



Fitchburg State University Police Department

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| Subject: PATROL RESPONSE | |
| Reference: MPAC: 41.2.1 IACLEA: 9.1.3 | |
| Rescinds: Section 41 | |
| Effective Date: September 30, 2020 | Review Date: |
| By Order of: Michael J. Cloutier, Chief of Police | |

General Order

9.1.3

PURPOSE:

How officers respond to calls for services must vary according to the nature and severity of the call. This is necessary to ensure the maximum safety of the general public and to the officers themselves. Types of calls can be classified into three categories: Routine, Urgent, and Emergency. The need for the type of response is determined by which category the call falls into.

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. None of these procedures will preclude the possibility of circumstances that 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.

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Fitchburg State University Police Department to respond to all calls for police assistance or service in a timely, efficient, and safe manner consistent with the nature of the particular call.

STATUTORY GUIDELINES:

A. Chapter 89 Section 7 (Right of way of Emergency Vehicles):

"The members and apparatus of a fire department while going to a fire or responding to an alarm, police patrol vehicles and ambulances, and ambulances on a call for the purpose of hospitalizing a sick or injured person shall have the right of way through any street, way, lane or alley. Whoever willfully obstructs or retards the passage of any of the foregoing in the exercise of such right shall be punished by a fine of fifty dollars or by imprisonment for not more than three months for the first offense and by a fine of not

more than five hundred dollars or by imprisonment for up to one year for a second and subsequent offenses; provided, however, that for a third or subsequent offense the court or the registry of motor vehicles, in addition to any such fine or imprisonment, may suspend the license of the person so convicted and may order mandatory classroom retraining in motor vehicle and traffic laws."

B. Chapter 89 Section 7B (Definition of Emergency Vehicle):

"An "Emergency Vehicle", as used in this section of the policy, means any driver of a motor vehicle of a fire department, police department, or recognized protective department and the driver of an ambulance, in an emergency and while in performance of a public duty or while transporting a sick and/or injured person to a hospital or another destination where professional medical services are available."

C. Chapter 89 Section 7B (Vehicle Operation):

"The driver of a vehicle of a fire, police or recognized protective department and the driver of an ambulance shall be subject to the provisions of any statute, rule, regulation, ordinance or by-law relating to the operation or parking of vehicles, except that a driver of fire apparatus while going to a fire or responding to an alarm, or the driver of a vehicle of a police or recognized protective department or the driver of an ambulance, in an emergency and while in performance of a public duty or while transporting a sick or injured person to a hospital or other destination where professional medical services are available, may drive such vehicle at a speed in excess of the applicable speed limit if 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 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. The driver of any such approaching emergency vehicle shall comply with the provisions of section fourteen of chapter ninety when approaching a school bus which has stopped to allow passengers to alight or board from the same, and whose red lamps are flashing."

PROCEDURE

I. Dispatching Responsibilities

- A. Under the direction of a supervisor, the number of officers to be assigned to a call will normally be left to the dispatcher's discretion. However, certain types of crimes and alarms will require the dispatching of at least two officers. Emergency Calls and many Urgent Calls will normally require two officers to respond. Routine Calls will normally require only one officer to respond.
- B. Supervisors have the responsibility and authority, at their discretion, to determine the number of officers necessary at any particular call.
- C. It shall be the responsibility of the dispatcher to obtain information from callers which will determine the severity of the situation, and thus govern the degree of response to any call.

II. CATEGORIES OF CALLS FOR SERVICE

The following procedures provide guidelines for evaluating the urgency of police response to a given situation. These procedures are designed to guide officers in the manner in which they will respond to calls, and guide dispatchers in assigning calls and response priorities.

A. Emergency Calls:

1. Emergency Calls are those which require an immediate response from the department. They are critical in nature and will usually involve situations where there is an actual danger of serious injury or death. These calls require the presence of a supervisor at the scene for the purpose of assuming command.
2. Officers responding to Emergency Calls shall 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.
3. If available, a minimum of two officers shall be dispatched on these types of calls. Other units on duty should immediately prepare to deploy themselves to the call in case they too are dispatched.
4. Responding officers should be attentive to their radio as the situation may quickly change in nature or seriousness. Radio communication should be restricted to what is relevant to the emergency. Routine radio traffic should be curtailed until the situation returns to normal.
5. Conditions that will define an **Emergency Response** are:
 - a. Any imminent threat to life, or danger of serious physical injury or major property damage.
 - b. Ongoing felony or misdemeanor involving violence which may result in injury.
 - c. Serious felony or violent misdemeanor which has just occurred and reason exists to believe that the suspect is still in the area.
 - d. Incidents that involve exigent or unique circumstances that demand an immediate police response.
 - e. "Officer in trouble" call or any request from an officer for an emergency response.
6. Examples of **Emergency calls** would include:
 - a. Active shooters, hostile events
 - b. Serious personal injury accidents
 - c. Holdup alarm or armed robberies in progress
 - d. Serious felonies in progress
 - e. Large disturbances
 - f. Subject with a gun or other deadly weapon
 - g. Explosion, bombing, major fire, or building collapse
 - h. Life threatening medical emergencies
 - i. Hostage situations

B. Urgent Calls:

1. Urgent calls are those which require quick response on the part of officers, 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.
2. A response to an urgent call 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).
3. Urgent calls will generally require that two officers be dispatched, depending upon the seriousness of the situation and the availability of personnel. The response should be made in a quick but safe manner. Units responding to urgent calls should be attentive to their radios, as the situation may quickly change in nature or seriousness.
4. Conditions that will define an **Urgent Response** are:
 - a. Incidents which do not represent a significant threat to life and property, or a felony which has occurred without injury and the suspect has fled the area.
 - b. In-progress incidents which could be classified as a possible crime.
 - c. Incidents that represent a significant hazard to the flow of traffic.
 - d. Any incident that requires a prompt, non-emergency response.
 - e. Another officer's call for a non-emergency back-up unit.
5. Examples of Urgent calls are:
 - a. Domestic disturbance calls
 - b. Fights in progress
 - c. Crimes in progress
 - d. Accidents involving minimal physical injury
 - e. Property damage accidents causing traffic delays/hazards
 - f. Non-life-threatening medical calls
 - g. Other calls which require immediate response by the department

C. Routine Calls:

1. 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 is not expected to deteriorate to critical status, due to the time period of that arrival.
2. Routine response involves no emergency lights or sirens. It is done with the normal flow of traffic, and officers will obey all traffic laws.
3. The majority of calls will be of this type, and they will usually require that only one officer be initially assigned, unless the dispatcher or supervisor feels it necessary for safety purposes to assign additional units.
4. Routine responses include calls for service and taking reports.

5. Examples of **Routine Calls** would be:
 - a. Past crimes
 - b. Loud groups or parties
 - c. Noise violations
 - d. Larceny or stolen car reports
 - e. Calls for services
 - f. Any other call that can be termed routine in nature.

III. Emergency Response Procedure & Considerations

- A. While proceeding to the scene, responding officers shall maintain radio contact in order to clarify initial information, or to receive additional instructions.
- B. Officers responding to emergencies in unmarked or low profile police vehicles must use extra caution because other operators may not identify their vehicle as an emergency response vehicle.
- C. The use of the siren cannot be totally depended upon, as it is often difficult for motorists to identify the source and direction of the sound. Best results are obtained from activating the siren intermittently, not at a steady pitch, as it attracts more attention.
- D. Upon arriving at the emergency scene, the first officer present shall, as soon as possible, make a quick assessment of the situation and notify the dispatcher so the response of other units may be adjusted.
- E. **In emergency response situations, first responders are expected to keep the Communication Center informed of the situation.** Officers may request additional resources through the dispatcher. This may include additional officers, supervisors or detectives, fire apparatus, ambulance, other police agencies, and university resources, such as Capital Planning and Maintenance, Housing, Counseling Services, or Environmental Health & Safety. **The shift supervisor will determine if other administrative notifications should be made, (see General Order 9.1.6 Administrative Notifications).**
- F. Units responding to an officer-initiated call (such as an officer in trouble) should notify the dispatcher that they are responding, and indicate their proximity to the scene. Units will discontinue their response at the direction of the dispatcher or supervisor. All units will closely monitor their radios in the event that the situation changes (officer in trouble downgraded to a call for backup) so that their response can be appropriately modified.

IV. Use of Emergency Equipment

- A. The proper use of emergency signaling equipment is essential to the safety of police personnel and other motorists. Officers shall utilize emergency signaling equipment when situations warrant, and exercise extreme caution while engaged in emergency operations. Officers may be required to disregard standard traffic regulations but must strictly adhere to the driving procedures established for the operation of emergency vehicles, and act in compliance with M.G.L., Chapter 89, § 7B.

1. Emergency lights shall be used to alert other vehicle operators that an emergency condition exists and that the right of way should be given to the police vehicle.
 - a. While engaged in emergency operations
 - b. To protect police vehicles at hazardous locations
 - c. To assist motorists stopped in hazardous locations
 - d. To signal traffic violators to stop
 - e. To escort funeral processions or parades
 - f. To escort slow moving vehicles
2. Sirens should be used only in conjunction with emergency lights to:
 - a. Help clear traffic or warn pedestrians
 - b. As an additional aid to alerting traffic violators
3. Emergency lights and siren in combination shall be used:
 - a. When responding to an emergency or crime in progress, as appropriate, and
 - b. During pursuit situations as related in **General Order 9.2.1 Vehicle Pursuits**
4. Takedown lights and spotlights are used to protect police personnel from hazardous conditions during traffic stops by:
 - a. Illuminating the interior of vehicles, or
 - b. In conjunction with emergency lights and flashers
5. Public Address Systems may be used to:
 - a. Give general information to the public
 - b. Give instructions to violators from a distance, and
 - c. For officer safety reasons
6. Although the safety of officers and the community takes priority, officers should take into consideration the educational and residential environment and the disruption emergency signaling devices may cause.
7. Further regulations and information regarding the emergency operation of Fitchburg State University Police Department's vehicles is located in **General Order 9.2.1 Vehicle Pursuits**.
8. **REMINDER: General Order 9.1.2 Use of Seatbelts** requires the use of safety belts in all department vehicles.

Approval:

M. J. Clark

Chief of Police

09/29/2020

Date