

Officer Response to Calls

308.1 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.

308.2 RESPONSE TO CALLS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately. Officers responding to an emergency call shall continuously operate emergency lighting equipment and shall sound the siren (ORC § 4511.041).

Responding with emergency lights and siren does not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle of the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and does not protect the driver from the consequences of the driver's reckless disregard for the safety of others (ORC § 4511.041; ORC § 4511.45; ORC § 4511.452). The use of any other warning equipment without emergency lights and siren does not provide any exemption from the Ohio motor vehicle laws.

Officers should only respond as an emergency call response when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. Officers not responding as an emergency call response shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren.

308.3 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Requests for emergency assistance should be limited to those situations where the involved personnel reasonably believe there is an imminent threat to the safety of officers, or assistance is needed to prevent imminent serious harm to a citizen. Where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is not required, the requesting officer shall promptly notify the Communications Center.

If circumstances permit, the requesting officer should give the following information:

- The unit number
- The location
- The reason for the request and type of emergency
- The number of units required

308.3.1 NUMBER OF UNITS PARTICIPATING

Normally, only those units reasonably necessary should respond to an emergency as an emergency call response. The Watch Commander or the field supervisor should monitor all emergency responses and reduce or enhance the response as warranted.

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308.4 INITIATING EMERGENCY CALL RESPONSE

If an officer believes an emergency call response to any call is appropriate, the officer shall immediately notify the Communications Center. Emergency responses of more than one unit should include, if circumstances reasonably permit, coordinating the response of the second unit by the Communications Center to avoid any unanticipated intersecting of response routes.

An emergency call response of more than one unit should initiate notification by the Communications Center to the Watch Commander or field supervisor. The Watch Commander or field supervisor will make a determination regarding the appropriateness of the response and reduce or enhance the response as warranted.

308.5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESPONDING OFFICER

Officers shall exercise sound judgment and care with due regard for life and property when responding to an emergency call. During a response to an emergency call officers may (ORC § 4511.041):

- (a) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation (ORC § 4511.03).
- (b) Exceed any speed limits, provided this does not endanger life or property (ORC § 4511.24).
- (c) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions (ORC § 4511.37).
- (d) Disregard regulations governing parking or standing when using a warning lamp.

Continuing an emergency call response is at the discretion of the officer. If, in the officer's judgment, the roadway conditions or traffic congestion does not permit such a response without unreasonable risk, the officer may elect to respond to the call without the use of red lights and siren at the legal speed limit. In such an event, the officer should immediately notify the Communications Center. An officer shall also discontinue an emergency call response when directed by a supervisor or as otherwise appropriate.

Upon determining that an emergency call response is appropriate, an officer shall immediately give the location from which he/she is responding.

308.6 COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

A dispatcher shall ensure acknowledgment and response of assisting units when an officer requests emergency assistance or when the available information reasonably indicates that the public is threatened with serious injury or death and an immediate law enforcement response is needed. In all other circumstances, the dispatcher shall obtain authorization from the Watch Commander or a field supervisor prior to assigning an emergency response. The dispatcher shall:

- (a) Attempt to assign the closest available unit to the location requiring assistance.
- (b) Immediately notify the Watch Commander.
- (c) Confirm the location from which the unit is responding.

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- (d) Notify and coordinate outside emergency services (e.g., fire and ambulance).
- (e) Continue to obtain and broadcast information as necessary concerning the response, and monitor the situation until it is stabilized or terminated.
- (f) Control all radio communication during the emergency and coordinate assistance under the direction of the Watch Commander or field supervisor.

308.7 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated or requested, the Watch Commander or the field 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 field 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.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to terminate an emergency response that, in the supervisor's judgment, is inappropriate due to the circumstances.

When making the decision to authorize an emergency call response, the Watch Commander or the field 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.

308.8 EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Vehicles not equipped with emergency lights and siren are prohibited from initiating or joining in an emergency response. [Officers_Deputies] in such vehicles may provide support to an emergency response as long as the vehicles are operated in compliance with all traffic laws. Those [officers_deputies] 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 call response and respond accordingly.

The officer shall notify the Watch Commander, field supervisor or the Communications Center of the equipment failure so that another unit may be assigned to the emergency response.

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308.9 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.