

	Operational General Order	10.02 Response to Calls for Service	PAGE 1 OF 3
	SUBJECT		EFFECTIVE DATE
	Virginia Beach Police Department General Order Chapter 10 - Vehicle Policies		12/07/2007
			ORIGINATOR/REVIEW
DISTRIBUTION		CALEA: 41.2.1	Uniform Division
ALL			
BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:		<i>James A. Coonan</i>	

Purpose

To establish protocol between the police response to calls for service and E911 Emergency Communication Division priority codes in order to ensure a safe, rapid, and orderly response to those events.

Policy

Police officers must set examples for the public concerning safe driving practices and policies. The laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia apply equally to operators of police vehicles and to private citizens in all respects, with the few exceptions set forth in the Code of Virginia. These exempt police officers from certain criminal prosecutions, providing they operate within the framework of the provisions. Officers, when operating an emergency vehicle either under routine or emergency conditions shall do so in accordance with the Code of Virginia.

The laws do not exempt a police officer from civil liability, regardless of his authority to operate a vehicle under emergency conditions. Careful and prudent action in operating police vehicles is always the rule; there are no exceptions to this philosophy in spite of our demanding responsibilities and our exemption from criminal prosecution under certain circumstances as provided by law.

On occasion, police vehicles are involved in crashes that result in property damage or personal injuries. Most crashes can be prevented if officers use the care and prudence that is expected when operating emergency equipment.

Automobile crashes involving police equipment and police personnel will be thoroughly investigated. If negligence or lack of responsible thinking, on the part of the operator is established, disciplinary action will be taken as provided for in the Rules and Regulations of the Department.

Procedure (CALEA 41.2.1)

For the purpose of this section, an emergency will be deemed to exist only in situations where:

- There is an indication that violence or injury exists and will likely continue or worsen
- If the escape of an individual poses an immediate threat to the safety of others
- Where a need prevails for immediate action to ensure the continued protection of life and/or property.

Routine calls are those commonplace calls that indicate no emergency as indicated as described above.

Only police vehicles equipped with a siren and one or more emergency lights will be operated as an emergency vehicle. **BOTH SIREN AND EMERGENCY LIGHTS MUST BE ON WHEN OPERATING AS AN EMERGENCY VEHICLE AS MAY BE REASONABLY NECESSARY.**

Police Response Codes

When calls are received in the E911 Emergency Communications Division, it will be impossible to define every situation and indicate the appropriate communications priority code for each incident. Therefore, judgments will have to be made based on the information received at the time the call is received. Priority codes, as assigned by E911 Emergency Communications Division, shall not be reduced since the purpose of this code is to indicate to the officer the seriousness of the call; however, officer's shall determine the reasonable police response code based on the information provided to them at the time the call is dispatched or upon prior knowledge from similar incidents at the same location. It is the responsibility of the responding unit(s) to respond accordingly taking into consideration the road conditions, traffic density, visibility and time of day. If an operator elects to upgrade or downgrade his/her response mode, he/she shall notify the dispatcher by radio of that decision.

Police Response - Emergency

When the E911 Emergency Communications Division assigns an emergency call and designates it as PRIORITY 1 or PRIORITY 2, the officer(s) assigned will activate emergency lights and siren and respond as quickly as practicable with due regard to the safety of himself and others considering traffic density, weather conditions, and visibility. When approaching an intersection where the officer does not have the right of way, the officer(s) will slow sufficiently to be capable of coming to a complete stop before entering the intersection and before entering each lane of crossing traffic within the intersection and to ascertain that all opposing traffic has acknowledged the emergency signals and that the crossing can be made safely. Officers are to operate their vehicles consistent with the conditions set forth under State Code having due regard to the safety of persons and property.

As outlined in the State Code, emergency vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits when operating in the emergency mode using due regard for safety. However, unless authorized by a duly designated superior on a case-by-case basis, traveling greater than 20 mph over the posted speed limit is not permitted. In areas with posted speed limits of 35 MPH or less, a maximum speed of 10 MPH over the posted speed limit shall be permitted unless a greater speed is expressly authorized by a duly designated superior.

A vehicle operator shall not utilize a portable phone while operating in an emergency mode.

Police Response - Routine

When the E911 Emergency Communications Division assigns a call and designates it as a PRIORITY 3, 4, or 5, the officer(s) assigned will respond as soon as practicable, observing all traffic regulations and will not activate emergency lights and siren.

Right-of-Way:

Police vehicles must yield to all ambulances and fire equipment operating under emergency conditions.

Police vehicles with concealed emergency lights (interior and/or grill mounted) must use extreme caution in assuming the right-of-way at intersections where the concealed mounting of the lights prevents clear vision or observation of those lights by intersecting vehicles.

Emergency Escorts of Civilian Vehicles:

This Department does not authorize the emergency escorting of private civilian vehicles. In medical emergencies, a patient should be transported by Emergency Medical Services (EMS). (See General Order 12.10, (Police Escorts)).