



# ACTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

	DEPARTMENT MANUAL; P&P: Traffic	
POLICY & PROCEDURE # 5.06	DATE OF ISSUE: 5/14/2025	EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/21/2025
SUBJECT: SERVICES TO MOTORISTS	ISSUING AUTHORITY: Chief James Cogan	
REFERENCE(S): Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission # 61.4.1; 61.4.2	<input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AMENDS <input type="checkbox"/> RESCINDS	

## I. POLICY

The public often relies upon the police for assistance and advice in many routine and emergency situations, which can and do develop on the roadway. Information and directions should be provided to the public by the officer to his/her best ability. Officers should assist disabled motorists by contacting the Department's on-call towing/road service company. Officers should not engage in directly providing the service (i.e. obtaining fuel, changing tires, or making minor repairs) unless directed by a supervisor.

### A. Transporting Motorists

1. At the supervisor's discretion, officers may transport stranded motorists to an in-town location or arrange for a transfer with an area Department.
  - a. During a transport, and when practicable, officers should activate their body-worn cameras and cruiser-mounted cameras for the duration of the transport. Officers should notify the motorist that they are being audio and video recorded during the transport.
  - b. Officers should advise dispatch of their location and odometer reading at the beginning and end of the transport.
  - c. If given by the transporting officer, dispatch shall record the odometer readings from the beginning and end of the transport in the CAD notes.

### B. General Assistance (Motor Vehicle Lockouts) [61.4.1 (a)]

Officers of the Acton Police Department shall not provide lockout services. However, where circumstances such as extreme hot or cold weather exist or where a life may be in danger, officers are authorized to use whatever means necessary to secure the safety of any child, elder, or disabled person, individual, pet, or other animal. If deemed appropriate and where possible, the Acton Fire Department should be

requested to respond to the scene to provide rescue measures and medical assessment. Where no immediate danger to any person or animal exists, officers shall assist the owner of any such vehicle to secure private/commercial assistance such as AAA, a locksmith, or a service garage with lockout ability.

### **C. Towing and Mechanical Services [61.4.1 (b)]**

1. The Acton Police Department will always assist and protect citizens and motorists on any street or roadway that are in need. When an officer observes a stranded motorist, he/she will stop and ascertain what assistance, if any, is required. The officer may take any of the following actions:
  - a) If the vehicle is disabled on the roadway and can be pushed to a safe location off the roadway, the officer should help the person move the vehicle.
  - b) Arrange for the motorist to have the vehicle towed either by the owner's request or the Department's on-call service
  - c) Relay a message to a competent mechanic to have him repair the vehicle at the scene.
  - d) Transport the motorist to the Police Department or to a telephone.
  - e) Relay to the dispatcher a motorist's request to telephone a contact for assistance.
  - f) Officers who assist stranded motorists shall remain alert to the following possibilities:
    - 1) The vehicle is in possession of a motorist who has not been authorized its use.
    - 2) The vehicle is in an unsafe operating condition.
    - 3) The motorist is unlicensed to drive.
    - 4) The motorist is incapable of safely operating the vehicle.
    - 5) The vehicle's occupants have engaged in criminal activity.
2. Officers shall not use their patrol vehicles to push or pull any vehicles for the purpose of starting the vehicle. The supervisor may authorize such acts if it is determined that immediate removal is necessary so that further traffic problems and/or the possibility of a serious collision may be diminished **[61.4.1(d)]**.
3. Officers are not allowed to assist motorists by using police vehicles and jumper cables to help start vehicles. This policy exists due to the heavy electrical demand caused by the ancillary cruiser equipment, as well as the possible damage to sensitive electronic components and systems within the police vehicle - mobile data terminals, two-way radios, in-car MVR, and other sensitive items. Supervisors

may authorize the use of the Department's rechargeable jumper pack to assist motorists if time and traffic safety permit.

#### **D. Stranded Persons on the Roadway [61.4.1 (c)]**

Because of the overall danger to the stranded person and also to the motorists on the roadway, potentially affected by the stranded person, the Department will offer reasonable assistance at all times to the stranded person who appears to be in need of aid. This will apply at all hours of the day and particularly during the nighttime hours when hazards are commensurately increased.

#### **E. Emergency Assistance for Motorists [61.4.1 (e)]**

All emergency requests shall be radioed to the dispatcher for additional responses. Emergency assistance shall be provided to motorists by police personnel in any of the following situations:

1. First Aid,
2. Obtaining medical assistance,
3. Fighting fires,
4. Obtaining fire service assistance,
5. Obtaining mechanical / tow services, and/or
6. Criminal investigation of incidents occurring on the roadway.

#### **F. Road Hazards [61.4.2]**

1. Roadway and roadside hazards are contributing factors in many traffic crashes. Hazardous conditions may include, but are not limited to:
  - a) Debris in the roadway.
  - b) Defects in the roadway itself.
  - c) Lack of proper, obstructed, down, or damaged mechanical traffic control devices.
  - d) Lack of traffic control informational signs.
  - e) Lack of or defective roadway lighting systems.
  - f) Other roadside hazards, including vehicles parked or abandoned on or near the roadway.
2. Upon discovery of a hazardous or environmental condition, which sometimes is related, the officer shall request that the appropriate agency be contacted to have the hazard corrected.

3. In an officer's opinion, a hazard is identified and such hazard requires immediate correction (such as a fallen tree or electrical wire across or in any part of the traveled portion of the roadway), the officer will immediately inform communications of this situation, identifying assistance or special equipment required. The officer will protect the scene and bystanders and direct traffic, or take any other action deemed necessary to correct the situation.

## **SERVICES TO MOTORISTS INFORMATION**

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**History: Manual I, Section III.**