



RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER



Subject: EMERGENCY AND NON-EMERGENCY VEHICLE RESPONSE PROTOCOL	Chapter 6	Number 7	# Pages 7
References: CALEA: 41.2.1a, 41.2.1b, 41.2.1c, 41.2.1d, 81.2.4g	Related Orders: N/A	Effective Date: 04/14/2022 Revised By: CALEA Standard Prv. Rev. Date: 02/10/21	
Chief of Police: <div style="text-align: center; font-family: cursive; font-size: 1.2em; margin-top: 10px;">Herald M. Amato</div>			

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish a standard operating procedure for the safe operation of police vehicles when responding to both emergency and non-emergency calls for service.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGE

This revision derives from a CALEA standard where Non-Emergency has been defined in this policy. All changes are bold and italicized throughout this document.

III. POLICY

The Richmond Police Department’s responses to calls for service and for prescribing the number of police units to be dispatched are based upon a number of factors. The number of vehicles responding to a call for service and the response code will be determined by departmental policy and controlled by the on-duty 911 Department of Emergency Communications (DEC) Communications Officers. It is also the policy of the Department that field supervisors and superior officers have the authority to increase or decrease the number of responding vehicles.

When operating Department vehicles under emergency response conditions, officers will use lights and sirens. An officer’s primary responsibility when responding to an emergency situation is the safety of the officer and the welfare of the general public. Officers have a responsibility to respond to calls for service in accordance with the Department’s General Orders and other written directives. Any indiscriminate or uncontrolled police response to calls for service is neither prudent nor authorized. Although officers are given qualified exemptions under state law from observing certain traffic regulations in specific circumstances, they are required to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons. (VA Code §46.2-920)

III. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this General Order. Responsibility rests with the Division Commander to ensure that any

violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated.

This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT – The lights and siren on a police vehicle.
- B. EMERGENCY:
 - 1. A condition deemed to exist only in a situation where there is an indication that violence or injuries exist and will likely continue or worsen or where a need prevails for immediate action toward the continued protection of life and property. In addition, a serious felony that involves an actual or threatened attack that an officer reasonably believes could or has resulted in death or serious bodily injury (e.g. Aggravated Assault, Armed Robbery, Murder, etc.).
 - 2. A situation in which the physical safety and well being of an individual requesting or needing police assistance is directly jeopardized. In these incidents, the primary, backup and supervising units will utilize both their lights and siren to respond to the scene in an expedited manner.
- C. ***NON-EMERGENCY: In situations where the officer is dispatched to a non-priority call, he/she shall not use their emergency equipment when responding. If in route to the call and it changes to a high priority call, the officer shall activate their emergency equipment for a faster response.*** [CALEA 41.2.1a]
- D. MARKED UNIT – A police vehicle equipped with a police package (i.e. conspicuous police markings, emergency lights and siren) and able to engage in radio communications.
- E. UNMARKED UNIT – A police vehicle able to engage in radio communications but does not contain conspicuous police markings, emergency lights or siren.
- F. UNMARKED, POLICE EQUIPPED UNIT – A police vehicle able to engage in radio communications that is equipped with emergency lights and siren but does not contain conspicuous police markings.
- G. [REDACTED].
- H. [REDACTED].

V. PROCEDURE

A. Officers shall acknowledge radio assignments, give current location, verbally mark [REDACTED] and use the [REDACTED] function key on the MDC when they arrive near the scene of an incident.

B. Emergency Operation of Police Vehicles – (General): [CALEA 41.2.1b]

1. Only a police vehicle equipped with a siren and emergency flashing lights will be operated as an emergency vehicle. Both the siren and the emergency flashing lights must be activated when operating under emergency conditions or in an emergency capacity.

NOTE: The use of either siren or emergency lights alone shall not qualify the police vehicle as an emergency vehicle (VA Codes §46.2-1022, 46.2-1023 and 46.2-1029.1) and the vehicle must be driven in compliance with all traffic laws.

2. Unmarked police vehicles with concealed emergency lights must use extreme caution in assuming the right-of-way, where the concealed mounting of the lights prevents the clear vision or observation of those lights by the general public.

C. Classification of Emergency Calls for Service: [CALEA 41.2.1b]

Emergency classifications are assigned to those calls for service meeting the definition of an Emergency as defined in this policy. Examples of emergency calls include but are not limited to the following:

1. Police Officer is in immediate harm and needs assistance, [REDACTED] or “Mayday”;
2. Person(s) shot or person with a deadly weapon;
3. In-progress calls such as Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Breaking and Entering, Sex Offenses or Robbery;
4. Traffic crash/accidents involving serious injury and/or a fatality;
5. Calls in which a violent perpetrator is still on the premises, not just in the vicinity;
6. Hold-up alarms for businesses during business hours;
7. Riot or large disturbances involving violence or the credible threat thereof;
8. Verbal communications or other sounds that may lead DEC to believe that the officer or others are in danger; or,
9. If the status of a non-emergency call for service changes or DEC determines that the call should be upgraded to an emergency call.

- D. Calls for Service Prioritization: [CALEA 41.2.1c]
1. The Department's existing call priorities are: Response Code 1 – Emergency Response and Response Code 2 – Non-Emergency Response.
 2. DEC is responsible for prioritizing and assigning all incoming calls for service based on the individual nature of the call.
 3. The number of vehicles responding to a particular call, based on the response code, will be controlled by the on-duty Communications Officer. Field Supervisors and superior officers have the authority to increase or decrease the number of responding vehicles.
- E. Protocols for Response Codes:
1. Response Code 1: Emergency Response – A [REDACTED] will be used and the call shall be simulcast on [REDACTED] for officer safety purposes.

NOTE: Mayday calls are Response Code 1 calls. Upon a [REDACTED] or “Mayday” transmission, verbal communication or other sound that may lead the Communication Officer(s) to believe that an officer(s) is in danger, DEC will immediately simulcast [REDACTED] and broadcast the call on [REDACTED]. [CALEA 81.2.4g]
 2. Response Code 2: Non-Emergency Response – Response Code 2 is reserved for all other calls for service or situations not prioritized as Emergency Response (Response Code 1). [CALEA 41.2.1a]

NOTE: Due to the nature of some typically classified Response Code 2 calls, the call may be elevated to a Response Code 1 based on the information received by DEC.
- F. Sector Unit Assignment (by Response Code):
1. Response Code 1 – Emergency Response: These calls for service will be assigned to the nearest two (2) distinct units, regardless of the number of officers assigned to each unit. The units closest to the incident, regardless of sector assignment, shall be responsible for responding to the scene of the incident. An immediate response is required. [CALEA 81.2.4g]
 2. Response Code 2 – Non-Emergency Response: These calls for service will be assigned to a single sector unit, if available. Officers shall respond without delay to these calls for service.
- G. Vehicle Response Protocols (by Response Code): [CALEA 41.2.1d]
1. Response Code 1 – Emergency Response:
 - a) When operating under Response Code 1, officers must use lights and sirens. Officers shall utilize their emergency equipment when assigned a

Response Code 1 call for service as either the primary or secondary unit. The supervisor responding to such calls also shall respond using such equipment. On Mayday calls, only the [REDACTED] are pre-authorized to use Response Code 1, unless otherwise authorized by a supervisor. The first unit arriving on scene shall act as the Incident Commander and have the authority to increase or decrease the number of responding vehicles until such time that the first police supervisor arrives on the scene.

NOTE: An officer's primary responsibility when responding on a Response Code 1 call for service is the safety of the officer and the welfare of the general public. Officers are never relieved of the responsibility of driving with due regard for the safety of all persons and property.

- b) Officers and supervisors operating emergency vehicles, when the vehicle is being used in the performance of public services and when operating the vehicle under emergency conditions:
 - (1) Shall not exceed the posted speed limit [REDACTED] on city streets and on all controlled access highways, such as: Interstates, the Chippenham Parkway, the Downtown Expressway, etc. The maximum safe speed, [REDACTED] will be determined by the responding officer, taking into consideration the seriousness of the incident, traffic conditions, weather conditions, vehicle conditions and the potential for other officer(s) who are closer to the incident to render assistance;
 - (2) Must be able to come to a complete stop if necessary at any steady or flashing red signal, traffic, stop sign or other such traffic stopping device. Officers may avoid a complete stop if the intersection can be cleared prior to entering it, using due regard for the safety of themselves and citizens;
 - (3) Verbally mark [REDACTED] and use the [REDACTED] function key on the Mobile Data Computer when they arrive near the scene of the incident;

2. Response Code 2 – Non-Emergency Response: [CALEA 41.2.1a]

- a) Officers will obey all applicable traffic laws; and,
- b) If the status of a Response Code 2 call for service changes to a Response Code 1, the responding officer(s) will operate the police vehicle in accordance with the aforementioned vehicle response protocol for Response Code 1 calls for service.

H. Supervisory Responsibilities (Response Code 1):

1. The first police supervisor on the scene of any Response Code 1 call for service shall relieve the primary unit as the Incident Commander and may request any other emergency response that is deemed necessary beyond the primary and secondary response units. The Incident Commander must mark [REDACTED].
2. The Precinct Sergeant (responsible for the activities of the Sector officers) is responsible for ensuring that the Department's emergency response protocol is followed in Response Code 1 situations. All supervisors have a responsibility to act, if deemed appropriate, to correct actions of employees.
3. Whenever an "Officer Needs Assistance or Mayday" is called, the supervisor of the officer calling the emergency situation will complete the Unusual Incident Report/Mayday Summary Report (PD-50) and forward the form, through channels, to the Precinct/Division Commander and the appropriate Operations Major for review. After the Major of the affected Service has reviewed the PD-50, the original copy of the PD-50 shall be forwarded to the Office of the Chief of Police and a copy to the Office of General Counsel.

I. Handling Requests for Emergency Assistance from Outside Emergency Service Agencies:

1. When a member of DEC receives information that there is a situation that requires an emergency response and the nature of the request is based on in-progress violent actions, the on-duty Communications Officer shall issue [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] will respond as a Response Code 1 call for service, utilizing emergency lights and siren.
2. If the request is not of an emergency nature, the call for service will be logged as a Response Code 2 call for service.

J. Display of blue lights by marked vehicles on duty

1. If a departmental vehicle is equipped with the technology permitting the permanent display of two solid blue LED lights illuminating the front and the rear of the light bar positioned on the top of marked police vehicles, the officer or supervisor operating that vehicle shall ensure that the lights are on display at all times when operating the vehicle. The following are the only exceptions (when the lights may be deactivated.)
 - a) When, in the officer's discretion, the display of the lights during the response to the call for service is not considered a tactical or safe approach.
 - b) Speed enforcement.

2. Vehicles equipped with the technology permitting the permanent display of the solid blue LED lights may be identified by the presence of two white strips of tape on the front and rear bumpers.

VI. FORMS

- A. PD-50, Unusual Incident Report/Mayday Summary Report
- B. Incident Based Report (IBR)