

Officer Response to Calls

309.1 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.

309.2 POLICY

To carry out the mission of protecting life and property it may become necessary to operate a police vehicle as an emergency vehicle. The danger created by an emergency response to innocent citizens and to the responding officer(s) must be weighed against the importance of immediate police presence at the call for service. Officers cannot fulfill their obligation to the citizen in need of help if they are involved in an accident prior to their arrival. A timely, but safe arrival at the scene of an emergency must be the primary objective in all emergency response decisions.

EPD members will, in the performance of their duties, operate EPD motor vehicles in a manner consistent with safety, training and within the provisions of the law.

No matter the response code authorized or the situation to which the officer is responding, the sole responsibility of arriving at the call for service safely rests with the vehicle operator.

309.3 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.

Officers will be dispatched to calls for service by Talbot Center based on a pre-determined response priority. Additional information received by Talbot Center after the call is dispatched that would upgrade or downgrade the response will be relayed to the responding officer. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring response priorities and may upgrade or downgrade any response, if warranted, based on information known to them. This information may include but is not limited to:

- (a) Locale, road, traffic, and weather conditions.
- (b) Road construction.
- (c) Previous calls at a particular location.
- (d) Sufficient manpower is already on scene.
- (e) The imminent threat to life no longer exists.

309.3.1 PRIORITY 1 RESPONSE

A Priority 1 response directs a most expeditious response and is prompted by a life threatening emergency as defined in this policy. It is recognized that when a life threatening emergency exists, EPD officers have a duty to respond most expeditiously. During these conditions, EPD vehicles will operate with emergency lights and siren activated and may operate at high speeds. Officers operating vehicles while responding to life threatening emergencies are not relieved from the duty

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to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons. There is no speed cap or ceiling for Priority 1 response, however, the requirements to make absolutely certain that the way is clear and can be safely navigated and to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons is paramount.

Calls that require an emergency Priority 1 response include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) Assaults in Progress.
- (b) Burglary in Progress.
- (c) Domestic Violence in Progress.
- (d) Escape in Progress.
- (e) Fight in Progress.
- (f) Foot/Vehicle Pursuit.
- (g) Kidnapping in Progress.
- (h) Officer Needs Urgent Assistance.
- (i) Rape in Progress.
- (j) Riot in Progress.
- (k) Robbery in Progress.
- (l) Shots Fired in Progress.
- (m) Suicide Attempt in Progress.

Priority 1 responses shall be strictly monitored by the on-duty patrol supervisor to ensure the officer's response under Priority 1 is appropriate and to take the appropriate corrective actions, if necessary.

309.3.2 PRIORITY 2 RESPONSE

A Priority 2 response directs a moderately expeditious response and is prompted by a situation where there is reasonable grounds to believe an emergency exists, other than a life threatening emergency as defined in this policy. It is recognized that when an emergency exists, EPD officers have a duty to respond expeditiously. During these conditions, EPD vehicles will operate with emergency lights and siren activated and may operate at moderate speeds that may exceed the posted speed limits. Officers operating vehicles while responding to emergencies are not relieved from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.

Calls which normally require an emergency Priority 2 response include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) Disorderly Conduct.
- (b) Domestic Disturbance/Violence.
- (c) Escape.
- (d) Motor Vehicle Accidents with Injury.
- (e) Person with a Gun/Weapon.

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- (f) Prowler.
- (g) Suicide.

309.3.3 PRIORITY 3 RESPONSE

A Priority 3 response dictates normal operation of the police vehicle with the flow of traffic. This applies to all non-emergency calls for service. This code does not grant the operators any privileges under Maryland Vehicle Law – Transportation Article Section 21-106. Officers responding to non-emergency calls may use emergency lights as an aid in maneuvering through traffic. Officers, when approaching an intersection, must obey any traffic control device. In all cases, when an officer goes through an intersection contrary to the traffic control device, the siren must be used.

Officers may use the visual signal to attract the attention of motorists being stopped for traffic violations, to warn motorists of imminent dangers, or at any incident where the use of emergency lights constitutes a necessary warning for the safety of life (such as scenes of fire, accidents, disasters, traffic control, etc.)

Response to calls for service will be operated “Priority 3” unless otherwise directed.

309.4 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.
- 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.

309.5 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate and shall continuously operate the emergency vehicle lighting and siren as required by law (Md. Code TR § 21-106(c))

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.

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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 (Md. Code TR § 21-106(b):)

- 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.
- Park or stand without regard to parking restrictions.

309.5.1 NUMBER OF OFFICERS ASSIGNED

Only the number of officers that are reasonably necessary should be assigned to respond to an emergency call or request for assistance.

An emergency response involving more than one police vehicle should be coordinated by Talbot Center to avoid any unanticipated intersecting of response routes. The dispatcher shall notify the Shift Supervisor who will make a determination regarding the appropriateness of the response and reduce or enhance the response as warranted.

309.6 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 responding officers 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.

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 Shift Supervisor, or the dispatcher of the equipment failure so that another officer may be assigned to the emergency response.

309.7 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers shall respond to calls for service following the response priority provided by Talbot Center. If no response code is given the officer will seek direction from the Shift Supervisor if he/she believes an emergency response is warranted.

The decision to upgrade from a non-emergency response to an emergency response should be vetted by a supervisor, when practical. The decision to 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 supervisor or as otherwise appropriate.

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Upon receiving authorization or determining that an emergency response is appropriate, whenever practicable, an officer shall immediately give the location from which he/she is responding.

The first officer arriving at the emergency call will 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 will be communicated to the dispatcher by the officer in charge of the scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

309.8 TALBOT CENTER

CAD call types have a pre-determined priority response code. When additional 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. In all other circumstances, the dispatcher shall obtain authorization from the Shift Supervisor prior to assigning an emergency response.

309.8.1 DISPATCH 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 Shift Supervisor as soon as practicable.
- (f) Controlling all radio communications during the emergency and coordinating assistance under the direction of the Shift Supervisor..

309.9 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated or requested, the Shift Supervisor shall verify that:

- (a) The proper response has been initiated.
- (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 supervisor 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.

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It is the supervisor's responsibility to terminate an emergency response that, in his/her judgment is inappropriate due to the circumstances. Likewise, it is the supervisor's responsibility to upgrade the priority response if the circumstances dictate.

When making the decision to authorize an emergency response, the Shift Supervisor should consider the following:

- 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.