

Deputy Response to Calls

308.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides deputies 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.

308.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Emergency Vehicle - Defined in the Maryland Transportation Article.

CODE 1 - Non-emergency, routine call for service. Officers will respond as soon as practical, operate their vehicle without activation of emergency equipment, and obey all traffic laws.

CODE 2 - A non-emergency call for service requiring an immediate response. Officers will proceed to the assignment without unnecessary delay, operate their vehicle without activation of emergency equipment, and obey all traffic laws.

CODE 3 - An emergency call for service requiring an immediate response. Officers will respond without delay, operate their vehicle with emergency equipment activated (minimally, siren and lights), and proceed with due regard for the safety of all persons and property.

Signal 13 - An urgent request for help by a deputy sheriff, or any law enforcement officer, in need of immediate assistance. The response will be in accordance with guidelines as set forth in the Code 3 response.

308.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this office to appropriately respond to emergency and nonemergency calls for service or requests for assistance, whether these are dispatched or self-initiated.

308.3 RESPONSE TO CALLS

Deputies responding to nonemergency calls shall proceed accordingly, either Code 1 or Code 2, unless they are sent or redirected to a higher priority call, and shall obey all traffic laws.

The shift supervisor, or other supervisor, may change the response classification to any call, based on call information and/or history.

308.3.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

Deputies should only respond to a call as an emergency response (Code 3) when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. This includes, but is not limited to (Md. Code TR § 21-106):

- (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.

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- (c) When immediate assistance is requested by a deputy or other law enforcement agency.
- (d) When a call for service is preceded by a tone alert.

If a deputy believes an emergency response to any call is appropriate, the deputy shall immediately notify the dispatcher. When deciding to proceed with a Code 3 response, deputies will consider the incident's threat to life and property as well as his/her safety and the safety of other citizens in determining his/her response level.

Deputies not responding to a call as an emergency response shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren

Deputies operating agency vehicles shall not initiate or engage in emergency response driving while non-official passengers are present on the vehicle. In such circumstances, passengers shall be safely deposited at an appropriate location before any emergency response is initiated.

Exception: The provisions of this section do not apply to individuals participating in an approved ride-along program, who may remain in the vehicle during an emergency response in accordance with Policy 405.6 Ride-Alongs, Member Responsibilities.

308.4 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

When requesting emergency assistance, the involved office 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.

If circumstances permit, the requesting member should provide 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 deputies or resources required
- Hazards and any known or potential dangers for responding deputies

In any event where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is no longer required, the requesting member shall immediately notify the dispatcher.

308.5 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Deputies responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate and shall continuously operate the emergency vehicle lighting and siren as required by law (Md. Code TR § 21-106(c)).

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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 deputy may, when responding to a call with an emergency response, and provided there is no endangerment or unnecessary risk to persons and property (Md. Code TR § 21-106(b)):

- Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after stopping and assuring by careful observation that the way is clear before proceeding through the intersection.
- Exceed the speed limit.
- Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.
- Park or stand without regard to parking restrictions.

[Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: CODE 3 OPERATION](#)

308.5.1 NUMBER OF DEPUTIES ASSIGNED

Only the number of deputies that are reasonably necessary should be assigned to respond to an emergency call or request for assistance.

An emergency response involving more than one sheriff's vehicle should be coordinated by the Emergency Communications Center to avoid any unanticipated intersecting of response routes. The dispatcher shall notify the Shift Commander or field supervisor, who will make a determination regarding the appropriateness of the response and reduce or enhance the response as warranted.

308.5.2 MOTORCYCLES

Agency motorcycles will primarily be used for traffic control, speed enforcement, and other assignments as needed. Any assignment other than the primary duties will be with the approval of the commander of the division responsible for the Motor Unit.

The following circumstances, conditions, and uses are prohibited:

- Motorcycles will not be used for the transport of passengers.
- Motorcycles will not be used in any weather which, in the operator's opinion, will hinder the safe, effective operation of the motorcycle.
- Supervisors may expand these prohibitions where they believe a particular use is unduly hazardous.

308.6 EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Vehicles not equipped with emergency lights and a siren are prohibited from initiating or joining in an emergency response.

If the emergency equipment on the vehicle should fail to operate, the deputy must terminate the emergency response and continue in compliance with all traffic laws. The deputy shall notify the Shift Commander, field supervisor or the dispatcher of the equipment failure so that another deputy may be assigned to the emergency response.

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308.7 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

The decision to initiate or continue an emergency response is at the discretion of the deputy. If, in the deputy's judgment, the weather, traffic and/or road conditions do not permit such a response without unreasonable risk, the deputy 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 deputy should immediately notify the dispatcher. A deputy shall also discontinue an emergency response when directed by a supervisor or as otherwise appropriate.

Upon receiving authorization or determining that an emergency response is appropriate, whenever practicable, a deputy shall immediately give the location from which he/she is responding.

The first deputy arriving at the emergency call should determine whether to increase or reduce the level of response of additional responding deputies and shall notify the dispatcher of his/her determination. Any subsequent change in the appropriate response level should be communicated to the dispatcher by the deputy in charge of the scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

308.8 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

When information reasonably indicates that the public is threatened with serious injury or death or a deputy requests emergency assistance and immediate law enforcement response is needed, the dispatcher shall assign an emergency response and ensure acknowledgement and response of handling and assisting deputies. In all other circumstances, the dispatcher shall obtain authorization from the Shift Commander or a field supervisor prior to assigning an emergency response.

308.8.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon notification or assignment of an emergency response, the dispatcher is responsible for:

- (a) Confirming the location from which the deputy is responding or requesting assistance.
- (b) Attempting to assign the closest available assisting deputies to the location of the emergency call.
- (c) Continuing to obtain and broadcast information as necessary concerning the response and monitoring the situation until it is stabilized or terminated.
- (d) Notifying and coordinating allied emergency services (e.g., fire, emergency medical services).
- (e) Controlling all radio communications during the emergency and coordinating assistance under the direction of the Shift Commander or field supervisor.

308.9 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated or requested, the Shift Commander or the field supervisor shall verify that:

- (a) The proper response has been initiated.

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- (b) No more than those deputies 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 deputies into or out of the response, if necessary. If, in the supervisor's judgment, the circumstances require additional deputies 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 authorize an emergency response, the Shift 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 deputies and the location of the incident

308.10 VEHICLE ESCORTS

(a) Emergency Escorts

1. A deputy sheriff may escort ambulances and/or other emergency vehicles in emergency situations when an operator of an ambulance or fire apparatus is unfamiliar with the route to the destination.
2. Emergency delivery of blood, critically needed medication, or other such items will be made only with the authorization of the supervisor.
3. A deputy sheriff will not escort privately-owned vehicles in emergency situations. The deputy sheriff will contact the Emergency Communications Center to provide appropriate transport or medical aid.

(b) Funeral Escorts

1. Funeral escort requests will be dispatched by the Emergency Communications Center. Daily requests will be handled by Patrol and SOD personnel as manpower permits. The Traffic Safety Unit will coordinate traffic control as necessary.

(c) Public Officials and Dignitaries

1. Escorts of public officials and dignitaries will be coordinated by the Traffic Safety Unit.

(d) Other Escorts

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1. With the approval of a supervisor, deputy sheriffs may escort oversized or hazardous materials vehicles to ensure the safety of citizens.
- (e) In all cases, the Emergency Communications Center will be notified when an escort is provided.