



ACTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT MANUAL; P&P: Operations		
POLICY & PROCEDURE # 1.03	DATE OF ISSUE: 1/24/2024	EFFECTIVE DATE: 1/31/2024
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO CALLS	ISSUING AUTHORITY: Chief James Cogan	
REFERENCE(S): Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission #2.1.2; 41.2.1; 41.2.4; 41.3.3; 61.4.2; 81.2.4; 81.2.13;	___NEW __X__AMENDS ___RESCINDS	

I. PURPOSE

The manner in which officers respond to calls for services must vary according to the nature and severity of the call. This is necessary to ensure the maximum safety of the general public and to the officers themselves. Types of calls can be classified into three categories: Routine, Urgent, and Emergency. The need for the type of response is determined by the category into which the call falls. The total number of officers to be initially sent on a call can also be determined through these categories.

The purpose of this policy is to provide personnel with clear guidelines as to what calls will generally fit into which category, thus determining the degree of response and the number of officers to be assigned. None of these procedures will preclude the possibility of circumstances which will alter our normal and expected reactions. Response to any type of call requires an officer to utilize the shortest and safest route of travel.

Officers shall be prepared to reduce their high-speed response to calls due to sudden changes in the road/weather conditions and/or traffic volume. **[41.2.1]**

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Acton Police Department to:

- A. Evaluate the urgency of the police response to a given situation and assign the appropriate number of officers.
- B. In situations when the department is unable to respond to calls with sufficient on-duty personnel, it may have to rely on off-duty officers, and officers from neighboring departments via mutual aid agreements.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Safety Restraint Devices

1. The use of seat belts can have a significant effect in reducing the number of deaths and the severity of injuries resulting from traffic crashes, and assist the officers in maintaining proper control of their vehicles during pursuit or emergency high-speed operations. This Order requires the use of occupant's safety restraining devices by the driver and all passengers in any Acton Police vehicles when the vehicle is in motion, subject to the following procedures.
 - a) All sworn and non-sworn operators, passengers, and detainees will wear a safety belt with the following exceptions: **[41.3.3(1-6)]**
 - 1) Officers may remove safety belts a reasonable distance from arrival at any call, prior to stopping any motor vehicle, while approaching any suspicious activity, during slow-moving building checks, or during other unique situations where the individual officer feels wearing a seat belt may create a safety problem for him or herself.
 - 2) When an officer, due to the exigency of the situation, in his or her reasonable judgment, does not have time to safely put on his or her seatbelt.
 - 3) Officers are not required to wear safety belts when they would be required to exit their patrol vehicle frequently within a short distance, e.g. parking tickets.
 - 4) Officers are not required to wear safety belts when actually performing first aid on a person in the patrol vehicle.
 - 5) Officers are not required to wear safety belts when the patrol unit is in a parked and stationary position.
 - 6) Officers and their passengers will not be required to wear a safety belt when an officer is functioning in an undercover status.
 - 7) An officer will not be required to fasten the safety belt of an arrestee who is violent or potentially violent to the point where the officer's safety would be jeopardized by attempting to fasten the safety belt.
 - 8) When an arrestee has an injury that may be aggravated by the use of a safety belt.
 - 9) When an employee has a Doctor's note stating that the wearing of a safety belt may aggravate an injury, and is approved by the Chief of Police.
2. Any supervisor may grant exceptions to this Order for specific situations in which they deem the efficiency of operations outweighs the safety benefit.

B. Statutory Guidelines [41.2.1]

According to M.G.L. Chapter 89, Section 7B: the driver of any police vehicle,

“In an emergency and while in the performance of a public duty may drive such vehicle at a speed in excess of the applicable speed limit if he exercises caution and due regard under the circumstances for the safety of persons and property, and may drive such vehicle through an intersection of ways contrary to any traffic signs or signals regulating traffic at such intersection if he first brings such vehicle to a full stop and then proceeds with caution and due regard for the safety of persons and property, unless otherwise directed by a police officer regulating traffic at such intersection.”

C. Categories of Calls for Service

1. GENERALLY

- a) An officer’s response to a particular call will be dictated by the officer’s perception of the existing traffic conditions, road conditions, and severity of the call while keeping in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 89 Section 7B.
- b) Under the direction of the patrol shift supervisor the number of officers to be assigned to a call will normally be left to the dispatcher's discretion. However, certain types of calls for service will require the dispatching of at least two officers. Emergency Calls and many Urgent Calls will normally require two officers or units to respond. Routine Calls will normally require only one officer or unit to respond. The patrol shift supervisor also has the responsibility and authority, at their discretion, to determine the number of officers necessary at any particular call or assignment. **[81.2.4(E)]**
- c) It shall be the responsibility of the dispatcher or person taking the call to obtain information from the caller which will determine the severity and thus govern the degree of response to any call or the presence of a patrol supervisor at the scene. **[81.2.4(F)]**
- d) Dispatchers should avoid giving callers overly optimistic estimates of the timeliness or level of probable police response. Simply stated: Do not make promises concerning how many officers will arrive or how quickly they will respond.

2. ROUTINE CALLS FOR SERVICE: [41.2.1]

- a) Routine calls for service are those which require a police response for the purpose of taking some sort of action, but which do not require immediate arrival since the situation will probably not

deteriorate to critical status due to the time period of that arrival. The majority of calls require that only one officer be initially assigned unless the patrol shift supervisor feels it necessary for safety purposes to assign more than one.

- b) A Routine Call for Service response involves no emergency lights or sirens. It is a **speed-limit** response. Routine responses include:
 - 1) Calls for service; and/or
 - 2) To take a report.
- c) Examples of Routine Calls: illegally parked vehicles; barking dogs; past larceny reports; fraud and scam reports; and any other call that can be termed routine in nature.

3. URGENT CALLS FOR SERVICE:

- a) Urgent calls for Service are those that require a prompt police response on the part of the officer but are not so critical that they could be termed emergency -- an officer's presence is needed in a timely manner at the scene. Urgent calls for service will take priority for a response over a routine call for service. **[41.2.1]**
[81.2.13(2A)]
- b) An Urgent Call for Service response is accomplished by responding directly to an incident without unnecessary delay. This type of call will have flexibility in the manner of response (i.e., emergency lights with or without the use of a siren). **[41.2.1]**
- c) Units responding to Urgent Calls for Service should be attentive to their radios as the situation may quickly change to a more or less serious incident.
- d) Conditions that will define an Urgent Call for Service response are:
 - 1) Any incident that does not represent a significant threat to life and property or a felony that has occurred without injury and the suspect has fled the area;
 - 2) An in-progress incident that could be classified as a possible crime;
 - 3) Any incident that represents a significant hazard to the flow of traffic;
 - 4) Any incident that requires a prompt, non-emergency response;
 - 5) An officer's call for non-emergency assistance (backup unit, potential but not present problem); and

- e) Urgent Calls will generally require that at least two units be dispatched unless the primary unit responding is a two-officer unit. **[81.2.13(2A)]**
- f) Examples of Urgent Calls: domestic/family disputes; motor vehicle crashes; bank alarms/security alarms; non-life threatening medical aids; and any other call that requires immediate response by the department. **[81.2.13(2A)]**
- g) Traffic Laws Observed: Officers must remain aware of the statutory limits placed on the operation of a patrol vehicle when emergency lights and/or siren are in use.ⁱ **[41.2.1]**

4. EMERGENCY CALLS FOR SERVICE: **[4.2.1]**

- a) Emergency Calls for Service are those that require immediate police response from the department. They are critical in nature and will usually involve incidents where there is a danger of death or serious physical injury. Emergency calls for service will take priority for a response over an urgent call for service. **[41.2.1]**
- b) Officers responding to Emergency Calls for Service shall use both emergency lights and siren, except when doing so would eliminate the element of surprise desired when responding to certain types of crimes in progress. Officers must bear in mind that during their response, they have a responsibility to the public to ensure that their actions do not create a greater public hazard than is represented by the nature of the situation to which they are responding. **[41.2.1]**
- c) Conditions that will define an Emergency Call for Service:
 - 1) An officer in trouble call or any emergency request for assistance from an officer; **[81.2.4(G)]**
 - 2) Any imminent threat of death or danger of serious physical injury or major property damage;
 - 3) Any ongoing felony or misdemeanor that involves violence and may result in death or serious physical injury;
 - 4) Any serious felony or violent misdemeanor that has just occurred and reason exists to believe the suspect is still in the area; and
 - 5) Any incident that involves exigent or unusual occurrences that demands an immediate police response.
- d) Examples of Emergency Calls would include: A shooting or stabbing; motor vehicle crashes with injury; life-threatening need for medical assistance; bank or armed robberies in progress;

serious felonies in progress; subject with a gun or other deadly weapon; a bombing, explosion, major fire, or building collapse; and hostage situations.

- e) A minimum of two officers or units shall be dispatched on these types of calls. Officers on patrol duty should be aware of emergency calls in other precincts. They should be readily available to deploy themselves to a call that is close to their location. Units in town that are not dispatched shall position themselves within their precincts to respond to any other calls for service in town.
- f) Traffic Laws Observed: Officers must remain aware of the statutory limits placed on the operation of a patrol vehicle when emergency lights and/or siren are in use.ⁱⁱ **[41.2.1]**
- g) Responses to vehicular pursuit calls shall be governed by the departmental policy on Vehicular Pursuits (1.04).

D. Response to Officer Initiated Calls [81.2.4(G)]

- 1. Any units responding to an officer-initiated call (such as an officer in trouble) shall notify the dispatcher that they are responding and shall indicate from where they are responding.
- 2. Units will continue their response at the direction of the dispatcher.
- 3. All units will closely monitor their radios in the event that the situation changes so that their response can be appropriately modified.
- 4. The first unit to arrive at the scene will report the current situation so that other units may adjust their response accordingly.
- 5. Any units called off, by either the dispatcher or a supervisor, will immediately discontinue any emergency operation and resume their normal patrol.

E. Upon Arrival [41.2.4]

- 1. Upon arrival, the first responding unit shall assess the situation and determine, based on the information at hand, if responding resources are adequate for the situation.
- 2. The officer(s) may request additional resources as appropriate for the situation, or in accordance with department policy, by contacting the dispatcher.
- 3. On-duty, local, or contracted resources may be requested through the shift supervisor. Such resources may include requests for a supervisor, Emergency Medical Services, investigator(s), fire department, highway department, Mass Highway, Gas Company, etc.

4. Officers responding to calls to state highways for calls shall follow the procedures listed above. Dispatch shall be instructed to notify the State Police. Upon arrival, State Police shall assume jurisdiction. **[61.4.2]**
[2.1.2]

RESPONSE TO CALLS INFORMATION

History: Policy and Procedure #4.08

Manual I, Section III.

ⁱ M.G.L. c. 89, s. 7B

ⁱⁱ M.G.L. c. 89, s. 7B