RESPONSE TO CALLS

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I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The manner in which officers respond to calls for services will vary according to the nature and severity of the call. This is necessary to ensure the maximum safety of the general public and of the officers themselves. Types of calls can be classified into three categories: routine, urgent, and emergency. The type of response is determined by the category into which the call falls. The total number of officers to be initially sent on a call can also be determined through these categories.

The purpose of this policy is to provide personnel with clear guidelines as to what calls will generally fit into which category, thus determining the degree of response and the number of officers to be assigned. None of these procedures will preclude the possibility of circumstances which will alter our normal and expected reactions. Response to any type of call requires an officer to utilize the shortest and safest route of travel.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this department that:

1. The department will evaluate the urgency of the police response to a given situation and assign the appropriate number of officers; and,
2. In situations when the department is unable to respond to calls with sufficient on-duty personnel, it may have to rely on off-duty officers, non-regular personnel and officers from neighboring departments via mutual aid agreements.

III. PROCEDURES [41.2.1]

A. ***Statutory Guidelines:*** Emergency Vehicle Operation: M.G.L. Chapter 89, Section 7B states that the driver of any police vehicle "in an emergency and while in the performance of a public duty may drive such vehicle at a speed in excess of the applicable speed limit if [s]he exercises caution and due regard under the circumstances for the safety of persons and property, and may drive such vehicle through an intersection of ways contrary to any traffic signs or signals regulating traffic at such intersection if [s]he first brings such vehicle to a full stop and then proceeds with caution and due regard for the safety of persons and property, unless otherwise directed by a police officer regulating traffic at such intersection."

B. Categories of Calls for Service

1. GENERALLY

   a. Under the direction of the officer-in-charge, the number of officers to be assigned to a call will normally be left to the dispatcher's discretion.

   b. Certain types of crime will require the dispatching of at least two officers.

      1) Emergency calls and many urgent calls will normally require two officers or units to respond.

      2) Routine calls will normally require only one officer or unit to respond.

   c. Patrol supervisors have the responsibility and authority, at their discretion, to determine the number of officers necessary at any particular call or assignment.

   d. It shall be the responsibility of the dispatcher or person taking the call to obtain information from the caller which will determine the severity and thus govern the degree of response to any call.

   e. Dispatchers should avoid giving callers overly optimistic estimates of the timeliness or level of probable police response. Simply stated, do not make promises concerning how many officers will arrive or how quickly they will respond unless you are absolutely certain.

   f. The following procedures provide guidelines for the evaluation of the urgency of a police response to a given situation.

2. EMERGENCY CALLS: CODE THREE RESPONSE

   a. Emergency calls are those which require immediate response from the department. They are critical in nature and will usually

involve situations where there is actual danger of serious injury or death.

b. Officers responding to emergency calls will use both emergency lights and siren, except when doing so would eliminate the element of surprise desired when responding to certain types of crimes in progress, and will adhere to the law.[1]

c. Officers must bear in mind that during the response, they have a responsibility to the public to ensure that their actions do not create a greater public hazard than is represented by the nature of the situation to which they are responding.

d. Conditions that will define an Emergency/Code Three Response are:

1) Any imminent threat to life or danger of serious physical injury or major property damage;

2) Any ongoing felony or misdemeanor that involves violence and may result in injury;

3) Any serious felony or violent misdemeanor that has just occurred and reason exists to believe the suspect is still in the area;

4) Any incident that involves exigent or unique circumstances that demand an immediate police response; and

5) An officer in trouble call or any request from an officer for an emergency response.

e. Examples of emergency calls would include a shooting or stabbing; personal injury motor vehicle accidents; life threatening need for medical assistance; bank or armed robberies in progress; serious felonies in progress; subject with a gun or other deadly weapon; a bombing, explosion, major fire, or building collapse; and hostage situations.

f. If available, a minimum of two officers or units shall be dispatched on these types of calls. Other units on duty should immediately deploy themselves to a location within their area which is closest to the location of the call in case they, too, are dispatched.

g. Responses to vehicular pursuit calls shall be governed by the department policy on ***Vehicular Pursuit.***

3. URGENT CALLS: CODE TWO RESPONSES

a. Urgent calls are those which require quick response on the part of the officer, but are not so critical that they could be termed emergency. An officer's presence is needed at the scene, but the need is not immediate.

b. An Urgent/Code Two Response is accomplished by responding directly to an assignment without unnecessary delay. This type of call will have flexibility in the manner of response (i.e., emergency lights with or without siren). The response should be made in a quick but safe manner.

c. Units responding to urgent calls should be attentive to their radios, as the situation may quickly change to a more or less serious incident.

d. Conditions that will define an Urgent/Code Two Response are:

1) Any incident that does not represent a significant threat to life and property or a felony that has occurred without injury and the suspect has fled the area;

2) An in-progress incident that could be classified as a possible crime;

3) Any incident that represents a significant hazard to the flow of traffic;

4) Any incident that requires a prompt, non-emergency response;

5) An officer's call for non-emergency assistance (back-up unit, potential but not present problem); and

6) Officers holding a prisoner and requesting transport will receive an Urgent/Code Two Response unless special circumstances dictate otherwise.

e. Examples of Urgent Calls are domestic/family problems; property damage motor vehicle accidents; non-life threatening medical aids; and any other call which requires immediate response by the department.

f. Urgent calls will generally require that at least two units be dispatched, unless the primary unit responding is a two officer unit.

g. All officers must remain aware of the statutory limits placed on the operation of a patrol vehicle when emergency lights and sirens are in use.[2]

4. ROUTINE CALLS: CODE ONE RESPONSE

a. Routine calls are those which require police response for the purpose of taking some sort of action, but which do not require immediate arrival, since the situation will probably not deteriorate to critical status due to the time period of that arrival.

b. A Routine/Code One Response involves no emergency lights or sirens. It is a normal traffic speed response.

c. Usually, only one officer will be initially assigned, unless the dispatcher or shift commander feels it necessary for safety purposes to assign more than one. Examples of routine calls would be past breaking and entering; loud groups or parties; barking dogs; larceny or stolen car reports; transport assistance (bank deposit) for retail businesses; and, any other call which can be termed routine in nature.

d. Routine responses include a call for service and taking a report.

C. Response to Officer Initiated Calls

1. Any units responding to an officer initiated call (such as an officer in trouble) shall notify the dispatcher that they are responding and shall indicate from where they are responding.
2. Units will continue their response at the direction of the dispatcher.
3. All units will closely monitor their radios in the event that the situation changes (officer in trouble downgraded to a backup), so that their response can be appropriately modified.
4. The first unit to arrive at the scene will report the current situation so that other units may adjust their response accordingly.
5. Any units called off, by either the dispatcher or a supervisor, will immediately discontinue any emergency operation and resume their normal patrol.

D. Upon Arrival [41.2.4]

1. Upon arrival, first responding employees shall assess the situation and determine, based upon the information at hand, if responding resources are adequate for the situation.
2. If the response appears excessive, the employee shall notify the dispatcher and may request a reduced response.
3. The employee may request additional resources as appropriate for the situation, or in accordance with department policy, by contacting the dispatcher.
4. On-duty, local, or contracted resources may be requested directly by the first responding officer. Such resources may include requests for a supervisor, Emergency Medical Services, investigator, fire department, highway department, Mass Highway, Gas Company, etc.
5. Requests for off duty personnel, mutual aid, or specialty assistance shall be authorized by a supervisor.
6. Any determination as to response made by the supervisor shall be followed.

[1]M.G.L. c. 89, §7B.

[2]M.G.L. c. 89, §7B.