Quality Driving Program

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NORWALK STATION

TO: DEPUTY PERSONNEL,
NORWALK STATION

SUBJECT: STATION DIRECTIVE 98-03; QUALITY DRIVING PROGRAM (DEPUTIES)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this directive is to decrease the number of preventable on-duty traffic collisions involving Temple Station personnel.

Our decisions, or more succinctly, our attitudes must reflect an understanding of the need to safely operate our patrol vehicles during normal and emergency driving conditions. The vehicle code offers protection from liability while operating a patrol vehicle during emergency driving conditions, so long as the operator of the car does so with due regard for public safety. There is no protection from liability for the unsafe operation of a patrol car during normal driving conditions. Furthermore, the unsafe operation of a patrol vehicle during emergency driving conditions subjects the drive and the department to indefensible litigation and costly settlements.

As public servants, we must set the correct standards for safe driving techniques by obeying all traffic laws in accordance with our Code of Ethics. Law enforcement officers are held to higher standards - we are accountable to those we serve.

DIRECTIVE:

Deputy personnel shall be aware of the following situations that can result in a collision:

The most common factor associated with preventable collisions during normal driving conditions has been identified as **inattention**.

Inattention:

> Driving can be described as a multi-task decision making process. Accelerating, stopping, turning, talking, and listening to the radio are just a few things we do while driving. Deputies should pay attention and stay focused on the act of driving itself. Looking around for suspects, pushing light bar switches and talking on the radio or to a partner a the same time increases our odds of a collision. As we do more, we see less potential hazards around us. The number one cause of accidents due o inattention has been identified as MDT usage. Using the MDT while moving causes most preventable collisions. Eye contact is taken off the roadway and directed to the terminal itself (your eyes need time to refocus and interpret the MDT screen). Deputies should always pull over the side of the road before typing or reading any transmission. Having SRC show your location or running a plate is an available resource to us.

Unsafe Backing/ Staring:

When practical, walk around your vehicle to check for obstacles if you know that backing will occur when leaving a location. Objects such as poles, hydrants, mailboxes, brick planters, etc., are difficult to see at night. Do not rely on mirrors; continually check all around you. When stopped behind another vehicle, keep our foot firmly on the brake while your head is turned to check on-coming traffic. Doing another task (such as typing on the MDT) while assuming the car ahead of you has moved on is a sure-fire way to "Drift" forward into another car.

Speed / Following Too Close:

Unsafe speed & following too closely are the primary factors for traffic collisions not related to inattention. Priority or emergency calls increase anxiety and may increase our speed, thus diminishing our defensive driving techniques. Slow down! We can't be of help to anyone if we can't get there safely, especially with a back-up or assistance request. Back-off following other cars too closely, especially when making a traffic stop or if you are in pursuit. Expect the unexpected from motorists and pursued suspects. Driving a radio car doesn't allow us to push the speed limits.

Code 3 Driving:

Collision factors associated with emergency driving conditions are most frequently related to unsafe vehicle speed and failure to clear intersections prior to entry. Driving Code 3 does not give us the right-of-way; we must clear intersections one lane at a time and proceed only when it is safe to do so. Do not let your guard down just because the light is green for your direction of travel!

Deputy personnel should be aware that approximately 75% of radio car collisions occur during the hours of darkness and should therefore take extra precautions. **Always wear safety belts** and practice **defense driving**.

In summary, our driving habits receive the greatest amount of public scrutiny. We must be safe and professional in the operation of patrol
vehicles **at all times**.

RJW:mw