

Officer Response to Calls

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Revised Date:	
Issuing Authority: Chief Dustin Liston	

309.1 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.

309.2 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. When operating a vehicle in any situation, officers are expected at all times to exercise the highest degree of care.

309.3 RESPONSE TO CALLS

Officers responding to non-emergency calls shall proceed accordingly, unless they are sent or redirected to a higher priority call and shall obey all traffic laws.

309.3.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate and shall continuously operate the emergency vehicle lighting and/or siren as required by law (Iowa Code § 321.231(4))

Officers should only respond to a call as an emergency response when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. This includes:

- (a) When in pursuit or apprehending a violator or suspected violator.
- (b) Medical calls for which the officer is trained or if the first responders are requesting officer assistance prior to entering to render aid. Incidents could include a possible cardiac arrest, drug overdose, choking, accident with significant personal injury or death, or an incident dangerous to the public that could result in serious injury or death.
- (c) When emergent assistance is requested by an officer or other law enforcement agency.

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Emergency lights should be used at all times while responding to an emergency assignment. In-car and body worn cameras shall be activated while responding in emergency mode and remain activated until the officer is cleared from the call for service.

A. No unit assigned to an officer shall be driven in such a manner or at such a speed that the officer is unable to safely maintain control of the vehicle.

B. Sirens should be used whenever responding in emergency mode. There may be times when in the judgment of the officer, the use of a siren is unnecessary and creates confusion and unwarranted attention. This should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the officer.

C. Officers operating a unit in emergency mode using lights and/or sirens shall slow to speeds where the officer is able to stop at controlled and uncontrolled intersections, this includes intersections controlled by signs or lights.

D. When emergency equipment is deactivated the responding officer shall obey all traffic laws and proceed in a manner consistent with the normal flow of traffic.

E. When responding to a medical emergency as defined above, responding officers should downgrade to non-emergency mode when EMS/Fire is on scene unless otherwise requested to continue in emergency mode by personnel on scene.

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

309.4 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

When requesting emergency assistance, the involved department 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
- Violator information, including weapons, if applicable
- Reason for the request and type of emergency
- The number of officers or resources required
- Hazards and any known or potential dangers for responding officers

In any event where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is not required, the requesting member shall immediately notify the dispatcher and all responding units shall discontinue emergency response and return to a normal response mode.

309.5 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Responding with emergency lights and/or 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

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and does not protect the operator from the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others (Iowa Code § 321.231(5)).

The officer may, when responding to a call with an emergency response, and provided there is no endangerment or unnecessary risk to persons and property (Iowa Code § 321.231):

- Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- Exceed the speed limit as long as the driver does not endanger life or property.
- Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.
- Park or stand in the roadway.

The operation of a vehicle against traffic on one-way streets or controlled access roadways shall only be performed under the most extreme circumstances and only when the benefit of such action clearly outweighs the danger of traveling against traffic.

309.5.1 NUMBER OF OFFICERS ASSIGNED

The number of officers assigned to respond to an emergency call or request for assistance should be limited to that which is reasonably necessary. To the extent possible the nearest available area car will be assigned as the initial unit of an emergency call and will respond in emergency mode. The next nearest unit should be assigned as the second unit to the call. Secondary unit(s) should consider responding in a routine mode. However, if the gravity of the situation and/or the distance to be traversed would unnecessarily delay the arrival of the assisting unit(s), the secondary unit(s) may respond in an emergency mode. In these circumstances, the responding officers must weigh the jeopardy their response presents to themselves and the public. The assisting officer(s) must remain mindful of the fact that other emergency vehicles may be responding to the area in an emergency mode. When a scene is stabilized (Officers advise Code 4) all responding units shall immediately cease operating vehicles in an emergency mode and no further units should respond unless requested.

309.6 EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

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

If the emergency equipment on the vehicle should fail to operate, the officer must terminate the emergency response and continue accordingly. The officer shall notify their supervisor or the

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dispatcher of the equipment failure so that another officer may be assigned to the emergency response.

309.7 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

The decision to initiate or continue an emergency response is at the discretion of the officer. If, in the officer's judgment, the weather, traffic and road conditions do not permit such a response without unreasonable risk, the officer may elect to respond to the call without the use of emergency lights and siren at the legal speed limit. An officer shall also discontinue an emergency response when directed by a supervisor or as otherwise appropriate.

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

The first officer arriving at the emergency call should determine whether to increase or reduce the level of the response of additional officers 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 officer in charge of the scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

309.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the on-duty supervisor's responsibility to terminate an emergency response that, in his/her judgment, is inappropriate due to the circumstances.

When making the decision to terminate an emergency response, the Watch Commander or the on-duty supervisor should consider:

- 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.

309.9 ESCORTS

Private vehicles or other emergency vehicles (law enforcement, fire department, ambulance service, etc.) shall not be given an escort by a member of this department with the exception of a funeral procession or special event and in those exigent circumstances where the delay involved in an ambulance response to the scene may create a life and death situation.

This section does not preclude officers from guiding "lost" motorists or providing non-emergency chaperoning for businesses.

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309.10 OCCUPANT RESTRAINT

All employees of the Iowa City Police Department are required to utilize safety belt devices whenever the employee operates a departmental vehicle and shall comply with Iowa Code 321.445 requiring the use of safety belts on all front seat occupants.

Persons being transported in the back seat of marked patrol cars should be restrained with a safety belt, when they are cooperative, and it does not compromise the safety of the officer(s) involved.