

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.

309.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Code 1 - At the officer's convenience. No emergency lights or siren are in use. The officer will obey all traffic laws.

Code 2 - Emergency response. Emergency lights are utilized but siren is not in use.

Code 3 - Emergency response. Emergency lights and siren are utilized.

309.2 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.

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.

309.3.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate and shall operate the emergency vehicle lighting and siren in accordance with § 61-9-401, MCA; § 61-9-402, MCA.

Officers should only use an emergency response when circumstances reasonably indicate it 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.

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.

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.

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If circumstances permit, the requesting member should consider providing 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 notify Dispatch.

309.5 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 with the use of an audible and/or visual signal as required by law, and provided there is no endangerment or unnecessary risk to persons and property (§ 61-8-107, MCA):

- 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.

309.5.1 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.

309.5.2 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.

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 an emergency response

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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 Commander, field supervisor or the communications operator of the equipment failure so that another officer may be assigned to the emergency response.

309.7 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 communications operator.

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 communications operator of his/her determination. Any subsequent change in the appropriate response level should be communicated to the communications operator by the officer in charge of the scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

309.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated, the Shift Commander 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 Shift Commander 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 supervisor's responsibility to terminate an emergency response that, in his/her judgment, is inappropriate due to the circumstances.

When making the decision to terminate an emergency response, the Shift Commander should consider:

- The type of call or crime involved.
- The type and circumstances of the request.

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- The necessity of a timely response.
- Weather, traffic and road conditions.
- The location of the responding officers and the location of the incident.