Policy III.3000.E, Emergency Driving and Non-Emergency Driving

Purpose

This policy establishes the standards governing the operation of San Jacinto College Police Department vehicles, including use of emergency vehicles during emergency responses and vehicle pursuits. It is intended to promote public safety by providing guidance for use of patrol vehicles and emergency vehicle operations that are consistent with applicable law, sound judgment, and professional law enforcement practices.

Policy

San Jacinto College Police officers shall give the highest priority to the safety of the public, fellow officers, and all persons involved when operating a motor vehicle, including an emergency vehicle.

Officers shall exercise due regard for the safety of all persons and operate College vehicles and emergency vehicles in accordance with applicable federal and state law, this policy, and departmental procedures. Officers shall drive with due care at all times, regardless of whether responding to an emergency call, in route to a call for service, or during routine patrol. Due care is required regardless of whether the officer is driving with lights and a siren.

Officers shall drive at a speed that is safe and appropriate for the situation and shall consider clearance in proceeding through intersections and determining route and direction of traffic. Officers shall consider the totality of circumstances when operating a motor vehicle, including but not limited to road conditions, the volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, weather and lighting conditions, vehicle condition, and disabilities or other barriers that may impair a citizen's ability to hear or see emergency equipment. Officers shall consider public safety and the potential risks to the public at all times.

Decisions to initiate, continue, or terminate an emergency response or vehicle pursuit shall be guided by department policy and shall include an ongoing assessment of the circumstances described above in addition to an assessment of the seriousness of the incident requiring an emergency response.

Emergency vehicle operations shall be conducted only when authorized by policy and when needed for an emergency response. In cases involving vehicle pursuit, the necessity of pursuit must outweigh the risks to public safety. Emergency vehicle operations shall be conducted only when authorized by this policy and necessary for a legitimate law enforcement purpose. Emergency vehicle operations generally fall into one of the following categories:

1. Hot pursuit of a suspect when a crime is in progress or has just been committed and the suspect is actively attempting to evade apprehension.
2. Emergency response driving (not involving a vehicle pursuit) when an officer must arrive at the scene of an emergency as quickly as reasonably possible to protect life, prevent serious body injury, or address another urgent law enforcement need.

3. Non-emergency driving, which includes all routine vehicle operations that do not require emergency response or pursuit and shall be conducted in full compliance with applicable traffic laws and department policy.

Vehicle pursuits may be initiated or continued only when the need to immediately apprehend the suspect outweighs the foreseeable risks to the public, officers, and other road users. Officers shall continuously evaluate whether the pursuit remains justified and terminate the pursuit when the risks exceed the need for immediate apprehension.

Authorized emergency vehicles shall be operated with the required emergency equipment and in compliance with the Texas Transportation Code. Vehicles not equipped and authorized for emergency operations shall not be used to conduct emergency responses or vehicle pursuits.

The Chief of Police shall establish departmental procedures governing motor vehicle operation and emergency vehicle operations, including types of emergency responses, vehicle pursuits, supervisory oversight, coordination with other law enforcement agencies, reporting requirements, post-accident assessment, and training. Emergency vehicle operations and pursuits shall be documented and periodically reviewed to ensure compliance with applicable law, this policy, and departmental procedures and to identify officers who may need additional training and to identify opportunities for continuous improvement by the department as a whole. All commissioned officers must complete initial training in emergency vehicle operations, pursuit driving, and safe driving as required by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) and departmental procedures. Periodic refresher training will also be required.

Authority

San Jacinto College authorizes commissioned peace officers to operate emergency vehicles in the performance of their official duties in accordance with applicable state law, including the Texas Transportation Code, Board policy, and departmental procedures.

This policy supports the College's commitment to protecting life, minimizing risk, promoting public safety, and ensuring accountability in emergency vehicle operations.

Associated Procedures
None

Date of Board Approval	This policy became effective as of August 10, 2026, under the Chancellor's authority granted by the Board under Policy III.2000.A, Policy and Procedure Development, Review, Revision, and Rescission. Permanent affirmation of the change will follow the standard policy review process of two readings at regularly scheduled meetings of the Board with first reading on August 10, 2026, and approval anticipated on September 14, 2026.
Effective Date	This policy became effective as of August 10, 2026, under the Chancellor's authority granted by the Board under Policy III.2000.A, Policy and Procedure Development, Review, Revision, and Rescission. Permanent affirmation of the change will follow the standard policy review process of two readings at regularly scheduled meetings of the

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Primary Owner	Vice Chancellor, Fiscal Affairs
Secondary Owner	Chief of Police