# Law Enforcement Emergency Vehicle Operations, LMC Model Policy

*League models are thoughtfully developed by our staff for a city’s consideration. Models should be customized as appropriate for an individual city’s circumstances in consultation with the city’s attorney.*

# **City of** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Minnesota**

# **Emergency Vehicle Operations**

## Purpose

This policy provides guidance to officers in the safe and responsible operation of emergency vehicles. ([Minn. Stat. § 626.8458, subd. 1](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/626.8458)). It does not encompass pursuit decisions or tactics.

## Policy

It is the policy of this agency to require that officers exercise sound professional judgment in the operation of emergency vehicles, mindful of our overarching duty to protect public safety. Emergency driving is sometimes necessary to meet urgent public safety needs, but it involves increased risks to persons and property. Officers must balance these risks against the need for a prompt response, while also driving with due regard for the safety of others. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.17](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.17)).

## Guidelines

1. For the purposes of this policy, an emergency is a situation that, in the exercise of sound professional judgment, calls for arriving somewhere more promptly than could be accomplished by routine driving in order to protect life, safety, property, render medical assistance, or to apprehend one who has committed or is suspected of committing an offense.

Officers must discontinue an emergency response when:

Circumstances indicate the risk created by emergency driving plainly outweighs the necessity of arriving quickly;

The emergency situation has ceased to exist; or

When directed by a supervisor to discontinue.

1. To operate in emergency status, the police vehicle must be sounding its siren or displaying at least one lighted red light to the front. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 169.03, subd. 2](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.03); [169.17](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.17)). Officers should use both lights and siren when doing so would enhance safety without hindering a law enforcement objective. The use of a siren might hinder a law enforcement objective when, for example, nearing the scene of a reported crime in progress.
2. Officers must exercise sound professional judgment in gauging their speed and manner of driving. There are multiple factors that bear on safety during emergency driving, including but not limited to road, traffic, weather, and lighting conditions, time of day, and the presence of pedestrians. Officers should take these and other relevant factors into account and respond in a manner that does not, given the urgency of the situation, unreasonably endanger others.

## Statutory Framework

The Minnesota traffic code provides specific exemptions for emergency vehicles that apply when an officer is responding to an emergency or is in immediate pursuit of an actual or suspected violator. These exemptions allow officers operating an emergency vehicle to:

1. Proceed cautiously past a red light or stop sign after slowing down as necessary for safety ([Minn. Stat. § 169.03, subd. 2](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.03));
2. Travel faster than the speed limit ([Minn. Stat. § 169.17](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.17));
3. Enter against the run of traffic on a one-way street or highway to get to the place of the reported emergency ([Minn. Stat. § 169.03, subd. 3](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.03)); and
4. Stop or park as necessary at the scene of an emergency, without regard to laws or ordinances that regulate parking or stopping in traffic. ([Minn. Stat. § 169.03, subd. 4](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/169.03)).

However, driving conduct that is not specifically covered by an exemption may still be permissible when officers: (1) are balancing the need for arriving quickly against the risks of the emergency response; and (2) driving with due regard for the safety of others.

## Training

Officers whom the Chief of Police determines may be involved in police pursuits are required to undergo the training specified by [Minn. Stat § 626.8458 subd. 5](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/626.8458) for pursuits and emergency vehicle operations. Other officers who operate vehicles in emergency status should receive in-service training in emergency vehicle operations as may be directed.