



Unit 6

General Petrol Tactics & Techniques

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ *Understand the most important principles of effective traffic control*
- ✓ *Provide traffic control services in a safe and confident manner*
- ✓ *Deal with a variety of everyday issues and unexpected scenarios in the field of traffic control*



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Types of Traffic Control

Traffic control plays a role of enormous importance in the wider health and safety frameworks of millions of businesses worldwide. In any instance where vehicles of any kind are present, it may be necessary to control the flow of traffic to keep things both safe and efficient.

In most instances, traffic is directed and controlled by way of automated lights and other signals. However, there are also instances where manual traffic control is necessary. This is a particularly frequent requirement in a working environment, where the movement of traffic may differ from one point in time to the next.

Security managers and associated personnel in general should therefore develop a detailed understanding of the two primary traffic control types:

1. ***Pedestrian traffic control***
2. ***Vehicular traffic control***

Some security personnel will be expected to direct one of the two types of traffic exclusively, or perhaps both at the same time. As the direction and control of pedestrian traffic is comparatively straightforward, more time and effort should be invested in the development of vehicular traffic control skills.

Particularly as when things become congested and chaotic, it takes a great deal of confidence to take control and get the job done safely.

Of course, the difficulties involved in controlling traffic will always vary significantly from one job and setting to the next. Attempting to take control of a major intersection at rush hour where the traffic lights have failed can be far more challenging than safely guiding a few vehicles around a construction site.

Nevertheless, traffic must always be controlled, guided and directed with a sense of confidence and authority. Not to mention, the flexibility needed to respond to any unexpected eventuality that may occur.

The Objectives of Traffic Control

Irrespective of when, where and how traffic control takes place, its primary objectives are always the same. Along with the prevention and/or alleviation of congestion, it is the goal of the traffic controller to ensure that all vehicles and persons in the vicinity are sufficiently safeguarded from

harm.

Traffic control measures often appear to slow or even bring the flow of traffic to a halt. In reality, they're implemented for the greater good of everyone in the area at the time.

When is Manual Traffic Control/Direction Necessary?

Manual intervention may be necessary in any instance where automated, electronic or mechanical traffic control measures fail. There are also instances where manual traffic control may be required, despite there having been no automated traffic control measures in place beforehand.

A few common scenarios which may call for manual traffic control or direction:

- Accidents or broken down vehicles that block active lanes
- Any type of obstruction that may affect the flow of traffic
- Hazards on or around roads that must be circumvented
- The presence of police or emergency services for any reason
- When a business or site is expecting or receiving a delivery
- Protection of crime scenes and sites of severe accidents
- Any time when traffic volumes and/or congestion are extreme
- When there are major events organized in the area
- If existing traffic control measures are damaged or inoperable

Quite simply, if there is any instance where the flow of traffic could become problematic, security personnel may be called upon to provide manual direction for motorists.

The Principles of Traffic Control

Traffic control is a relatively complex and demanding responsibility, which takes practice and experience to perfect. Once again, it's important to remember that traffic control requirements (and duties accordingly) will always vary enormously from one setting and situation to the next.

Nevertheless, there are five primary principles that apply in all types of traffic control. Each playing an equally important role in ensuring those directing traffic and those behind the wheel are kept safe at all times.

Here are the five primary principles of traffic control:

1. **Be Safe**

Above all else, nothing matters more than prioritising your own health and safety, and that of and everyone else in the vicinity. This means ensuring that you are suitably visible at all times, wearing appropriate high visibility clothing and carrying illuminated accessories where necessary.

Standards in high visibility clothing vary from one organisation and jurisdiction to the next, but the overriding principle remains the same. Irrespective of the time of day you are directing traffic (and whatever the weather), you need to ensure you are comprehensively visible and can be seen from all directions. If not, you are putting yourself and everyone else in a dangerous position. If you do not have the required high visibility equipment, under no circumstances should you be directing traffic.

In addition, you should always operate under the assumption that any of the drivers around you may *not* have seen you ahead of time. What this means is that you should never let your guard down, instead being ready at any second to move out of the way and avoid being hit by an approaching car. Remember that you are *literally* putting yourself in the centre of a moving system of traffic, which means putting yourself directly in harm's way. If a careless or distracted driver approaches you, he or she may not see you until it is too late to slow down or stop.

Where there is any kind of incident or traffic flow issue that may result in slow or stationary traffic, it is essential to position appropriate markers in advance of the scene. For example, if there is an accident that has led to a lane closure, this should be indicated well in advance to give motorists plenty of warning that they will need to slow down.

In addition, weather conditions should be taken into account, as they may affect visibility and drivers' physical capacity to slow down and stop within a safe distance. Where weather conditions are particularly adverse, extreme precautions should be taken and warnings of the incident or accident should be provided at an even earlier stage.

Under no circumstances should you assume that as you are a designated or authorized traffic controller, traffic will immediately grind to a halt and obey your every command when you walk out into the road. Instead, you should take your time and advance carefully into the road or intersection in question, using a large and visible 'Stop' sign and while wearing the appropriate high visibility equipment.

The position you choose should enable you to see approaching traffic in all directions, while at the same time allowing drivers of approaching vehicles to see you. Though again, you should always assume that at least some approaching traffic *won't* see you in advance, so be sure to take the necessary precautions accordingly.

2. Be Confident with your Hand Signals

In most instances, you will be provided with clear signs and visual indicators instructing motorists what they should do. Stop signs, arrows pointing one way or the others, signs indicating it's safe to proceed and so on.

However, there will always be times when these kinds of provisions are unavailable or inaccessible. In which case, the only tools you will have at your disposal are your hands and your arms - perhaps in conjunction with a whistle.

It's important to note at this juncture that the hand signals used by traffic controllers and police vary significantly from one country to the next. However, there are some universally understood and acknowledged signals and gestures, which make it quite clear to anyone what they need to do.

Standard Traffic Control Gestures

There are many instances where you are more or less forced to make things up as you go along. Nevertheless, carefully controlled and authoritative gestures can make it easy to send a clear and understandable message to any driver in the vicinity.

In terms of standard traffic control gestures, the following are perhaps the most widely used of all:

Stopping Traffic

- If you want to stop car, ensure you make direct eye contact with the driver of the vehicle
- Lifting your hand to a horizontal position with an open palm will be understood by the vast majority of drivers as an instruction to stop
- Ensure that your hand is held in this 'stop' position until the vehicle has come to a complete stop
- If you also need to stop traffic approaching from another direction, keep your arm in the raised position, turn your head and raise your other arm to stop the other flow of traffic accordingly
- Lower your arms only when the traffic has completely stopped

Restarting Traffic

- The procedure for restarting traffic is equally straightforward, which begins by ensuring that it is 100% safe to set the flow moving once again
- Make eye contact with the driver once again and point at them with a fully extended arm in a horizontal position

- Next, swing your arm using the universally understood 'come here' gesture to indicate that they can once again start moving
- Continue with the same gesture until the traffic starts moving accordingly, before repeating the same steps for the other stationary traffic you wish to start

A helpful tip - under no circumstances should you use the 'come here' too aggressively or impatiently when restarting the flow of traffic. This is because you may be dealing with a nervous or experienced driver, who may panic and subsequently cause an accident.

Take your time and give the motorists in the vicinity all the time they need to move away safely.

Directional Turns

- If you are directing the flow of traffic into oncoming traffic, you will first need to ensure that the traffic coming from the opposite direction is halted using the start signal
- Directing motorists to turn as required is simply a case of pointing at the driver in question with a fully extended horizontal arm, before gesturing in the appropriate direction using a downward swinging motion
- Continue the downward swinging motion until the flow of traffic begins moving as required

The type of junction and the country you are based in will impact how difficult or dangerous it can be to direct traffic to the left or the right. Primarily in accordance with whether you drive on the left or right-hand side of the road in your jurisdiction.

Though in all instances, it is essential to be extremely mindful of your surroundings and to take into account *all* oncoming traffic from *all* directions.

3. Keep Traffic Flowing

Always remember that when directing traffic, it is more important to keep things flowing steadily than to attempt to hurry things along. Things can quickly become stressful and intimidating, if and when dealing with frustrated drivers unhappy with the speed at which they are progressing. Horns blaring, motorists shouting and angry faces - all recipes for accidents and dangerous incidents, unless you as a traffic controller remain cool, calm and collected.

Your job is to keep traffic flowing in a safe and consistent manner, which often means using your initiative to circumvent obstacles and potential hazards. If things are getting heating and moving at a pace you're finding it difficult to keep up with, don't be afraid to slow things down, regroup and take back control.



Handling Emergency Vehicles

This can be a particularly stressful scenario, as not only do emergency vehicles always have the right of way, but it may be up to you to help clear a path to let them through. This is where an encyclopaedic knowledge of the traffic system in the immediate vicinity can help. Use hand signals and the signs at your disposal to create a path for the emergency vehicle, only if safe to do so.

Ensure traffic is safely stopped from all directions, before signalling to an emergency vehicle to pull out or turn. As most drivers are extremely careful and conscientious when emergency vehicles are in the vicinity, they'll be more than willing to oblige and obey your commands.

Though remember that if there is no realistic or safe way for an emergency vehicle to be channelled through traffic, you shouldn't compromise the safety of those in the vicinity by attempting to do so.

4. Be Authoritative, But Never Argumentative

As previously touched upon, there will always be motorists who do not see you until the last moment. While there is no valid excuse for this kind of poor alertness or distracted driving, you can expect it to happen on a regular basis.

If a driver is forced to brake aggressively having failed to see you, they'll often blame *you* for the oversight. Likewise, you'll regularly find yourself dealing with drivers who either don't understand the instructions you provide or aren't happy with them. Particularly if it means slowing or disrupting their journey, you can expect a hostile response.

Drivers will honk their horns at you, perhaps even shout obscenities at you from the safety of their vehicles.

Nevertheless, it is your job to remain professional and personable at all times - irrespective of how obnoxious the drivers around you become. The reason being that there are no instances whatsoever where becoming argumentative or aggressive with an agitated motorist yields positive results. You'll simply make the situation worse, which won't do you any favours.

That said, there's no excuse for excessively rude, threatening or abusive behaviour of any kind. In any instance where you feel threatened or uncomfortable with the behaviour of a motorist, take note of their number plate and record the time and date of the incident.

Ideally, your traffic patrol duties should involve the use of a safety camera of some kind, which can be referred back to in the event of any such incidents when performing your duties. There's also nothing to stop you calling the police, if and when things get out of hand.

5. Be Flexible

We mentioned back at the beginning that there will always be instances where you are more or less forced to make things up as you go along. You may be called upon to direct traffic at an entrance, exit or junction you're not familiar with. Likewise, an accident or incident may occur at any time that's unlike any think you've experienced before.

There's also the possibility for any incident to be made even more complex by a *secondary* incident, such as a broken down vehicle which another car then collides with. Not to mention, the complexities associated with emergency vehicles attempting to gain access to and/or pass through the area.

This is where flexibility holds the key to successful traffic control. Rather than panicking when things aren't quite as simple as you expect them to be, it's essential to approach the situation with a sense of calm logic and rationality.

Road Safety Violations

It's frustrating, but traffic controllers who do not work directly for the police cannot cite motorists for road safety violations. Even if there's a motorist driving like a maniac and putting lives at risk, there's very little you can do to stop them.

Taking number plates and recording the times and dates of incidents can help, with such information subsequently being passed to local law enforcement. They may or may not choose to take the matter further by scouring local CCTV, but don't be surprised if for no further action is taken.

However, any serious or potentially dangerous incidents caught on camera are an entirely different matter. This is why it is becoming the norm for traffic controllers (and security personnel in general) to go about their duties with 'bodycams' attached to their clothing. Along with providing clear visual evidence in the event of an accident or incident, these bodycams can also deter angry motorists from venting their frustrations on you.

Management of Accident Scenes

Being the first person (or one of the first people) to arrive at the scene of an accident can be stressful and daunting. As such, developing an understanding of your obligations and responsibilities in such instances is important.

If you are the first 'official' to arrive at the scene of the accident, you should prioritise the following:

1. Determine whether anyone has been injured and ensure the appropriate emergency services have been called. As you should have undertaken basic first aid training, provide the necessary first aid accordingly until the emergency services arrive. Do not attempt to move anyone who appears injured, unless they are in danger of death in their current position (i.e. in the middle of

a busy road).

2. Consider the extent to which the incident may pose a danger to other traffic in the vicinity. It may be impossible to move any of the damaged vehicles or debris out of the way, so you should instead focus on marking the site of the accident appropriately - cones, barricades, flares, lights and so on.
3. Take the names and contact details of anyone nearby who may have witnessed the accident, as this information will subsequently be requested by local law enforcement. It can also be useful to take photographs of the scene of the accident as soon as possible after the incident took place, as certain types of evidence can be damaged or lost if not recorded immediately.
4. Use your traffic control skills and knowledge to carefully direct traffic around the scene of the accident, until help arrives. Though at all times, it is essential to keep a safe distance from any vehicles that pose a potential fire or explosion hazard - i.e. those already ablaze or leaking fuel.
5. If any of the individuals in the vicinity are willing to help, ask as many questions as necessary in order to ascertain what happened. Ask them to provide a full account of everything they saw and heard in the runup to the accident,

Your own initiative and flexibility will come in handy, but you'll also find a somewhat regimented approach to accident scene management helpful. You cannot be expected to single-handedly deal with the chaos of a potentially serious incident on the roads, so don't overestimate your own capabilities.

Just as long as you do what's necessary to help those affected (to a realistic extent), safeguard the surrounding space and ensure the emergency services are on their way, you've done your job.

Further Reading: