





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

	POLICE VEHICLE OPERATIONS	
	POLICY NUMBER: 41-10	ISSUING AUTHORITY
	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 12, 2025	 Christine A. Elow Police Commissioner

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Police department vehicles are purchased and maintained for the purpose of delivering police services to the City. The department is committed to maintaining its vehicles to be safe, dependable, and professional in appearance; and stocked with supplies according to function. Employees are expected to keep vehicles clean and fueled, and to report damage or malfunction in a timely manner.

Inherent in the operation of police vehicles is a heightened risk of harm to officers and the public. However, the Cambridge Police Department places the highest value on the sanctity of human life. Therefore, all personnel who operate department vehicles shall do so with a heightened level of vigilance and care and shall wear a seatbelt when the vehicle is in motion.

While this policy addresses many general mandates and procedures for the operation of police department vehicles, it does not address all of them; other policies address specific mandates and procedures for operating vehicles in various police functions, including Patrol Operations, Pursuit, and Special Purpose Vehicles.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department to:

- A. require that employees who are authorized to operate department vehicles do so in a safe and prudent manner, obey traffic laws absent exigent circumstances, maintain current and valid drivers' licenses, and report a conviction of a motor vehicle charge, loss, or suspension of driving privileges to the Commissioner;
- B. prohibit the use of department vehicles for personal business or pleasure;
- C. require that only authorized personnel operate police vehicles who may only transport other persons, including but not limited to, detainees, victims, witnesses, ride-along passengers, and clergy according to department policy;
- D. secure police department vehicles and remove the keys when unattended and not in use; and

- E. report all damage or malfunctions to a supervisor, who may initiate a BlueTeam review if necessary, and document the circumstances in a written report.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Fleet Manager*: An employee designated by the Police Commissioner who is responsible for coordinating the equipping, stocking, maintenance, and replacement of department vehicles.
- B. *Police Vehicle*: All vehicles that are maintained by the police department, to include all specialty vehicles that are marked as a police vehicle, patrol cruisers assigned to the Operations Division, police motorcycles, any clearly marked vans, SUVs, and other special purpose vehicles.
- C. *Special Purpose Vehicle*: A motor vehicle intended for a specific purpose, such as a mobile command post, tactical team van, bomb unit vehicle, or four-wheel ATV.
- D. *Unmarked Vehicle*: A sedan or truck without visible paint, markings, and equipment that would make it easily identifiable as a police vehicle.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Authorization
 - 1. Department vehicles may be operated only by employees authorized to do so.
- B. Licensing
 - 1. All employees operating department vehicles must possess an active and valid Massachusetts driver's license.
 - 2. An employee whose right to operate a motor vehicle has been suspended or revoked shall inform their supervisor immediately upon learning of such suspension or revocation; and if directed to operate a department vehicle advise a supervisor in this regard.
 - 3. The Professional Standards Unit is responsible for conducting an internal audit of all employees' licenses to ensure compliance with the licensing requirement.
- C. Operator Responsibilities
 - 1. Prior to operating a department vehicle, usually at the beginning of a shift and assuming no emergency, employees will inspect the vehicle for proper operating functionality, cleanliness, fuel and supplies, and damage. The inspection shall be noted in the Fleetio software.
 - a. Defective or damaged vehicles shall be reported to the Sector Sergeant, who will inspect the reported damage or deficiency and report to the fleet manager.
 - b. The Sector Sergeant shall initiate an investigation of any unexplained damage.
 - c. Vehicles used for transporting detainees shall be inspected for weapons, contraband, and hazardous material according to policy on Transportation of Detainees.

- d. Upon returning the vehicle, the operator should refuel if necessary and remove any debris from the interior compartments.

D. Monthly Inspections

1. Fleet Maintenance shall inspect all vehicles on a regular basis and perform preventive maintenance, repairs, washing, and ensure operational readiness including all equipment, such as First Aid Kits, AEDs, and forms. Any deficiencies should be reported to the Shift Commander who will arrange for replacement or replenishment.

E. Use of Seatbelts

1. All employees of the department are required to wear factory-installed seatbelts while operating or riding in any department vehicle. Employees shall not buckle the seatbelts behind the front seats of the vehicle to bypass or disengage the seatbelt warning signals. Such action may disengage other collision safety features of the vehicle, particularly the deployment of airbags. Therefore, rendering inoperable any of the other safety devices within the vehicle is strictly prohibited.
2. Whenever officers transport non-sworn personnel or members of the public in a police vehicle, all passengers shall use seatbelts while the vehicle is in motion.
 - a. This requirement also pertains to any detainees who are transported as a passenger in a marked or unmarked police cruiser.
3. Children being transported in a police vehicle may be transported without a car seat if car seats are not available. A child being transported in a police vehicle should not be left unattended by an adult and should always use a seatbelt while the vehicle is in motion.

F. Equipment and Supplies

1. All marked and unmarked patrol vehicles shall be equipped with emergency lights and siren.
2. All unmarked vehicles intended for use other than patrol shall be equipped with the proper necessary functional supplies.
3. No paint or body modifications may be made to a department vehicle without prior approval of the Commanding Officer of the Administrative Section.

G. Pushing and Jump-Starting Disabled Vehicle

1. Department vehicles shall not be used for pushing other vehicles.
2. Department vehicles may not be used to jump start vehicles, except for other department vehicles and only by one of the department's mechanics.

H. Maintenance

1. Fleet Maintenance is responsible for state inspections, oil changes, tire damage and wear. If a tire needs to be inflated or replaced after hours, a City-approved tow company may be called with approval of a supervisor.

2. Mechanical and equipment failure shall be reported to a supervisor who will determine if the vehicle should be taken out of service and reported to Fleet Maintenance. Inoperable vehicles may be left in the Fleet Garage, at the police station in an appropriate parking space, or at the North Cambridge Station in a designated parking space.

I. Towing

1. If a department vehicle requires towing and is in the local area, towing will be arranged through one of the city's approved towing vendors. Typically, a disabled police vehicle will be towed to the department's Fleet Maintenance Garage or left in one of the two alternate locations as indicated in the previous section.
2. If the vehicle is outside of the local area, the operator will notify the Shift Commander. The state police or local police department in whose jurisdiction the disabled vehicle is located shall be called to arrange for the towing of the vehicle.

J. Collisions Involving Police Vehicles

1. All collisions involving department police vehicles will be fully investigated regardless of the extent of the damage to either the department vehicle or another vehicle.
2. It is the responsibility of the operator of a police vehicle to report immediately whenever there is a collision or damage involving a police vehicle.
 - a. An employee shall not move the vehicle, except in an emergency, when:
 - (1) an employee is involved in a collision with or while operating a department vehicle;
 - (2) a vehicle is used as a defensive instrument in a use of force situation;
 - (3) a vehicle is disabled or sustains serious damage.
 - b. In addition to the Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Crash Operators Report, the operator shall submit a written statement detailing the events leading up to and during the collision.
 - c. If an employee is involved in a collision that could likely result in criminal charges, such as vehicular homicide, the Shift Commander will immediately notify the Duty Chief, who in turn will make the appropriate notifications, to include notification to the Commanding Officer of the department's Professional Standards Unit and the District Attorney's Office in compliance with M.G.L. c. 38, § 3. Depending on the severity of the collision, the Duty Chief may request that the State Police Collision Reconstruction Team assist in the department's investigation.
3. Collisions Within City of Cambridge Jurisdiction
 - a. All collisions within the City involving department police vehicles will be fully investigated by a supervisor. When the collision involves a patrol officer, detective, or non-sworn employee, the investigation will be conducted by the Sector Sergeant and reviewed by the next higher-ranking officer. If the operator of the police vehicle is a supervisor, the

collision will be investigated by a higher-ranking officer and reviewed by the next higher-ranking supervisor.

- (1) The investigator shall complete the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Motor Crash Exchange Form.
 - (2) The investigator shall complete a Cambridge Police Department City Solicitor Report.
 - (3) The names, addresses, dates of birth, extent of injury, and other pertinent identifying information shall be obtained for all occupants of the involved vehicles, injured pedestrians/bicyclists, and other involved persons.
 - (4) The extent of the damage to property and injuries to persons shall be recorded.
 - (5) Photographs of the scene and damages should be taken.
- b. The supervisor will compile all reports from the officer operating the vehicle and from the investigating officer. The supervisor will then review the reports and determine whether the collision was preventable or non-preventable. The supervisor will complete a BlueTeam entry including the determination and will forward it to their superior.
- c. The Unit Commander will review all reports and write a report including a statement of concurrence or disagreement with the supervisor's findings. The Unit Commander will forward the reports to the Commanding Officer. This process will be repeated through all command levels concluding with the submission of all reports to the Police Commissioner.
4. Collisions Outside the City of Cambridge Jurisdiction
- a. Officers or non-sworn employees who are involved in a collision with a department vehicle outside the City of Cambridge jurisdiction shall immediately report such to the Shift Commander. The employee is responsible for notifying the appropriate agency having jurisdiction of where the collision occurred.
 - (1) The Shift Commander will verify that the employee involved has notified the appropriate agency of the collision. At the time of notification, the Shift Commander should obtain sufficient information concerning the circumstances of the collision, to include whether there were any injuries and/or any property damage.
 - (2) The collision should be investigated by the agency having jurisdiction.
 - (3) If the agency refuses to investigate the collision, the employee shall immediately notify the Shift Commander of such, in which case the Shift Commander should speak with the Commanding Officer of that agency and inform them of the Cambridge Police Department's policy in having all collisions fully investigated, and request full cooperation.
 - (4) At the discretion of the Shift Commander, a supervisor or other officer may be assigned to respond to take photographs and otherwise offer to render assistance to the investigating agency.

5. Collision Review

- a. The completed collision reports should be forwarded through the appropriate chain of command via BlueTeam. The reviewing officers should confirm that the report is complete and accurate, and determine if there were any violations of criminal law or department policy. In such cases, the completed BlueTeam report should be forwarded to the Professionals Standards Unit for further investigation and/or review.
- b. In all collisions involving a police vehicle, a separate internal review will be performed by the Commanding Officer of the employee involved in the collision. This review process should include the following assessment.
 - (1) If the collision was *preventable*: the employee did not operate the vehicle in a safe and professional manner, and in accordance with department policy, as well as state statutes and municipal ordinances or traffic regulations.
 - (2) If the collision was *non-preventable*: the employee operated the vehicle in a safe and professional manner and in accordance with department policy, as well as state statutes and municipal ordinances or traffic regulations.
 - (3) The reviewing Commanding Officer should summarize the findings and indicate whether in their view the collision was preventable or non-preventable.

6. Remedial and Disciplinary Action

- a. The goal of any post-collision remedial or disciplinary action is to modify employee behavior. Actions available to effect such change includes, but is not limited to:
 - (1) training;
 - (2) re-training;
 - (3) medical evaluation;
 - (4) Employee Assistance Program; and
 - (5) disciplinary action.
- b. Superior officers making such decisions should consider the totality of the circumstances as well as any aggravating and mitigating factors. Nothing in these recommended guidelines shall prohibit the Police Commissioner or Division Commanders from taking action outside of these recommendations including:
 - (1) training or re-training;
 - (2) a medical evaluation for a condition suspected of having a causal relationship to the collision; and
 - (3) disciplinary action.

7. Annual Review of Collisions Involving Department Employees

- a. Annually, or more frequently if necessary, the Professional Standards Unit will conduct a review of all police involved collisions that took place during the preceding twelve months. The review will take the following factors into consideration.
 - (1) Any discernible patterns that may suggest modifications to the department's training program, to policies and procedures, or to existing practices.
 - (2) A review of the driving history of the employees involved in collisions over the past three-year period to determine the frequency of collisions and/or any patterns stemming from prior collisions.
 - (3) Any recommendations regarding departmental internal review of collisions.
 - (4) The completed annual report will be forwarded to the Police Commissioner with all recommendations.

- K. Vehicle Disposal
 - a. When a police department vehicle is to be disposed of through auction, trade in, possession by an insurance company, or other means, the Fleet Manager shall cause all loose supplies and equipment to be removed from the vehicle. The vehicle shall be stripped of all retrofitted equipment that is unique to public safety vehicles, such as two-way radios, emergency lights, prisoner cages, radio racks, MDT mounts, push bars, and sirens.