POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. 444

Response to Calls for Service

Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards:
81.2.4

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1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish officer response and minimum staffing requirements for calls for service, to specify supervisor notification and response triggers, and to establish radio procedures and unit designations for patrol operations.

2. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Worcester Police Department to respond to all calls for service in a manner that prioritizes the safety of the public and Department personnel. Officers shall respond with urgency and staffing appropriate to the nature of the call and the information received. The Department shall maintain clear radio procedures and unit designations to support effective communications. MPAC 81.2.4

3. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all sworn personnel and governs the Department's expectations for officer conduct, response posture, radio discipline, and supervisory oversight in connection with dispatched calls for service.

4. RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. General Requirements

Calls for service are received, classified, and prioritized by the Department of Emergency Communications. Officers respond based on the nature of the call and the information received, in accordance with this policy. All Operations Patrol Officers should call into service as soon as practicable at the start of their tour of duty. All officers on duty, if feasible, should monitor the appropriate radio channel (Eastside or Westside) for the duration of their tour and should be available to respond to calls involving an in-progress threat to life or a serious risk to persons.

B. Calls Involving an In-Progress Threat to Life

Calls involving an in-progress threat to life — including an active shooter, a robbery in progress, an assault with a weapon in progress, or a serious medical emergency involving violence — are broadcast as a general alert. A minimum of two officers shall be assigned. The two-officer minimum governs the assignment of units; it does not delay or preclude immediate

action by the first arriving officer where an active threat to life exists. Immediate deployment against an active assailant is governed by Policy 804 Active Threat Response. Officers shall respond immediately in accordance with Policy 420.1 Emergency Response Driving. The arriving officers shall assess the scene and provide an update to communications. If no assigned unit is available, the responding officer shall request a general broadcast to all available units.

C. Minimum Two-Officer Calls

A minimum of two officers shall be assigned whenever possible to any call involving: a crime against a person that is in progress or has just occurred; a report of a subject with a weapon; an alarm at an occupied premises; a call dispatched as a domestic dispute (see Section 7); a hostile or potentially violent complainant; or a past crime of violence. This assignment guideline does not delay or preclude immediate intervention by a single officer where necessary to prevent serious physical harm. Officers should respond promptly in accordance with the nature of the call, assess the scene upon arrival, and notify communications of any change in conditions. MPAC 81.2.4 [e]

D. All Other Calls

For all other calls, officers should respond in a timely manner consistent with the nature of the call and current workload, and should notify communications upon arrival and upon returning to service.

5. RADIO PROCEDURES AND UNIT DESIGNATIONS:

A. Unit Designations

The following call designations are established for uniform patrol: MPAC 81.2.4 [c]

1. OSCAR – Route officer
2. SIERRA – Sergeant
3. LIMA – Lieutenant
4. CHARLIE – Captain

B. Officer Communication Requirements

Officers shall notify communications in the following circumstances: MPAC 81.2.4 [a]

1. Calling into service at the start of tour.
2. Arriving at a dispatched call.
3. Initiating a motor vehicle stop, including the location and vehicle description.
4. Initiating any self-dispatched activity or investigation.
5. Returning to service after each call.
6. Requesting additional units or resources.
7. Non-emergency requests for CJIS or warrant confirmation information should be made on the administrative channel or via the in-car mobile data terminal.

An officer who remains on a call thirty (30) minutes after dispatch shall provide a status update upon contact from communications. If communications reports that an officer cannot be contacted, the sector sergeant shall immediately initiate efforts to locate the officer, including dispatching units to the officer's last known location.

C. Out-of-Service Status

Officers going out of service for any reason shall notify communications of the reason and their location so that the out-of-service status and location are recorded. Officers returning to service shall notify communications promptly. MPAC 81.2.4 [b]

D. Interagency Communications

Officers should be familiar with the radio channels and procedures for communicating with mutual aid agencies during multi-jurisdictional incidents. When operating on a mutual aid or interoperability channel, officers should identify themselves by agency and unit designation. Coordination with outside agencies during major incidents should be managed through the Incident Commander or the officer designated to coordinate communications. MPAC 81.2.4 [d]

E. Emergency Requests for Assistance

When an officer activates an emergency alert on a portable or mobile radio, or transmits an emergency request for assistance, all non-essential radio traffic on the affected channel shall cease immediately. The nearest available units shall respond immediately. A supervisor shall respond to the scene. If the activating officer cannot be contacted, the sector sergeant shall immediately initiate efforts to locate the officer, including dispatching units to the officer's last known location. MPAC 81.2.4 [g]

6. SUPERVISOR NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE:

A. Supervisor Response

A sector sergeant or supervisor shall respond to the scene under the following circumstances, and as further provided in Section 5.E (emergency requests for assistance) and Section 6.B (crash response): MPAC 81.2.4 [f]

1. Any call to which more than two Department units respond.

2. Any call involving off-duty Department personnel (see Section 8).

3. All acoustic gunfire detection alerts, which are governed by Policy 585 Acoustic Gunfire Detection System Response.

4. All calls involving a deceased person.

5. Any incident involving serious bodily injury, as defined in Policy 400 Use of Force.

6. Any call involving a hate crime or report of civil rights violence, other than a delayed or telephone report, which a supervisor reviews instead of responding to the scene. Hate crime procedures are governed by Policy 510 Hate Crimes and Civil Rights Violence.

7. Any incident involving an elected official, as provided in Section 6.D.

Upon arrival, the responding supervisor shall assume command of the scene and shall retain command until properly relieved, consistent with Policy 800 All Hazard Plan.

B. Crash Response

An operations supervisor shall be notified of every pedestrian crash and of any crash involving serious bodily injury. The responding officer shall verify that the operations supervisor has been notified and shall make the notification if it has not occurred. An operations supervisor shall respond to the scene of a pedestrian crash involving a fatality or serious bodily injury, an injury beyond apparent minor injury, an operator who has departed the scene, suspected operator impairment, or a suspected criminal offense, and shall respond to the scene of any other crash involving serious bodily injury. For all other pedestrian crashes, the operations supervisor should determine whether a scene response is necessary. The operations supervisor shall notify the Traffic Division of every pedestrian crash and of any crash involving serious bodily injury. Crash reconstruction and the deployment of the Crash Reconstruction Unit are governed by Policy 675 Motor Vehicle Crashes: Response, Investigation, and Reporting. When the Traffic Division is off duty, the operations supervisor should determine whether the Traffic Division should be called in.

C. On-Scene Supervisory Discretion

Excluding circumstances that require only simple approval, a supervisor should respond to the scene of an incident rather than engage in extended discussion of the situation over the radio.

D. Elected Officials

For purposes of this subsection, an elected official is a person who currently holds elective public office at the federal, state, county, or municipal level. An elected official is involved in an incident when the official is a victim, suspect, or participant. An elected official who only reports an incident or requests police service for another person, and is not a party to the incident, is not considered involved.

When a responding officer knows or learns that an incident involves an elected official, the officer shall ensure that a supervisor is notified. A supervisor shall respond to the scene and notify the Official in Charge, with only two exceptions:

1. For a delayed or telephone report, the supervisor reviews the report instead of responding to the scene.

2. For a motor vehicle stop in which no criminal offense is suspected and no arrest is made, no supervisor response is required under this subsection; the officer shall notify a supervisor after clearing the stop.

A supervisor shall respond to every other incident involving an elected official, including a motor vehicle crash.

The responding supervisor is responsible for the disposition of the incident unless otherwise directed by an official of higher rank. Enforcement decisions involving an elected official are made on the same basis as for any other person.

7. DOMESTIC DISPUTE CALLS:

Any call dispatched as a domestic dispute shall not be recoded to a lower priority or different incident type by responding officers. A written report shall be submitted for all calls dispatched as a domestic dispute, regardless of the disposition upon arrival. Domestic violence response is governed by Policy 451 Domestic Violence.

8. OFF-DUTY OFFICER INVOLVEMENT:

For purposes of this section, an off-duty officer is involved in an incident when the officer: is a party to the incident as a victim, suspect, or participant; takes or attempts police action, such as identifying themselves as an officer to intervene, detaining a person, using force, displaying a weapon or credentials, or making or attempting an arrest; remains on scene as a witness or participant; or becomes the subject of a complaint or investigation arising from the incident. An off-duty officer who only reports or relays information and takes no police action, is not a party to the incident, and does not remain on scene is acting as a reporting citizen and is not considered involved for purposes of this section.

A. Notification Requirements

When an incident involves off-duty Department personnel, the responding officers shall ensure that a supervisor is notified. A supervisor shall respond to the scene and notify their Official in Charge. The Official in Charge shall notify the on-call Deputy Chief when the incident involves the arrest of the off-duty officer, a death or serious bodily injury, any use of force, or the discharge of a firearm. Further notification, reporting, and investigation are governed by Policy 453 Domestic Violence Handling for Employees, Policy 500 Bureau of Professional Standards Investigations, Policy 501 Officer Involved Shootings, In-Custody Deaths and Serious Uses of Force, and Policy 210 Rules and Regulations, as applicable.

B. Rank Considerations

The supervisor dispatched to an incident involving an off-duty officer should be of a higher rank than the involved officer. When the involved officer holds the rank of Captain or above, the responding supervisor shall notify the Chief of Police or designee, who shall direct the response. The responding supervisor will be responsible for the disposition of the incident unless otherwise directed by an official of higher rank. If probable cause exists and an arrest is to be effected, this should be accomplished by a supervisory official at least one rank higher than the off-duty officer.

9. FIRST RESPONDER COORDINATION:

A. Scene Assessment

When responding to the scene of an incident where Fire and/or EMS may also be responding, the first officer at the scene should evaluate the situation and make a determination whether those agencies are needed. If they are not needed, the officer should request that those agencies stage or be released.

B. Staging of First Responders

When officers respond to a dangerous situation or a past violent incident, the officers at the scene, and if applicable a supervisor, should notify other first responders to stage at a nearby location and await further instruction before approaching the scene.

C. Fire Scene Response

When responding to fire scenes, the first priority is the personal safety of any occupants who may still be in harm's way, followed by general public safety and traffic control.

Per:

Paul B. Saucier
Chief of Police

Revisions:

October 16, 2026–

Added supervisor response for incidents involving elected officials. Replaced scene response to delayed and telephone hate crime reports with supervisor review.

September 9, 2026–

Removed the general notification requirement for first responder calls.

August 14, 2026–

Replaced the December 26, 2008 policy, Priority Level Dispatching / Officer Assignments, in its entirety in the ADA-compliant template. Removed the provisions directing the Department of Emergency Communications, the incident-type and disposition-code guidance, the construction and hazardous-condition procedures, and the BIKE and FOOT unit designations. Replaced the priority-based two-officer requirement with call-type criteria, and the thirty-minute status check with a status update and a duty to locate an officer who cannot be reached. Added radio notification, out-of-service, interagency, and emergency-assistance procedures; supervisor scene response for acoustic gunfire alerts, deceased persons, serious bodily injury, and hate crimes; crash response keyed to severity; and off-duty officer involvement rules with Deputy Chief and Chief notification. Replaced the signing authority.

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