

 Lacey Township Police Department Rules & Regulations/Policies & Procedures		Issue Date: 2-19-10	Effective Date: Immediately
		Issuing Authority:  CHIEF MICHAEL C. DIBELLA	
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Subject: Emergency Vehicle Response Procedures		Accreditation Standard(s): 41.2.1	
Reference(s): Vol. 2, Ch. 12 – Communications Vol. 5, Ch. 6 – Vehicular Pursuit Policy		Last Revision Date: 8-9-19	Evaluation Date: Annually

PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for the use of emergency vehicle warning devices intended to minimize the risk involved in responding to emergencies as well as routine assignments.

POLICY: It is difficult, if not impossible, to describe the manner in which officers should respond to calls for emergency assistance, except to say that it must be done legally and safely. Likewise, one cannot set a "safe" maximum speed or in all cases specify the maximum number of police vehicles that can be involved in a response. Each individual call for emergency assistance has unique aspects. Responding officers and field supervisors will have to use their best judgment, collect their total resources, including their training and experience. This shall be done bearing in mind the provisions included in this and other applicable written directives and apply them collectively to the existing circumstances. If the officers and supervisors determine that the response is justified according to established criteria, and it can be performed in relative safety, they should continue with the response, while remaining constantly mindful of the risk involved to all concerned. Otherwise, the response method should be modified.

PROCEDURE:

I. Definitions

- A. **Emergency:** a situation or sudden occurrence which poses an actual or potential threat of serious injury or loss of human life and which demands or requires prompt police response and/or intervention.
- B. **Emergency Vehicle:** an authorized law enforcement vehicle equipped with emergency lights, audible device, as required by law and used for emergency response situations.
- C. **Emergency Warning Devices:** devices placed in/on each emergency vehicle that emit audible or visual signals in order to warn others that law enforcement services are in the process of being delivered.

II. General Considerations

- A. Officers driving authorized emergency vehicles are granted an exemption from the speed regulations provided that they are engaged in the apprehension of violators of the law, or of persons charged with, or suspected of, a violation (*N.J.S. 39:4-103*).
 - 1. This shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provision protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others (*N.J.S. 39:4-91*).
- B. Moral, as well as policy considerations, require that officers balance the necessity for an expedited emergency response against the possibility and severity of damage or injury.
- C. Negligent or reckless actions committed by officers during their lawful efforts in response to emergencies that damage or injure innocent persons are prohibited by law.

1. Liability exposing officers to criminal and/or civil action may result for the officer and the department.
- D. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring response modes and shall have the authority to upgrade or downgrade response modes as deemed appropriate.

III. Response Modes

A. Code 1 (Non-Priority Response)

1. The use of emergency warning devices is not authorized and officers are required to obey all motor vehicle laws.
2. Officers may respond in a less expedient fashion but without unnecessary delay. This should not be construed so as to permit unnecessary stops, detours or idle conversation while responding, but the general nature of these assignments does not justify an emergent response.
3. The initiation of motor vehicle stops while responding is not generally desirable unless the seriousness of the violation would reasonably justify a further delay in the officer's response to the assignment.
4. If an officer is going to be delayed in responding to an assignment, the reason for the delay and the anticipated length of the delay shall be communicated to the supervisor to determine if the call should be reassigned.

B. Code 2 (Routine Response)

1. With limited exception, the use of emergency vehicle warning devices is not authorized and officers are required to obey all motor vehicle laws. Officers may intermittently use emergency lights and audible devices to safely proceed through unusual delays (e.g., traffic backup) or obstructions while en route.

2. Officers shall take the most direct route available, unless circumstances dictate otherwise, in an effort to reduce the overall response time. An expedient, controlled response is expected of all officers.
3. Officers shall not initiate routine motor vehicle stops while en route to an assignment unless the suspect vehicle's character of operation is so egregious, or such other conditions are present, to warrant an immediate stop of the vehicle in the interest of public safety.
4. If an officer is going to be delayed in responding to an assignment, the reason for the delay and the anticipated length of the delay shall be communicated to the supervisor to determine if the call should be reassigned.

C. Code 3 (Emergency Response)

1. During an emergency response, emergency lights and an audible device shall be utilized unless tactically inappropriate. If the tactical decision to deactivate emergency warning devices has been made, it is incumbent upon the vehicle operator to slow down sufficiently to comply with the posted speed limit and otherwise obey all traffic laws.
2. Four-way flashers shall not be utilized when the police vehicle is in motion to prevent the possibility that they might create confusion and interfere with the effective utilization of brake lights and turn signals.
3. At no time shall the vehicle spotlight be directed at the operator of a moving vehicle.

4. Officers employing an emergency response shall give due consideration to the following conditions and modify the response accordingly:
 - Police vehicle condition and the officer's familiarity with the roads.
 - Roadway and weather conditions.
 - Type of area and volume of traffic.
5. Emergency vehicle warning devices may be deactivated at a safe distance from the incident location if necessary to prevent warning suspects of the impending arrival of the police, or in situations where the audible device and/or emergency lights might tend to jeopardize lives or inflame an irrational subject.
 - When the decision to deactivate emergency warning devices has been made, it is incumbent upon the vehicle operator to slow down sufficiently to comply with the posted speed limit and otherwise obey all traffic laws.

IV. Determining Response Modes

- A. The information contained in this written directive is intended to guide the operators of emergency vehicles in selecting the appropriate response mode for the situation at hand. While it is expected that supervisors will monitor and amend response priorities as warranted, the individual emergency vehicle operator is vested with a significant degree of discretion in determining the appropriate response priority.
 1. All operators of emergency vehicles are expected to evaluate the prevailing conditions known to the operator at the time the response priority decision is reached.
 2. When an officer verbally acknowledges a call for service/assistance, he or she is also required to verbally announce the response mode he or she intends to utilize.

Example: "46 received, responding Code 3"

3. If an officer is uncertain as to the response mode that should be utilized for a particular assignment, the officer shall request direction from a supervisor.

B. Non-Priority Response (Code 1) – this response mode shall be utilized for officers responding to non-priority incidents that do not require an expedient response by police.

1. Examples of such assignments include, but are not limited to:

- Barking dog complaint
- Requests for information
- Follow-up interviews/investigations
- Past tense non-violent crime investigations
- Requests for traffic assistance where a hazard is not present
- Notifications
- All other assignments where a protracted response would not expose any person to a foreseeable risk of injury or loss

C. Routine Response (Code 2) – this response mode shall be utilized by officers responding to non-life threatening assignments that generally substantiate a prompt response by police to assist or intervene in the underlying event.

1. Examples of such assignments include, but are not limited to:

- Disputes and reports of disorderly behavior without violence
- Collisions on or adjacent to a roadway without reported injuries
- Non-life threatening fire and ambulance calls
- Alarm calls (except for hold-up alarms)
- Suspicious person/ vehicle
- Abandon/misdialed 911 calls, provided there is no particularized information suggesting a problem

- Routine officer assist/back-up and property crimes in progress with no indication of danger to persons
- All other service calls where a prompt response is considered necessary and prudent

D. Emergency Response (Code 3) – this response mode shall be utilized by officers responding under emergent conditions, where life is in jeopardy, there is a potential for bodily harm, a dangerous crime is reported to be in progress, there may be significant loss of property, or an identifiable hazard exists which necessitates emergency response to lessen the potential for subsequent injury or damage.

1. Examples of such assignments include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency medical calls where serious/life-threatening injury/illness is reported
- Reports of fires where death/injury is a possibility
- Crimes in progress (e.g., robbery, burglary, assault)
- Collisions/industrial accidents with reported injuries, trapped occupants, or other attendant hazardous conditions
- Pursuit driving (See Lacey Township Police Department Policy Vol. 5, Ch. 6 – Vehicular Pursuit Policy)
- Any other call for service where a reasonable belief exists that an emergency response is warranted to immediately protect or save any person from death or bodily injury

V. Special Considerations Involved in Emergency Response/Operation

A. Upon approaching an intersection controlled by traffic signals or signs requiring the operator of an emergency vehicle stop (red light or stop sign), or any other location at which there is an increased likelihood of collision, the operator of any emergency vehicle utilizing emergency warning devices shall, prior to entering the intersection, come to a complete stop and control the vehicle so as to avoid collision with another vehicle or a pedestrian. The operator of the vehicle shall then observe the entire area/intersection and ensure that the way is clear

and all vehicles operating in the area/intersection have stopped and/or yielded to the operator's vehicle before cautiously proceeding through the intersection.

- B. The use of emergency warning devices is intended to alert other motorists of an emergency vehicle's approach and provide notice of their duty to yield. In situations where a vehicle operator utilizing emergency warning devices approaches an intersection or other area of traffic gridlock where the vehicles already present cannot move and/or yield and thus create a lane for the emergency vehicle to safely pass, the operator of the emergency vehicle shall deactivate the vehicle's emergency warning devices.
 - 1. This shall be done to prevent the panic and confusion often demonstrated by drivers faced with the above-described dilemma and to minimize the degree of hazard to such other drivers who might otherwise attempt an unsafe maneuver in attempting to yield.
- C. All officers operating vehicles utilizing emergency warning devices shall remain constantly alert for the possibility of erratic and unsafe vehicular maneuvers by other drivers who may become panicked by an approaching emergency vehicle.
- D. All officers operating vehicles utilizing emergency warning devices shall remain in full control of their vehicles at all times and not engage in any erratic operation including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Frequent or unsafe lane changes;
 - 2. Vehicular operation on other than the travel portion of a roadway;
 - 3. Tailgating

VI. Motor Vehicle Stops and Discretionary Use of Emergency Vehicle Warning Devices

- A. The use of emergency vehicle warning lights is required in connection with motor vehicle stops to provide adequate notice of intent to stop the suspect vehicle and to provide a degree of safety for the officer, violator and public.
 - 1. The use of the audible device is discretionary and shall be employed based upon need and/or safety considerations.
- B. In other situations, when expediency is required to effectively eliminate a potential hazard to the public or public safety officials, officers are authorized to activate emergency vehicle warning devices. Examples of permissible use include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. The shielding of disabled vehicles on the roadway.
 - 2. The practice of physically channeling vehicular and pedestrian traffic with a parked police vehicle.
- C. Officers operating police vehicles shall deactivate emergency vehicle warning devices as soon as safely possible.

VII. Responding to Calls for Assistance

- A. When an officer in the field is involved in a situation where help is needed, he or she must be aware that a non-specific request for assistance will often result in an uncoordinated response involving a greater number of backup units than is necessary. This may be a greater hazard to life and property than that of the originating incident. To minimize this potential, officers must provide the following information whenever possible:
 - 1. Badge number and exact location.
 - 2. Reason for the request for assistance.
 - 3. Specify "Code 1", "Code 2" or "Code 3" assistance or backup.
 - 4. Indicate the number of additional units required.

- If a situation should arise where an officer requests assistance and does not or is unable to communicate a response mode or other particularized information, the officer shall be contacted by a supervisor or other available officer to determine the urgency of the request.
 - If the officer requesting assistance does not respond, it shall be assumed that emergent assistance is needed and a Code 3 response shall be employed.
- B. Whenever possible, the officer requesting assistance shall monitor the radio sufficiently to determine that the request was received and understood and to provide updated status reports to responding units.
1. Units available to respond to the call for assistance shall acknowledge with communications personnel and provide their current location. The shift supervisor shall monitor the communication and modify the response as necessary.
 2. Assisting units shall utilize the proper response mode as requested unless otherwise modified by a supervisor.
 3. Upon arrival at the scene, all assisting units shall report their arrival to communications personnel and provide an updated status report, if warranted.
 4. When a broadcast is made indicating that the situation is under control and assisting units may respond in at "reduced speed" or the response mode is downgraded to "Code 2" by an officer at the scene or a supervisor, all responding units shall deactivate emergency vehicle warning devices and resume normal vehicular operation.
 5. Whenever a broadcast is made indicating that no additional assistance is required at the scene, all responding officers shall immediately terminate their response by deactivating all emergency vehicular warning devices, resuming normal vehicular operations and returning to their assigned patrol sectors.

C. In situations when an officer in the field requests emergency assistance, the supervisor is responsible for monitoring the response and incident until it has been stabilized or terminated, and asserting control by directing specific assisting units in their response and/or termination of such response.

1. The utilization of proper response modes shall be confirmed and the number of units responding to the call for assistance shall be regulated in respect to the magnitude of the incident.
2. Notification shall be provided to bordering jurisdictions as necessary.
3. Incidents that appear to be serious in nature shall require the immediate response of an available supervisor whenever possible.