
Officer Response to Calls

305.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides officers with guidelines for the safe and appropriate vehicular response to emergency and non-emergency incidents or requests for assistance, whether these are dispatched or self-initiated.

305.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this department to appropriately respond to emergency and non-emergency calls for service or requests for assistance, whether these are dispatched or self-initiated.

305.3 CATEGORY RESPONSE

To satisfy these needs, the Department has categorized these requests for police service into three general areas of response:

1. **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**
2. **IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**
3. **ROUTINE RESPONSE**

305.4 RESPONSE TO CALLS

Officers responding to non-emergency calls shall proceed accordingly, unless they are sent or redirected to a higher priority call, and shall obey all traffic laws.

Immediate Response - A request for service that requires an immediate police response. The use of emergency lights and sirens will be determined by the responding officer(s) after considering the information received from Dispatch.

Examples where this response is appropriate:

- (a) Public disturbances, fight, unruly crowds
- (b) Domestic incidents involving physical confrontations
- (c) Other offenses involving physical confrontations
- (d) Accidents, injuries reported
- (e) Robbery Alarm

Routine Response - A request for service that requires a police response for non-arrest related incident. Routine responses include requests for services, or on-scene investigation and /or police reports. A routine response would also cover non-crime related calls that the police have historically responded to. This type of response does not require the use of emergency lights and sirens.

Officers are permitted to upgrade their response method based on information from dispatch, previous personal knowledge, or briefings, regarding certain addresses or areas of recent crimes.

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Examples where this is appropriate:

- (a) Service requests – direct traffic, premise checks, bank escorts, welfare checks, 911 hang up calls
- (b) Minor law violations, illegal parking, TO violations, minor VTL violations
- (c) Minor disturbances reports – loud music, loud party, neighbor disputes
- (d) Verbal domestic incidents
- (e) Burglary/Panic Alarm with no additional information
- (f) Suspicious persons or vehicle
- (g) PDO accidents
- (h) Airport Emergency Alert Code 1 (minor trouble) or Code 2 (major trouble)
- (i) Reported property crime
- (j) Other routine police functions

305.4.1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate and should continuously operate the emergency vehicle lighting and siren as required by law (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 114-b; Vehicle and Traffic Law § 1104).

Officers should only respond to a call as an emergency response when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. This includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) When in pursuit or apprehending a violator or suspected violator.
- (b) When responding to a reported emergency involving possible personal injury, death or significant property damage.
- (c) When immediate assistance is requested by an officer or other law enforcement agency.

If an officer believes an emergency response to any call is appropriate, the officer should notify dispatch, via an MDT communication or when appropriate, via radio transmission.

Officers not responding to a call as an emergency response shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren.

305.5 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

When requesting emergency assistance, the involved department member should reasonably believe there is an imminent threat to the safety of him/herself or another person, or that assistance is needed to prevent imminent serious harm to the public.

If circumstances permit, the requesting member should provide the following information:

- Identifying call sign
- Location of the emergency situation

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- Suspect information, including weapons
- Reason for the request and type of emergency
- The number of officers or resources required
- Hazards and any known or potential dangers for responding officers

In any event where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is not required, the requesting member shall immediately notify the dispatcher.

305.6 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Responding with emergency lights and siren does not relieve the operator of an emergency vehicle of the duty to continue to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and property, and does not protect the operator from the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others. However the officer may, when responding to a call with an emergency response, and provided there is no endangerment or unnecessary risk to persons and property (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 1104):

- Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- Exceed the speed limit.
- Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

When two or more emergency vehicles approach an intersection simultaneously, the emergency vehicle that otherwise would have had the right of way shall proceed first.

305.6.1 NUMBER OF OFFICERS ASSIGNED

The number of officers assigned to respond to an emergency call or request for assistance should be limited to that which is reasonably necessary.

305.6.2 MOTORCYCLES

An officer operating a police motorcycle should not be assigned to an emergency response. However, an officer operating a police motorcycle in an emergency response should be replaced by an authorized emergency vehicle equipped with emergency lights and siren as soon as practicable.

305.7 EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Vehicles not equipped with emergency lights and siren are prohibited from initiating or joining in an emergency response. Officers in such vehicles may provide support to pursuing vehicles as long as the vehicles are operated in compliance with all traffic laws. Those officers should terminate their involvement in any emergency response immediately upon arrival of a sufficient number of emergency law enforcement vehicles.

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If the emergency equipment on the vehicle should fail to operate, the officer must terminate the emergency response and continue accordingly. The officer shall notify the Watch Commander, Sergeant or the dispatcher of the equipment failure so that another officer may be assigned to the emergency response.

305.8 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

The decision to initiate or continue an emergency response is at the discretion of the officer. If, in the officer's judgment, the weather, traffic and road conditions do not permit such a response without unreasonable risk, the officer may elect to respond to the call without the use of emergency lights and siren at the legal speed limit. In such an event, the officer should immediately notify the dispatcher. An officer shall also discontinue an emergency response when directed by a Sergeant or as otherwise appropriate.

The first officer arriving at the emergency call should determine whether to increase or reduce the level of the response of additional officers and shall notify the dispatcher of his/her determination. Any subsequent change in the appropriate response level should be communicated to the dispatcher by the officer in charge of the scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

305.9 DISPATCH

When information reasonably indicates that the public is threatened with serious injury or death, or an officer requests emergency assistance and immediate law enforcement response is needed, the dispatcher shall assign an emergency response and ensure acknowledgement and response of handling and assisting officers.

305.9.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon notification or assignment of an emergency response, the dispatcher is responsible for:

- (a) Confirming the location from which the officer is responding or requesting assistance.
- (b) Attempting to assign the closest available assisting officers to the location of the emergency call.
- (c) Continuing to obtain and broadcast information as necessary concerning the response and monitoring the situation until it is stabilized or terminated.
- (d) Notifying and coordinating allied emergency services (e.g., fire, emergency medical services).
- (e) Notifying the Watch Commander or Sergeant as soon as practicable.
- (f) Controlling all radio communications during the emergency and coordinating assistance under the direction of the Watch Commander or Sergeant.

305.10 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated or requested, the Watch Commander or the Sergeant shall verify that:

- (a) The proper response has been initiated.

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- (b) No more than those officers reasonably necessary under the circumstances are involved in the response.
- (c) Affected outside jurisdictions are being notified as practicable.

The Sergeant shall monitor the response until it has been stabilized or terminated and assert control by directing officers into or out of the response, if necessary. If, in the supervisor's judgment, the circumstances require additional officers to be assigned an emergency response, the supervisor may do so.

It is the Sergeants responsibility to terminate an emergency response that, in his/her judgment is inappropriate due to the circumstances.

When making the decision to authorize an emergency response, the Watch Commander or the Sergeant should consider:

- The type of call or crime involved.
- The type and circumstances of the request.
- The necessity of a timely response.
- Weather, traffic and road conditions.
- The location of the responding officers and the location of the incident.