



# ***GENERAL ORDER***

**DURHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT  
DURHAM, NC**

**NUMBER:**

**4001 R-1**

## **RESPONSE PRIORITIES**

Effective Date: 12/15/1995

Revision Dates: **R-1 01/10/2005**

### **INFORMATION**

The Durham Police Department will handle calls for police service based on a priority system rather than by the order the calls are received. The priority system is based on comparative threat to human life and property, probability of apprehension, the nature of the offense involved, and the nature of the police service required.

This priority system will be maintained by the Durham Emergency Communications Center, based on input from the Operations Bureau Commander. In addition to priority, the system also makes a recommendation of the number and type of field units to send to each call based on the nature of the call.

### **COMPUTER-AIDED DISPATCH ENTRIES**

When a call for service is received, the receiving telecommunicator will enter the call in the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. The system will automatically assign the appropriate response priority and make a recommendation of the number and type of field units to dispatch. Communications may alter the recommended response based upon additional information received from a complainant, a field unit, or supervisor.

If another unit is closer to the call for service than the dispatched unit, the closer unit will notify Communications of its location. Communications may reassign the call to the closer unit and cancel the unit originally dispatched. Communications will record the time the call is dispatched through the entry into the CAD system.

Officers will inform Communications of their arrival time to the call, the disposition of the call, and the time at which they return to service. Communications will record the arrival time, the clearance time, and the disposition for all calls in the prescribed CAD method.

### **RESPONSE PRIORITY DESIGNATIONS**

Response priority designations reflect the urgency of the call for service. The priority designation will be governed more by the circumstances and danger level presented by an incident rather than simply the nature of the call.

As calls are received and entered into the CAD system, their priority will be indicated by a designated color. Priority one calls are indicated by the color RED, priority two calls are indicated by the color YELLOW, while priority three calls are indicated by the color GREEN. These response priorities are described below, from most urgent to least urgent.

A responding officer shall not be distracted by an incident of lower priority when en route to an assigned call.

## **PRIORITY 1 - RED**

Calls for service in this category are a life-threatening or property-threatening situation in progress or an officer needing emergency assistance.

Communications will use any resource of sworn personnel which will initiate our fastest response. Lights and siren may be used. A patrol unit could be diverted from a previously dispatched call of a lower priority or non-patrol units may be dispatched.

## **PRIORITY TWO - YELLOW**

Calls for service in this category are life-threatening or property-threatening situations that have just occurred. Calls in this category may include, but are not limited to, traffic accidents with no personal injury, belated break-ins, barking dog (possible prowler), belated disturbances, etc.

At the discretion of the responding officer, lights and siren may be used. See General Order 4051, *Emergency Vehicle Equipment and Operation*.

## **PRIORITY THREE - GREEN**

Calls for service in this category are minor in nature and may include, but are not limited to, belated property-damage, belated petty larceny, traffic control sign damage, report of malfunctioning signal light, abandoned vehicle causing no hazard, parking violations, noise complaints, police advice, animal control complaint, etc.

Where appropriate, these calls will be routed to the Telephone Response Unit or Desk Officer as a first option, if of a police nature. If TRU or the Desk Officer is not available, then the call will be dispatched to the appropriate patrol unit. If the call is of a police nature for a specialized unit within the Department, the caller should be given the telephone number to that unit and the hours that unit is available. If the call is not of a police nature, or is concerning a police matter outside our jurisdiction, the caller will be directed to the appropriate agency.

No lights or siren are to be used for priority three calls. If the responding officer(s) interrupts their response for another activity, they must notify Communications when that alternative activity starts and ends. Communications will preferably dispatch the patrol unit responsible for the beat in which the incident occurred. If that unit is not available, the call can be held for a maximum of thirty (30) minutes waiting for the primary patrol unit to clear. At the end of the holding period, Communications will assign the call to the nearest available unit (any district). Communications will inform complainants that it may be up to one (1) hour before an officer arrives.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH PRIORITY ONE CALLS**

### **Officer Responsibilities**

When responding to Priority 1 calls, with or without lights and siren, officers must drive with due regard for the safety of citizens and fellow officers. Limit radio usage to essential or emergency traffic to ensure safety of units involved in the Priority 1 call.

## **Supervisory Personnel Responsibilities**

Ensure that a proper unit response is made. Decide whether to recommend that Communications modify some aspect of the response, when such modification is warranted.

Ensure that Communications has been properly notified as soon as the situation has been adequately controlled and no additional units are required.

## **Communications Responsibilities**

In most situations, Communications will be responsible for dispatching and maintaining the status of all units requested by on-scene personnel.

When the Priority 1 call is of an extended nature and/or any specialized unit must be called to the scene, Communications will advise all units involved in the call to switch to an alternate radio channel until the situation has been resolved.

Communications will request that units not involved with the extended Priority 1 call to refrain from using the designated reserved radio channel.

Communications will record out-of-service and return-to-service times on all units involved with the Priority 1 call.

## **EMERGENCY USE OF RADIO COMMUNICATIONS**

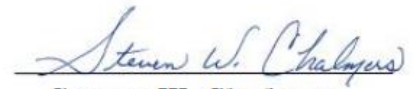
Any time an officer requires emergency, uninterrupted access to a radio channel, such as a life-threatening situation, he or she should state their assigned unit number followed by the code "10-33". Communications will acknowledge the officer and secure the radio channel for the officer's exclusive use. This code should be used with the realization that all activity on the police channel will be halted until the situation is cleared.

## **OFFICER NEEDING ASSISTANCE**

When an officer requests emergency assistance or a telecommunicator determines that an emergency situation exists, the procedures described below will be followed:

- The radio signal indicating emergency conditions (Signal 20) will immediately be in effect, whether verbalized or not. If verbalized, the announcement will be made on all police channels.
- Units not dispatched to the "assist an officer" call will not use the Primary Police radio channel until the assist call has been cleared by on-scene personnel and Communications has officially cleared the radio channel.
- The officer initiating the assist call is usually the best judge of what resources are required to control the situation. This officer will advise Communications of the number of units that need to respond to the call for assistance and which response priority is appropriate. If the initiating officer is not able to make that determination, their immediate supervisor or above, i.e. Incident Commander, though not on the scene, may make the decision based on what on-scene personnel are able to convey via the radio.
- If the officer requesting assistance does not specify the number of units needed or sufficient information is not available, or if a citizen rather than an officer initiates the call, a basic response team consisting of the following shall be dispatched to the scene:

- Two units and a supervisor sent Priority 1
  - Two units sent Priority 2.
- The duties of the first units to arrive at the scene shall be as follows:
  - Advise Communications of their arrival.
  - Give a first-impression evaluation of the situation to determine if adequate resources are at the scene or en route.
  - Request additional units or increased response priorities, if necessary.
  - Cancel additional units or reduce response priority, if appropriate.
- Each subsequent unit to reach the scene shall advise Communications of their arrival. As soon as the situation is under control, the first unit on the scene shall provide an evaluation of the situation to Communications.
- Units clearing from the scene shall advise Communications of their availability for other calls.

  
**Steven W. Chalmers**  
Chief of Police

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