504 VEHICLE ESCORT

504.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Specify the circumstances under which vehicular escorts will be provided.
- Establish procedures for processing requests for escorts and identify department personnel who are authorized to approve the requests.
- Establish procedures for ensuring that adequate resources are identified for escorts of oversize vehicles and hazardous cargo carriers.
- Establish guidelines for escorting privately-owned vehicles under emergency circumstances.

504.2 POLICY

The Columbia Police Department will provide limited vehicular escort services to the community based on the availability of adequate resources, an approved request, or in emergency situations. Escort services will only be approved if they can be provided in a manner that will ensure the safety of the public and officers and will allow for an orderly and expeditious flow of traffic.

504.3 DEFINITIONS

**Escort:** The movement of a vehicle or group of vehicles from one point to another with the least amount of impact to the motoring public. Escorts may or may not involve the use of emergency equipment and blocking traffic.

**Lead:** A movement of a vehicle or vehicles from one point to another without the use of emergency equipment. All traffic laws are followed.

**Civic Event:** An event that will gather the public’s attending during a specified route of travel. This includes, but is not limited to parades, athletic celebrations, and celebrity protection.

**Funeral procession:** (Per RSMo 194.500) Two or more vehicles accompanying the remains of a deceased person from a funeral establishment, church, synagogue or other place where a funeral service has taken place to a cemetery, crematory or other place of final disposition, or a funeral establishment, church, synagogue or other place where additional funeral services will be performed, if directed by a licensed funeral director from a licensed establishment.
Hazard Escort: An escort which if not done, will likely pose a direct hazard to the motoring public. Examples are large or oversize vehicles, a group of large vehicles, or vehicles carrying hazardous or unusual cargo which pose an increased risk to the motoring public, will immobilize traffic or are of a size to affect the safe movement of other vehicles.

Security Based Escort: An escort that involves the movement of a dignitary, head of state, person who has Secret Service protection, public official or at the discretion of the Chief of Police or designee.

504.4 GENERAL GUIDELINES

Generally, the Columbia Police Department does not provide vehicular escorts as a routine service. Escorts or leads may be provided for the following upon approval of the Chief of Police or designee:

a. Civic events, such as parades or processions;
b. Funeral processions (upon approval based on expectation of extremely large number of attendees);
c. Persons or vehicles with increased security risk (see Security Based Escort definition above);
d. Vehicles or cargo that poses an increased risk to the security of the motoring public (see Hazard Escort above);
e. Any other escort deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police or the Operations Support Bureau Commander.

The need for an emergency escort may arise in which approval of the Chief or designee would be unreasonable due to the exigency of the circumstances. In such cases, the following guidelines should be followed as reasonably possible.

a. Other emergency vehicles.
   i. If emergency escorts must be provided (i.e. escort of emergency personnel, emergency equipment, etc. to a scene) the escort shall be conducted with great care providing extra time in traffic intersections to ensure that vehicle operators in all directions can see the vehicle(s) and/or equipment being escorted. The patrol vehicle and the vehicle being escorted must be in compliance with revised Missouri Statute 304.022 and acting as an emergency vehicle.

b. Medical/Seriously Ill Escorts
   i. A supervisor may authorize an escort of an emergency vehicle when there is a medical emergency involving an extreme threat to life. An officer will not escort an emergency vehicle without the approval of a supervisor. If emergency escorts must be provided, the escort shall be conducted with great care providing extra time in traffic intersections to ensure that vehicle operators in all directions can see the vehicle(s) and/or equipment being escorted. The patrol vehicle and the vehicle being escorted must be in compliance with revised Missouri Statute 304.022 and acting as an emergency vehicle.
   ii. Escorting civilian vehicles under emergency circumstances should be avoided whenever possible. Generally, if an officer encounters a vehicle in which a citizen is experiencing a
medical emergency, the officer should call for an ambulance to respond to the location of contact. The officer should remain with the citizen until medics arrive. If a citizen can be safely moved to a police vehicle and waiting for an ambulance will pose a life-threatening risk, the officer may transport the citizen to the hospital, using emergency lights and siren as appropriate.

iii. If the situation does not constitute an emergency, the officer may provide directions to the nearest medical facility or show the citizen to the nearest medical facility but only by obeying all traffic laws (not performing an emergency escort).

504.5 REQUESTS AND APPROVAL PROCESS

a. Vehicle escort requests will be forwarded to the Operations Support Bureau Commander for approval. If resources are available, the Operations Support Bureau Commander or designee may make a preliminary recommendation for approval, the Operations Support Bureau Commander or designee will prepare an operations plan. The plan will be sent to the Chief of Police for approval via the Operations Support chain of command. The operations plan for an escort should include at least the following information:
   i. The date and time of the escort;
   ii. The person and/or entity requesting the escort;
   iii. The purpose of the escort (from Section 504.4 above);
   iv. If known, the approximate number of vehicles that will be part of the motorcade or procession (not including police vehicles);
   v. The proposed route of the escort;
   vi. The number of police personnel and vehicles needed to conduct the escort safely;
   vii. The roles and/or locations to which officers will be assigned;
   viii. Any unique or specific circumstances of which the submitting officer is aware that could potentially affect the safety or orderly movement of the escort.

b. If the designee does not recommend approval of an escort request, he/she will notify the Operations Support Bureau chain of command prior to completion of an operations plan.

c. The Chief of Police or his designee will be the final approving authority on all vehicle escorts except those conducted under exigent circumstances. Officers requested to provide these types of escorts should obtain approval of a supervisor or Watch Commander before providing the escort if possible.

Once the operations plan for a vehicle escort is approved by the Chief, the escort will be sent to the Operations Support Bureau Commander for assignment.

504.6 GENERAL ESCORT PROCEDURES

a. All vehicle escorts and leads for the Columbia Police Department will comply with all applicable laws, ordinances and department policies.

b. Officers shall use due regard for the safety of the public at all times during a vehicle escort or lead. Officers are allowed discretion in the use of lights and sirens for some escorts, however, they must
adhere to state law, city ordinance, and department policy in their use of such equipment. Generally, lights can be used to increase visibility when needed. Use of sirens should be limited to situations that reasonably involve increased, articulable risks to safety and/or security. Use of sirens for funeral procession escorts is addressed in the section of this procedure related to those escorts.

c. Any commander or supervisor or the lead officer directing a lead or escort will have the authority to discontinue the lead or escort at any time if circumstances unjustifiably increase the risk to the public, to the vehicles being escorted or to officers.

d. Any officer who observes a condition that threatens the safety of the lead or escort should notify the lead officer, a supervisor or a commander immediately.

e. Escorts employing emergency vehicle operation tactics may only be conducted with marked vehicles equipped with emergency lighting equipment and siren.

f. All leads and escorts will be conducted using a sufficient number of officers and vehicles to ensure the safety of the public, the escorted vehicles and officers.

504.6.1 CIVIC EVENTS

a. Missouri Revised Statutes do not provide exemptions for escorts for civic events. In general, vehicle escorts will not be provided for these types of events unless a City parade permit or other exemption is obtained. Leads may be provided on a case-by-case basis in which the requesting party provides advance notice of the event.

b. Whenever possible, all intersections along the route of an escort or lead for these purposes should be closed/block to cross traffic during the lead/escort.

504.6.2 FUNERAL PROCESSIONS

a. Missouri Revised Statutes provide an exemption for funeral processions related to compliance with traffic control devices. These exemptions do not apply to other types of escorts. Operators of vehicles involved in a funeral procession must still exercise the highest degree of care toward any other vehicle or pedestrian on the roadway.

b. Generally, approvals for small-scale funeral processions will not be granted. Processions where extremely large numbers of attendees are expected may be approved so long as adequate resources are available. Approval should be based on the totality of circumstances with consideration for the following:

   i. Type of area;
   ii. Time of day;
   iii. Traffic volume, specifically along the route of the requested procession;
   iv. Available staffing;
   v. Any unique or specific circumstances that could potentially affect the safety or orderly movement of the procession and escort.
c. Prior to starting a funeral escort, the Officer in charge of, or the lead officer should meet with a funeral representative to review the operational plan for the escort and confirm the details regarding the approximate number of vehicles in the procession and the pre-determined route. The officer should also request the funeral representative to instruct all drivers participating in the procession to activate their flashing emergency (hazard) lights throughout the procession.

d. All officers escorting a funeral procession will use their emergency lights to increase visibility throughout the escort. They may also use the siren when appropriate to warn other motorists of the procession.

e. While conducting a funeral escort, officers should comply with the applicable state statutes and city ordinances related to traffic signals and funeral escorts.

f. Whenever practicable and appropriate, intersections along the route of a funeral escort or lead should be closed/block to cross traffic during the lead/escort.

504.6.3 HAZARD ESCORTS

a. Officers conducting a hazard escort will be expected to comply with all regulations and should follow the operational plan developed during the approval process.

b. Intersections along the route of a hazard escort or lead may be staffed by police personnel and closed/block to cross traffic during the lead/escort if appropriate.

504.6.4 SECURITY BASED ESCORTS

a. Upon receipt of a request for a security-based escort and prior to completion of an operations plan, the Operations Support Bureau Commander will consult with the commander of the department’s Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T.) Team to gain input for the plan. The operations plan may then be completed by the Operations Support Bureau Commander or designee and a S.W.A.T. team leader, or a combination of the two, at the direction of the Operations Support Bureau Commander and the S.W.A.T. Team Commander.

b. The Chief of Police may pre-approve the use of emergency lights and sirens to protect the participants of a security-based escort and the public.

504.7 VEHICLE ESCORT PREPARATION

a. Briefings and Debriefs

i. All participating department personnel will be briefed prior to an approved vehicle escort, to include being provided with a copy of the approved operations plan.

ii. A debrief for participating department personnel should be held as soon as practicable after a vehicle escort is completed.

iii. If other agencies are assisting with a vehicle escort approved and coordinated by the CPD, efforts should be made to provide the personnel from those agencies with the operations
plan and briefing information. When possible, those personnel should be invited to any briefing and debrief meetings held.

iv. If the CPD personnel are assisting another agency with an escort, they should attend briefings and debrief meetings when appropriate.

b. When practicable, officers participating in a lead or escort should drive the approved route and review the departure and arrival sites prior to the lead or escort. If possible, this should be done during a similar time of day as the lead or escort will be conducted so likely traffic conditions and obstacles can be identified.

504.8 VEHICLE ESCORT PROHIBITIONS

a. Officers should not escort vehicles driving the wrong way on a roadway, highway or freeway unless such activity is included in an approved escort operations plan or under extenuating, unexpected circumstances with approval by a supervisor or commander.

b. Officers participating in an escort should not attempt to pass other units in motion unless a clear understanding of the maneuver process exists between the involved officers.