



Somerville Police Department 		TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		POLICY NUMBER: 123	
		Subject: Response to Calls			
		Issuing Authority: David Fallon Chief of Police		Signature: 	Effective Date: June 18, 2015
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Purpose

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 use the shortest and safest route of travel. The standard which we will follow is one of objective reasonableness.

Policy

It is the policy of the Somerville Police Department that:

- A. The department will evaluate the urgency of the police response to a given situation and assign the appropriate number of officers.
- B. 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.

Procedures [41.2.1]**1. Statutory Guidelines Emergency Vehicle Operation:**

- A. 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 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 14 of chapter 90 when approaching a school bus which has stopped to allow passengers to alight or board from the same, and whose red lamps are flashing.

2. Categories of Calls for Service**A. Generally:**

1. Under the direction of the Shift Commander, the number of officers to be assigned to a call will normally be left to the dispatcher's discretion.
2. Certain types of crime will require the dispatching of at least two (2) officers.
 - a) Emergency calls and many urgent calls will normally require two (2) officers or units to respond.
 - b) Routine calls will normally require only one (1) officer or unit to respond.
3. Patrol supervisors have the responsibility and authority, at their discretion, to determine the number of officers necessary at any particular call or assignment.
4. 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.
5. Dispatchers should avoid giving callers overly optimistic estimates of the timeliness or level of probable police response. Simply stated, try not to make promises concerning how many officers will arrive or how quickly they will respond.
6. The following procedures provide guidelines for the evaluation of the urgency of a police response to a given situation.

B. Emergency Calls: [41.2.1]

1. 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.
2. 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 officers will follow the law (M.G.L. Chapter 89, Section 7B) regarding Emergency Vehicle Operation.
3. Officers must bear in mind that during a 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.
4. 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) Any ongoing felony or misdemeanor that involves violence and may result in injury.
 - c) Any serious felony or violent misdemeanor that has just occurred and reason exists to believe the suspect is still in the area.
 - d) Any incident that involves exigent or unique circumstances that demand an immediate police response.
 - e) Any officer in trouble call or any request from an officer for an emergency response.
5. 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, building collapse, or hostage situation.
6. If available, a minimum of two (2) officers or units shall be dispatched to 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.
7. Responses to vehicular pursuit calls and high-speed driving conditions and restrictions shall be governed by the department policy on Vehicle Pursuit.

C. Urgent Calls:

1. 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.
2. An Urgent 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.
3. Units responding to urgent calls should be attentive to radio broadcasts, as the situation may quickly change to a more or less serious incident.
4. Conditions that will define an Urgent Response are:
 - a) 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.
 - b) An in-progress incident that could be classified as a possible crime.
 - c) Any incident that represents a significant hazard to the flow of traffic.
 - d) Any incident that requires a prompt, non-emergency response.
 - e) An officer's call for non-emergency assistance (back-up unit, potential but not present problem).
 - f) Officers holding a prisoner and requesting transport will receive an Urgent Response unless special circumstances dictate otherwise.
5. Examples of urgent calls are domestic/family problems, property damage motor vehicle accidents, non-life threatening medical calls, and any other call which requires immediate response by the department.
6. Urgent calls will generally require that at least two (2) units be dispatched, unless the primary unit responding is a two (2) officer unit.
7. 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 (M.G.L. Chapter 89, Section 7B).

D. Routine Calls: [41.2.1

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 will probably not deteriorate to critical status due to the time period of that arrival.

2. Examples of routine calls include calls for service, taking a report, past breaking and entering calls, loud groups or parties, barking dogs, larceny or stolen car reports, transports assistance, blocked driveways and any other call which can be termed routine in nature.
3. A Routine Response involves no emergency lights or sirens. It is a normal traffic speed response.
4. Usually, only one (1) 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, barking dogs, larceny or stolen car reports, transport assistance, and any other call which can be termed routine in nature.

3. Response to Officer Initiated Calls

- A. 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.
- B. Units will continue their response at the direction of the dispatcher.
- C. All units will closely monitor radio broadcasts in the event that the situation changes (officer in trouble downgraded to a backup), so that their response can be appropriately modified.
- D. The first unit to arrive at the scene will report the current situation so that other units may adjust their response accordingly.
- E. Any units called-off, by either the dispatcher or a supervisor, will immediately discontinue any emergency operation and resume their normal patrol.

4. Upon Arrival [41.2.4]

- A. Upon arrival, first responding officers shall assess the situation and determine, based upon the information at hand, if responding resources are adequate for the situation.
- B. If the response appears excessive, the officer shall notify the dispatcher and may request a reduced response.
- C. The officer may request additional resources as appropriate for the situation, or in accordance with department policy, by contacting the dispatcher.
- D. On-duty, local, or contracted resources may be requested directly by the first responding officer. These resources may include requests for a supervisor, emergency medical services, medical examiner/coroner, fire service, highway department, and public utilities personnel.
- E. Requests for off-duty personnel, mutual aid, or specialty assistance must be authorized and requested by a supervisor.
- F. Any determination as to response made by the supervisor shall be followed.