
Officer Response to Calls

309.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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.

309.2 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.

309.3 DEFINITIONS

Emergency Responses

Code 1: A prompt, safe driving response to routine calls without the use of emergency lights or siren while obeying all traffic laws and ordinances.

Code 2: An immediate, safe driving response with the use of emergency lights and / or intermittent siren to calls that require law enforcement presence at an actual or suspected emergency. It is limited to reasonable speeds and consideration and caution for all traffic control devices.

Code 3: A driving response which requires the continuous use of emergency lights and siren and is used for critical or life-threatening situations demanding emergency response. It is limited to reasonable speeds and consideration and caution for all traffic control devices.

309.4 RESPONSE TO CALLS

309.4.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

Officers responding to an emergency call shall continuously operate the emergency vehicle lighting and siren as required by law (§ 61-9-401, MCA; § 61-9-402, MCA).

Guidelines:

- (a) Officers must continually assess all factors and conditions during emergencies. Officers must choose the appropriate Emergency Response (Code 1, Code 2, or Code 3) in direct relation to the event or circumstance while being mindful of the risks to self and the public.
- (b) Factors and conditions to consider during Emergency Responses:
 1. Nature / seriousness of the call.
 2. Probability of apprehension
 3. Volume, type, speed and direction of all vehicular traffic

Bozeman Police Department

Policy Manual

Officer Response to Calls

4. Geographical factors, such as residential, commercial, construction zone, school zone, open roads, etc
 5. Presence of pedestrians, in and around the roadway
 6. Environmental factors, such as weather and time of day
 7. Road conditions, such as road surface, curves, ice / wet conditions, etc.
- (c) The use of a Code 2 or Code 3 response is a means to clear traffic and to expedite the officer's response.
- (d) The ultimate goal in emergency vehicle response is to safely arrive where the officer is needed without further endangering the responding officer or the public.

During Emergency Responses, the use of lights or siren is not required when it reasonably appears their use would hamper the apprehension of a suspect or affect police operations. Officers must be aware that once emergency lights and sirens are turned off (Code 1), the officer must obey all traffic laws and proceed in a safe manner.

309.4.2 NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

Officers responding to non-emergency calls shall obey all traffic laws.

All members shall wear seatbelts when operating or riding in any vehicle, in compliance with M.C.A. 61-13-104. Exceptions to the requirement to wear safety restraints may be made only in exceptional situations where, due to unusual circumstances, wearing a seat belt would endanger the department member or the public.

Members should operate equipment such as Mobile Data Terminals only when the patrol vehicle is stopped or when the use can be accomplished safely.

309.5 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 with the use of an audible and/or visual signal as required by law, and provided there is no endangerment or unnecessary risk to persons and property (§ 61-8-107, MCA):

- 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 direction of movement or turning in specified directions.
- Park or stand.

Officer Response to Calls

309.6 EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Vehicles not equipped with emergency lights and siren are prohibited from initiating or joining in an emergency response. Officers in such vehicles may provide support to an emergency response as long as the vehicles are operated in compliance with all traffic laws. Those officers should terminate their involvement in any emergency response immediately upon arrival of a sufficient number of emergency law enforcement vehicles.

If the emergency equipment on the vehicle should fail to operate, the officer must terminate the emergency response and continue accordingly. The officer shall notify the Shift Supervisor, or the dispatcher of the equipment failure so that another officer may be assigned to the emergency response.

309.7 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. An officer shall also discontinue an emergency response when directed by a supervisor or as otherwise appropriate.

Upon determining that an emergency response is appropriate, whenever practicable, an officer shall 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.

309.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated or requested, the Shift 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 Shift 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.

Bozeman Police Department

Policy Manual

Officer Response to Calls

When making the decision to authorize an emergency response, the Shift Supervisor 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.

309.9 ESCORTS

Escorts of private vehicles with the use of Emergency Warning Equipment are not allowed, unless authorized by the Chief of Police, or designee.

Officers will not authorize the driver of any private vehicle to exceed the speed limit or to ignore stop signs, or to otherwise violate traffic regulations.

Officers will not lead or otherwise escort ambulances on emergency runs. If such assistance is necessary, officers may render such assistance by attempting to clear intersections along the route of the emergency vehicle.