



**HIGHWAY FACTORS GROUP CHAIRMAN'S  
FACTUAL REPORT**

**Highway Attachment – Caltrans Implementation of Traffic Breaks Memorandum dated  
July 16, 2017**

**Palm Springs, CA**

**HWY17MH005**

(3 pages)

# Memorandum

*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life.*

**To:** DISTRICT DIRECTORS  
DEPUTY DISTRICT DIRECTORS  
Design, Construction, Maintenance, and Project Management

**Date:** July 16, 2017

**File:** Division of Traffic  
Operations

**From:**   
AMARJEET S. BENIPAL  
Acting Chief  
Division of Traffic Operations

**Subject:** IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAFFIC BREAKS

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has developed the following Revised Standard Specifications for work zone activities on the State Highway System (SHS):

1. Revised Standard Specification (RSS), 1-1.07B to include definition of "Traffic Break"
2. Revised Standard Specification (RSS), 12-4.02 to include requirement for "Traffic Breaks"

These revisions to the 2015 Standard Specifications will be posted on July 21, 2017.

A portable changeable message sign (PCMS) shall be required when conducting traffic breaks for all authorized planned construction, maintenance, and encroachment permit field activities on the SHS. Traffic breaks will be conducted by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) or other law enforcement officers.

The activity below is exempted from the PCMS and lane closure system (LCS) requirements:

- Emergency brief breaks (defined as one minute or less) conducted by a CHP officer or other law enforcement officer for the purpose of removing items from the traveled way.

The activity below is exempted from the LCS:

- A closure is already in place and the Engineer authorized for an on-duty officer to conduct a traffic break.

## Background

Caltrans and the CHP have agreed that at least one PCMS will be provided when a planned traffic break is conducted by a CHP officer or other law enforcement officer. The purpose of using PCMS is to caution motorists of the change in traffic conditions resulting from a planned traffic break.

## **Implementation**

This memorandum provides guidance regarding the implementation of the RSSs on the SHS. Traffic breaks can be considered for some activities to temporarily slow or stop traffic for a brief period of time (five minutes or as authorized) without having to set-up a closure (stationary, moving, or full closure). A traffic break is defined as a traffic operation conducted by a CHP officer or other law enforcement officer to temporarily slow or stop traffic within the traveled way at the request of maintenance, construction, and encroachment permit personnel. During a traffic break operation, the assigned officer turns on the patrol vehicle's rear emergency lights and slowly drives the vehicle across the traffic lanes in a serpentine pattern.

Placement of the PCMS shall be positioned sufficiently upstream of the planned traffic break to provide advance notice to motorists regarding the sudden change in traffic conditions before they approach the traffic queue.

A minimum of one (1) PCMS shall be placed during the planned traffic break. Additional PCMSs may be placed to caution motorists as needed.

A minimum of two (2) CHP vehicles (or other law enforcement vehicles) will be assigned to conduct a planned traffic break. One vehicle will conduct the traffic break, and the other vehicle will be stationed on the shoulder with its rear emergency lights on to caution motorists.

If you have any questions regarding this memo, please contact James Anderson, Chief, Office of Traffic Management at (916) 654-5869, or by e-mail at <James.R.Anderson@dot.ca.gov>.

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