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# BASIC TRAFFIC CONTROL PROCEDURES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS


Distributed by the

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| | |
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XVII

# BASIC TRAFFIC CONTROL PROCEDURES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

## ABSTRACT

This unit is designed to provide the student with knowledge of the proper techniques for directing traffic in various flow situations. The unit includes a discussion of signals and gestures used in regulating traffic flow.

## BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

Develop an understanding of the basic traffic direction and control (TDC) procedures, namely:

- Uniform and equipment requirements necessary to effectively and safely perform the task
- Types of signals and gestures employed in TDC
- Where and when to apply the TDC techniques and procedures
- TDC procedures in special/unusual situations.

XVII

# BASIC TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL PROCEDURES

## General

### Uniform and Equipment Requirements

Visibility is not only important for the patrolman's safety but also for the safety of motorists and pedestrians. It is important to recall that patrolmen have been injured and even killed for the lack of reflective outerwear under conditions of poor visibility. The required uniform and equipment must be brought by the patrolman to his assigned post and readily available. The patrolman should be familiar with the type of equipment/wearing apparel that may be available to him in the normal TDC situation.

- Daytime operation. The normal police uniform should afford proper protection against the elements; this applies especially to patrolmen assigned to police vehicles. Improperly dressed officer presents a hazard to himself as well as to motorists. Raincoat and cap cover should be readily available in the event of precipitation. If assigned a regular traffic post, the patrolman can probably arrange to store his rain gear at a business establishment nearby.

The following is a list of items which also should be carried by the patrolman in performing TDC procedures:

- Whistle
- Gloves (high visibility)

- Cross belt (white or reflective)
- Slip-over vest (reflective).

- Nighttime operation or periods of low visibility. The patrolman conducting TDC must have some highly reflective outerwear on for primarily two reasons:
  - Effective TDC
  - Personal, motorist and pedestrian safety

  In addition to clothing and equipment mentioned above, the patrolman needs a flashlight or illuminated baton. A spotlight on the officer, headlights in the area, portable lights, etc. can also be used.

## Appearance and Bearing

The patrolman should maintain the following bearing and demeanor:

- Present a good appearance
- Stand erect with a military bearing:
  - Stand straight with your weight equally distributed on each foot (ask your instructor to demonstrate the correct way to stand)
  - Stand with your feet slightly apart so that you can move in any direction if the need arises
  - Stand with your side toward the vehicles authorized to move.
- Do not give the impression that you have been caught in traffic and are waiting for a chance to get out
- Hands should hang relaxed at your side when not signaling
  - Keep your hands out of pockets
  - Do not twirl a chain or any other object.

Uniformity

Signals and gestures used in conducting TDC must be uniform. Uniformity is important for the following reasons:

- The motorist or pedestrian must understand signals and gestures if you expect them to obey you. Uniform signals and gestures direct motorists/pedestrians as to how, when, and where they may move. It is the language in which patrolmen communicate their desired actions in conducting TDC. Therefore, it is important to both:
  - Give clear signals
  - Avoid using exaggerated movements.
- If your signals and gestures are not uniform, motorists/pedestrians will be confused, which would result in the following:
  - Traffic congestion
  - Accidents
  - Disrespect toward the patrolman and the department
  - Vehicle traffic law violations.

How to Stop Traffic

The following is a description of the method the patrolman might use to stop traffic:

- Two motions are used:
  - First, select the vehicle to be stopped.
    While looking directly at the driver, extend your arm and point your finger at the driver. Maintain this position and watch the driver until your signal is observed.
  - Second, raise your hand, but not your arm, so that your palm is toward the driver.
    Hold this position until the driver stops. If you are wearing white gloves, the signal is distinct and quite visible.
- To permit cross-street traffic to move, traffic must be stopped in both directions
  - Stop traffic coming from one direction utilizing the above procedure. You can only look in one direction at a time
  - Once traffic is halted with one hand, turn your head to the other direction and using the above described procedure, stop traffic utilizing your other arm. Do not lower your arms until traffic is stopped.
  - At times for the protection of the police officer and pedestrian traffic, it is advisable to stop the last automobile in the line. A stopped vehicle with brake lights is more visible to traffic than a police officer in the highway.

How to Start Traffic

The following is a description of the method a patrolman might use to start traffic:

- Stand with side toward the vehicles to be started
  - Point finger and arm at the vehicle(s) selected to start. Hold that position until the driver's attention is secured.
  - Turn palm up and swing arm past chin. Bend arm only at elbow.
  - After traffic has been started from one side, lower that arm and start traffic in the other direction.
  - Never turn back to oncoming traffic. Be constantly alert for approaching vehicles.

Signals for a Right Turn Movement

The following is a description of the method a patrolman might use to signal for a right turn movement:

- Not usually required at an intersection.
- If necessary, the arm used for signaling will be determined by the vehicle's direction.
- Approach from the right
  - Point toward the driver with your right arm.
  - Allow sufficient time for the driver to see the gesture, then swing the right arm and point in the direction he is to go. Keep pointing until the driver starts making the turn.

- Approach from the left
    - Point with left arm. When the driver has seen the gesture, swing left arm in the direction he is to go. There is the option of bending the arm at the elbow and indicating the direction with thumb and forearm.

Signals for a Left Turn Movement

The following is a description of the method a patrolman might use to signal for a left turn movement.

- Traffic may have to be stopped in lanes which the turning vehicle must cross.
- Procedure for vehicle approaching from the left.
    - Give the stop signal to vehicles through which the turning vehicle must pass. Once the vehicles have stopped or the lane is clear, make the turning gesture with the left arm.
- Procedure for vehicle approaching from the right
    - Turn and face the direction the vehicle making the turn is to go
    - Stop traffic with right arm. When the traffic is stopped, give the turning gesture with left arm as described above.
    - Caution: Do not permit a left turn if each lane of oncoming traffic has not stopped or is close enough to strike the turning vehicle.

- Left turns on streets with one lane available in each direction
  - The driver wishing to make the turn can tie up traffic unless his movement is properly handled. Normally, he cannot turn unless there is a gap in it.

  - Signal him to move into the intersection close to you. This will permit cars behind him to continue straight through or make a right turn. This is accomplished by pointing at him and motioning him to move forward and point to the position where he is to stop.

  - Permit a left turn when there is a natural gap in the opposing traffic or stop the opposing traffic, as described before, and give the signal for the left turn.

- Pedestrians should be given consideration and should not be required to dodge gaps in traffic.

## Use of the Whistle

The following is a description of how the whistle is used in conjunction with signals and gestures.

- Proper use of the whistle attracts attention of motorists and pedestrians. Use the whistle in moderation to be effective. Blow loudly, not like a musical instrument.
- Various whistle signals are listed below:
  - One long blast supplements the patrolman's hand signal to stop.
  - Two short blasts supplements the patrolman's go signals.
  - Several short blasts attracts attention of:
    - Motorists/pedestrians not responding to signals.
    - Motorist that committed a violation but had driver past the officer and the intersection.
    - Motorist illegally parking.
- Use the whistle to arouse an inattentive driver to impending danger.

## Voice Commands

The following is a description of the use of voice commands:

- Voice commands are seldom used by the patrolman. Reasons for not using voice commands include:
  - Not easy to give or understand
  - Motorist/pedestrian might misinterpret
  - May antagonize motorist/pedestrian

- Situations when voice commands may be used include:
  - Motorist/pedestrian fails to understand signal.
- Procedures for issuing voice commands include:
  - Move reasonably close
  - Be polite and brief
  - Address as Miss, Madam, or Sir
  - Do not lose temper.
- Use an amplifier when emergencies arise.

Crossing of Pedestrians

It is the patrolman's job to protect the pedestrian. Do the job cordially and cheerfully. Patrolmen can be firm and friendly at the same time that they assist the pedestrian.

- Tell the pedestrian when and where to walk
  - The patrolman should not permit crossing until it is safe and should be particularly careful with children and elderly people.
- Assist children at school crossings
  - Small children should be formed in a group and led across, rather than signaling them to cross.
  - Patrolmen should look back to see if there are any stragglers.
  - Avoid crossing children against a traffic signal indication.

Nighttime Procedures

The patrolman should be aware of safety considerations (alertness, wearing reflective outer garments) and use of illuminated baton or flashlight.

- If post has adequate lighting, daylight procedures, as stated previously, are employed; if there is poor lighting, the patrolman should consider setting flares about his position for added protection.
- The illuminated baton is an aid in making signals and gestures at night or during periods of low visibility. It may be confusing if not used properly.
- In using the baton to stop traffic:
  - Stand to one side of vehicle path
  - Hold baton in right hand, elbow bent, baton pointing up
  - Move baton from right to left in a 45 degree arc.
- In using the baton to start traffic:
  - Use normal arm movement with body parallel to traffic
  - Exaggerate and repeat signal often because of limited visibility.
- In using the baton to signal left turn movements:
  - Wait until cross traffic or conflicting traffic is stopped
  - Point lighted end of baton toward turning vehicle and swing arc toward direction of the left turn movement.
- Flashlight (ask instructor to demonstrate procedure). Note that the flashlight is not as good as a baton for conducting TDC, however, it is a substitute.

- In using the flashlight to stop traffic:
  - Stand to the side of approaching vehicle
  - Swing arm slowly across path of approaching vehicle
  - Beam of light should form a moving elongated spot on the road. Do not blind the driver by shining the light directly at him.
  - Once the vehicle has stopped, the illumination from vehicle headlights will permit normal arm signals.
- A spotlight or car headlights can be used to illuminate self.

Directions: Circle the letter of the one item which best completes the following statements.

1. The patrolman should wear highly reflective outerwear:
   a. under conditions of poor visibility
   b. at all times
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

2. Signals for a right turn movement are:
   a. usually required at an intersection
   b. given by either the right or left arm
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

3. In assisting children to cross streets, the patrolman should:
   a. form a single file
   b. lead the group across
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

4. The illuminated baton:
   a. is generally used in nighttime
   b. may be used to start and stop traffic
   c. is much more effective than a flashlight for TDC
   d. all of the above.

Turn to page XVII - 30 to check your answers.

Where to Stand

Routine Positions for Conducting Point to Point Traffic Control

In conducting TDC, the patrolman should use the following safety precautions and positions:

- Safety precautions
  - Always think of your own safety and be prepared to quickly move out of the way of a vehicle that you believe may be out of control
  - Never step back without looking first to see that the way is clear
  - Never turn your back on moving traffic for the following reasons:
    - Body language - a patrolman's front or back to traffic is an indication to stop
    - Driver may be day dreaming and may not see you
    - Vehicle may have defective brakes
    - Driver may misunderstand your signal
    - Driver may have defective eyesight
    - Driver may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
  - Never permit vehicles or pedestrians to start from a stopped position until approaching traffic is stopped
  - When moving a lane of traffic, it is desireable to stop the last car in the line, to keep a metal barrier between the patrolman and oncoming traffic.

- Common positions a patrolman may select.
  - Note that there is no absolute rule for every intersection

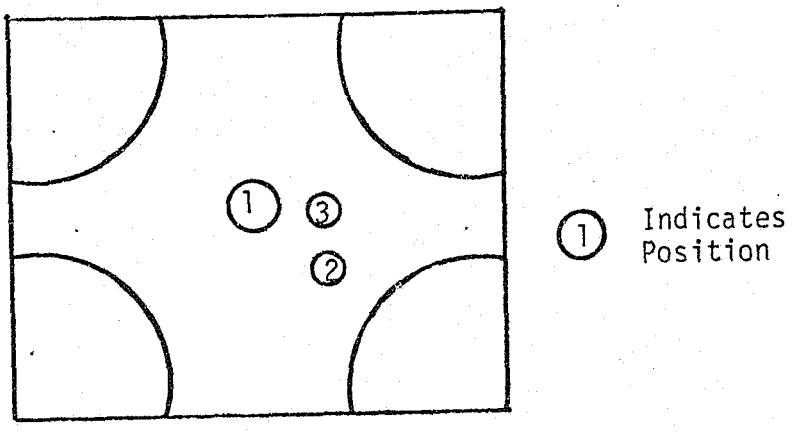


Exhibit 17-1

- Center position ① on exhibit 17-1 is the usual position for conducting TDC
  - The advantages of this position are as follows:
    - You can see what is going on around you
    - You can be seen by all drivers and pedestrians entering the intersection
  - The disadvantages of this position are as follows:
    - Most hazardous to patrolman
    - Patrolman forms an obstruction
      - Driver is uncertain whether to turn left in front of him or behind him

- The corner position (2) or center of one street position (3) are alternate positions which may be selected.
- Several points to consider before selecting alternate positions are as follows:
  - Personal safety
  - All lines of traffic and pedestrians can be seen
  - Degree of interference with free flowing traffic which causes you to continually shift position
  - Ability to control vehicle turning movements
  - Ability to direct pedestrian movements.

- Specific cases.
  - Review the following types of intersections and roadways where patrolmen are likely to perform TDC. Note that intersections will be either signal controlled or uncontrolled. Note also the suggested position where manual TDC is likely to be most effective and that alternate positions may be selected dependent on the situation.
  - Both streets two-way (common intersection)
    - Center position between the opposing streams of traffic.

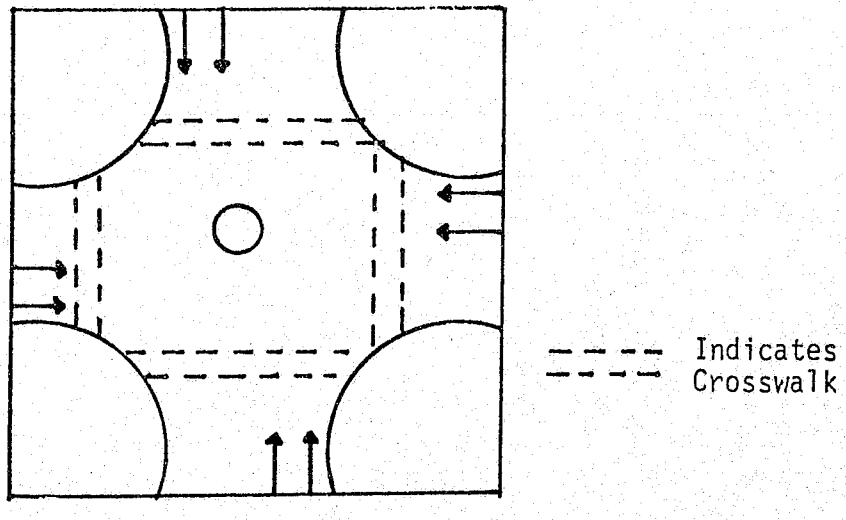


Exhibit 17-2

- One street two-way
  - Center of the two-way street

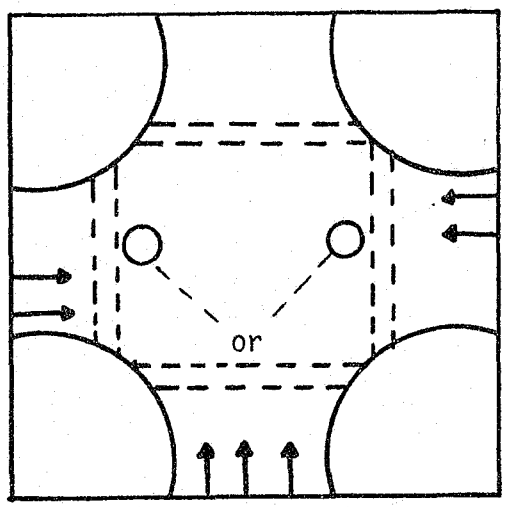


Exhibit 17-3

- Both streets one-way
  - Corner between the approaching flow of traffic on each street

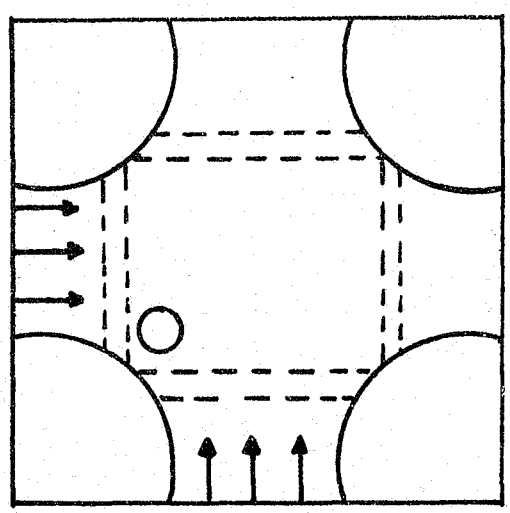

Exhibit 17-4

- Irregular intersection. Streets which do not cross at right angles or where additional streets join the intersection
  - Center position probably best
  - Mention again that position selection depends on the situation.

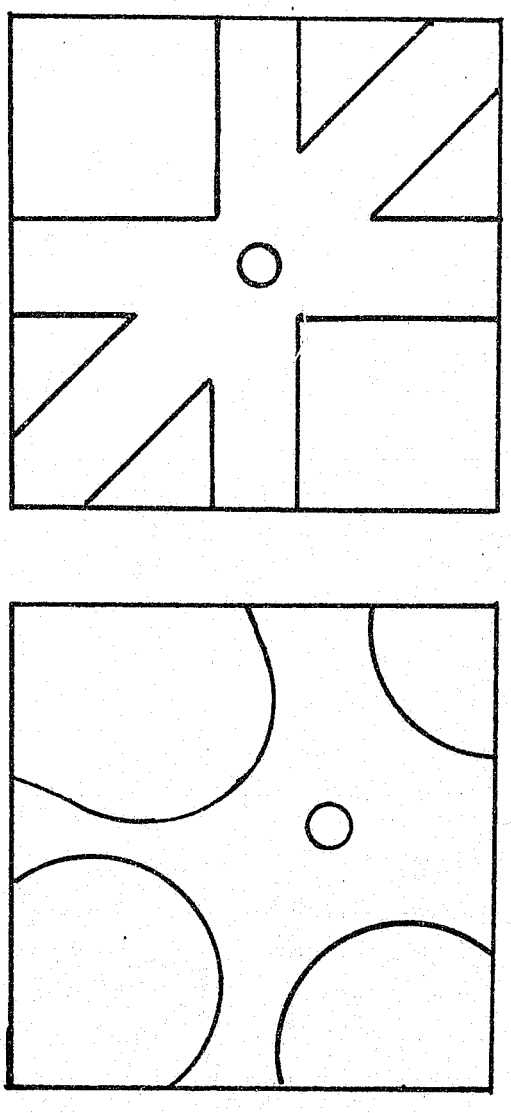

Exhibit 17-5

Examples of Irregular Intersections

- Between intersections. General purpose is to prevent mid-block traffic jams.
  - It may assist intersection patrolmen in maintaining traffic flow by preventing:
    - Double parking
    - Parking in restricted areas
    - Improved loading or unloading.
  - Center of the roadway is probably the best position
    - Affords best view of traffic situation
    - Motorist can easily see patrolman
- Limited access highway. Maintain personal safety when conducting TDC on a limited access highway.
  - Position selected strictly depends on situation
  - Patrolman must be alert and flexible
    - Vehicles travel at high rate of speed and require a longer braking distance
  - Patrolman must not stand directly in front of approaching vehicles
  - Patrolman should check oncoming lanes of traffic before stepping out into them.

## Considerations

The following are considerations for regulating traffic flow.

- Priority of movement should be given to the most heavily traveled street. Streets with similar traffic flows should have equal and adequate time phases. Time allotted to different movements has to vary with the traffic conditions. Patrolmen must be flexible in allocating phases when manually conducting TDC and should take advantage of gaps in cross traffic.
- Heavy traffic in various conflicting streams must be handled more systematically. Generally, a full cycle is about 60 seconds. In normal situations, however, it can vary from 40 - 80 seconds.
- Each phase should be proportional to traffic demands.
    - If, for example, traffic were equal on two intersecting roads, the phase would normally be 30 seconds, alternately. With a third phase for left turns only, the total cycle would be approximately 90 seconds, with a time distribution of 35 seconds for through movements and 20 seconds for left turns. Common sense will often indicate when the flow of directions should be changed.

## Right Turns

These turns may be permitted for traffic which is stopped when it is determined that the road width is sufficient so as not to interfere with the through flow of traffic.

## Keep the Intersection Clear

Do not permit traffic to enter the intersection if it cannot clear because of congestion immediately beyond. Blocked intersection does not permit cross traffic. Watch out for spillback; find cause, and take such actions as the following:

- Hold traffic if necessary
- Permit traffic to move only in open traffic lanes.

## TDC at Signalized Intersections

The patrolman's function at a signalized intersection is as follows:

- Assists signal operation whenever the signal alone cannot adequately control the flow of vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic.
- Accomplishes this function in several ways dependent on the situation. The patrolman can augment signal operation with proper use of hand signals and whistle.
- Also, when assisting, the patrolman should step away from the control box so that drivers and pedestrians can see the desired signals and gestures.

- Another means of assisting signal operation is to manually control the signal intervals by taking the signal out of the automatic mode and putting it in the manual control mode.
    - When manually controlling the traffic signal, patrolman position is most important. It must not create a conflict for motorists in terms of whether they should obey the signal or the patrolman. If it becomes necessary to supplement the traffic signal with signals and gestures, step away from the control box.
- If signal lights are defective in their operation, turn them off before employing signals and gestures. Notify the department of the failure and complete the forms to facilitate repairs if necessary. Patrolmen should place the signals back in the automatic mode when the signals can adequately handle the traffic flow.

Note: Under no circumstances should the officer use manual control mode until fully instructed in the use of the control device.

Avoiding Traffic Jams

Note that a key car should be removed before a jam occurs. However, a key blocking car may eventually be a contributing cause to accident, causing the situation to become worse. An officer should be alert for causes of traffic jams and remove them before the jam occurs.

## Breaking Traffic Jams

Patrolmen conducting TDC should never permit an intersection to jam. If it occurs the following guidelines should be followed:

- Determine the seriousness of the jam and how soon you can expect it to clear. A simple jam is one where the patrolman keeps all approaching cars out of the intersection until the blocking cars move on and the jam clears itself. A serious jam is one where the jam is expected to continue for some time. The patrolman's task is to make an opening in the intersection, otherwise neighboring intersections will be jammed.
  - Take the following action to clear the jam:
    - Determine the key vehicle creating the jam
    - Direct adjacent cars to move when possible to free the key car
    - If necessary, direct drivers to use roads other than they had intended (make turns instead of going straight, etc.).

Note: Since motorists are creatures of habit, sometimes it may be necessary to divert traffic to other major highways or streets parallel to the traveled street to expedite the movement of traffic. A person who finds an easier way may change his habits and the traffic will be more equally distributed on the various streets and highways.

## Special Considerations

### Vehicles Traveling on Hilly Roads

It is important to give drivers ample warning and braking distance before the direction of the flow is changed. Whenever possible, permit heavy vehicles to clear the intersection on an uphill grade. Heavy vehicles take longer to stop and gain momentum and may slow flow of traffic.

### Weather Conditions

Be aware of the fact that weather has an effect on TDC. The major areas which are affected by weather conditions are:

- Visibility
- Braking distances
- Driver reactions
- Equipment failures (vehicles, traffic control devices, etc.).

## TDC in Special/Unusual Situations

### General Objectives

The basic objectives of TDC, namely, to expedite the safe movement of traffic and to relieve congestion, remain in effect in special/unusual situations. In addition, the requirement will be placed on the patrolman to facilitate the movements of emergency vehicles (giving priority to the heavier vehicle) such as:

- Fire trucks
- Ambulances
- Police cars
- Tow trucks.

That patrolman must learn the geography of local highways and streets in order to effectively reroute or detour traffic when situations warrant such action. Before rerouting traffic, patrolmen must be aware of some of the following local factors:

- Traffic density
- Narrow road/bridge
- Bridge heights
- Road/bridge tonnage capacity.

## Accidents

Some of the basic responsibilities a patrolman has in conducting TDC at the scene of an accident are as follows:

- Prevent additional accidents from occurring by conducting effective TDC at the scene of an accident
- Relieve congestion caused by an accident
- Detour traffic around an accident scene as necessary, once it has been determined that the detour route can handle the traffic
    - Under conditions of poor visibility, set out flares or cones well in advance of accident scene to warn oncoming traffic. A patrolman should use safety precautions in lighting flares. Flares/cones should be used to channel traffic around the obstruction. Because of the poor visibility, the patrolman should also facilitate emergency vehicles to and from the scene and solicit help from motorists and pedestrians to expedite traffic flow, when necessary.

## Fires

The patrolman's primary TDC responsibilities at the scene of a fire are as follows:

- Clear traffic lanes for emergency vehicles
- Keep unauthorized vehicles out of restricted area

- Expedite the flow of traffic around the area
- Keep curiosity seekers out of the area.

TDC is usually performed just outside the core area of emergency. Usually traffic must be rerouted or detoured around the area which requires coordination of patrolmen conducting this function.

Other Special/Unusual Situations

There are many types of situations where patrolmen must perform a TDC function. Some of the situations are as follows:

- Escort service. The purpose of this function is to channel the escorted traffic over specific routes with the least practical delay. Escorts can be used for funerals, parades, oversized loads and military convoys. Escort service is not legally considered emergency service as a reason for using the siren and other equipment and violating the rules of the road.

- TDC at special events. Some of the special events where patrolmen facilitate the flow of traffic include sports, theater, race track and parades.

- Motorist emergency. If a motorist or his vehicle should become distressed at or near the patrolman's traffic post, the patrolman should stop traffic in all directions before leaving his post to render assistance.

Directions: Circle the letter of the one item which best completes the following statements.

5. The purpose of TDC between intersections is to:
   a. prevent mid-block traffic jams
   b. afford best view of traffic situation
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

6. In breaking traffic jams, the patrolman should:
   a. immediately call the dispatcher for assistance
   b. make an opening in the intersection
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

7. Rerouting traffic:
   a. is frequently necessary to facilitate movement
   b. requires knowledge of the geography of local highways and streets
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

8. In conducting TDC at the scene of an accident, the patrolman:
   a. should first attend to the injured
   b. prevent additional accidents from occurring by conducting effective TDC
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a or b.

Turn the page to check your answers.

## KEY

1. a. under conditions of poor visibility.

   (See pages XVII - 3 and XVII - 4.)

2. b. given by either the right or left arm.

   (See pages XVII - 7 and XVII - 8.)

3. b. lead the group across.

   (See page XVII - 11.)

4. d. all of the above.

   (See page XVII - 12.)

5. a. prevent mid-block traffic jams.

   (See page XVII - 20.)

6. b. make an opening in the intersection.

   (See page XVII - 24.)

7. b. requires knowledge of the geography of local highways and streets.

   (See page XVII - 26.)

8. b. prevent additional accidents from occurring by conducting effective TDC.

   (See page XVII - 27.)

END