Officer Response to Calls

308.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The State of Minnesota finds that emergency vehicle operations are an integral part of law enforcement's commitment to public safety. This policy provides for the safe and appropriate response to all emergency and non-emergency situations (Minn. Stat. § 626.8458, Subd. 1).

308.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this department 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

308.3.1 RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY CALLS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate. Officers responding to an emergency call shall sound the siren or display at least one lighted red light to the front of the vehicle. Whenever practicable, during an emergency call response the officer should continuously operate emergency lighting equipment and sound the siren (Minn. Stat. § 169.03 et seq.; Minn. Stat. § 169.17).

Responding with a red light, emergency lighting and/or siren does not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle or a law enforcement 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 his/her reckless disregard for the safety of others. The use of any other warning equipment without emergency lights and siren does not provide an exemption under Minnesota law (Minn. Stat. § 169.17).

Officers should only respond with a red light, emergency lights and/or siren when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is appropriate. Officers not responding with a red light, emergency lights and/or siren shall observe all traffic laws.

308.3.2 LIGHTING EXEMPTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT VEHICLES

An officer may operate a vehicle without lights as otherwise required while performing law enforcement duties when the officer reasonably believes that operating the vehicle without lights is necessary to investigate a criminal violation or suspected criminal violation of state laws, rules or orders, or local laws, ordinances or regulations. The operation of a vehicle without lights must be consistent with the standards adopted by Minnesota Peace Officer Standards and Training Board (POST) (Minn. Stat. § 169.541). An officer may not operate a vehicle without lights:

(a) On inter-state highways

(b) At speeds greater than what is reasonable under existing weather, road, and traffic conditions.

(c) Faster than the posted speed limit.

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(d) In situations where the peace officer is an active participant in the pursuit of a motor vehicle fleeing from a peace officer.

308.4 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Requests for emergency assistance should be limited to those situations where the involved personnel reasonably believe that 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 Washington County 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

308.4.1 NUMBER OF UNITS PARTICIPATING

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

308.5 INITIATING EMERGENCY CALL RESPONSE

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

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

308.6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESPONDING OFFICERS

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 (Minn. Stat. § 169.03; Minn. Stat. § 169.17):

(a) Proceed cautiously past a red or stop signal or stop sign but only after slowing down and utilizing a red light or siren as may be necessary for safe operation.

(b) Exceed any speed limits, provided this does not endanger life or property.

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(c) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions as authorized by law.

(d) Disregard regulations governing parking or standing when using a warning lamp.

The decision to continue 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 Washington County 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.

When emergency vehicles are on the scene of an emergency and pose any hazard, or when the vehicle operators seek exemption to park, stop or stand contrary to any law or ordinance pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 169.541, adequate warning lights shall be operated whenever practicable.

308.7 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 shift supervisor 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 shift supervisor.

(c) Confirm the location from which the unit is responding.

(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 communications during the emergency and coordinate assistance under the direction of the shift supervisor or field supervisor.

308.8 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated, the shift supervisor or the field supervisor shall verify the following:

(a) The proper response has been initiated.

(b) No more than those units reasonably necessary under the circumstances are involved in the response.

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(c) Affected outside jurisdictions are being notified as practicable.

The field supervisor shall, whenever practicable, monitor the response until it has been stabilized or terminated and assert control by directing units into or out of the response if necessary. If, in the supervisor's judgment, the circumstances require additional units 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 call response, the shift supervisor or the field supervisor should consider the following:

- The type of call or crime involved.
- The necessity of a timely response.
- Traffic and roadway conditions.
- The location of the responding units.

308.9 FAILURE OF EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

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 shift supervisor, field supervisor or the Washington County Communications Center of the equipment failure so that another unit may be assigned to the emergency response.

308.10 TRAINING

The designated training supervisor shall ensure the frequency and content of emergency vehicle operations training meets or exceeds that required by law (Minn. Stat. § 626.8458).

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