.
 - 3. Should the technician require information, he will call Headquarters on Mutual Response 3 and HQ will have the officer meet the signal unit on that channel.

- B. Signal Shop Priorities:
 - 1. Signals that are hung up.
 - 2. Signals that are flashing.
 - 3. Signals showing multiple indications.
 - 4. Signals with no power.