

Policy 316 Officer Response to Calls

316.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

I. 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.

316.2 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.

316.3 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. Members operating a vehicle without emergency equipment (lights and siren) and responding to a call shall obey all traffic laws.

316.3.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall proceed immediately as appropriate and shall continuously operate the emergency vehicle lighting and siren as required by law.

Officers should only respond to a call as an emergency response when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. This includes but is not limited to:

- 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.
- c. When immediate assistance is requested by an officer or other law enforcement agency.

If an officer believes an emergency response to any call is appropriate, the officer shall immediately notify the [dispatcher]. 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.

316.4 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
- Suspect information, including weapons
- 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].

316.5 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

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 officer may, when responding to a call with an emergency response, and provided there is no endangerment or unnecessary risk to persons and property (RCW 46.61.035):

- 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.
- Disregard regulations governing parking, direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

316.5.1 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.

The field supervisor will make a determination regarding the appropriateness of the response and reduce or enhance the response as warranted.

316.5.2 MOTORCYCLES

An officer operating a police motorcycle should not be assigned to an emergency response. However, an officer operating a police motorcycle in an emergency response should be replaced by an authorized emergency vehicle equipped with emergency lights and siren as soon as practicable.

316.6 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. In such an event, the officer should immediately notify the [dispatcher]. An officer 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, 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.

316.7 SNOHOMISH COUNTY 911

When information reasonably indicates that the public is threatened with serious injury or death, or an officer requests emergency assistance and immediate law enforcement response is needed, the [dispatcher] shall assign and ensure acknowledgement of an emergency response.

316.7.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

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

- a. Confirming the location from which the officer is responding or requesting assistance.
- b. Attempting to assign the closest available assisting officers 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. Notifying the Shift Sergeant as soon as practicable.
- f. Controlling all radio communications during the emergency and coordinating assistance under the direction of the Shift Sergeant or field supervisor.

316.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

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

- a. The proper response has been initiated.
- b. No more than those officers 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 officers into or out of the response, if necessary. If, in the supervisor's judgment, the circumstances require additional officers 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 Sergeant or the field 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.