



**California State University, Los Angeles**  
**Department of Public Safety**

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NUMBER: IV-18 APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
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EFFECTIVE: May 1, 2007

SUPERSEDES: 1/27/2004 Reviewed/Revised: May 30, 2010

SUBJECT: **Responding to Routine and Emergency Calls**

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I. PURPOSE:

To establish procedures for responding to routine and emergency calls and provide guidelines for the use of emergency equipment.

II. POLICY:

Police vehicles shall be operated with due regard for the safety of all persons and property. Officers shall comply with the procedures outlined in Vehicle Code Section 21055 at all times.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Code 1. Respond as soon as possible or as soon as other responsibilities of a higher priority permit. No emergency or serious problem is involved. Neither red light or siren is authorized and all traffic laws are to be obeyed.
- B. Code 2. Respond without delay, temporarily suspending all other activities of a non-emergency nature. Urgency rather than emergency is denoted by this code. Neither red light nor siren is authorized and all traffic laws are to be obeyed.
- C. Code 3. Respond immediately in emergency status. An emergency implies that a potential for serious injury or threat to life exists and requires immediate police response. The use of blue and red light and siren as necessary is required and the unit must proceed as an emergency vehicle in accordance with Vehicle Code Sections 21055 and 21056. Only those department vehicles equipped with the required emergency response warning equipment (blue and red light and siren – Vehicle Code Section 25252) are authorized to respond Code 3 to emergency calls.

IV. PROCEDURES:

- A. Applicable State Laws
  - 1. 21055 C.V.C. Provides exemptions to the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from compliance with vehicle code sections providing that the vehicle is sounding a siren and displaying a lighted red lamp and the driver is responding to an emergency, a rescue, a pursuit, or a fire alarm.

2. 21056 C.V.C. “Section 21055 does not relieve the driver of a vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway, nor protect him from the consequences of an arbitrary exercise of the privileges granted in that section.”
3. 21057 C.V.C. “Every police officer is hereby expressly prohibited from using a siren or driving at an illegal speed when serving as an escort of any vehicle, except when the escort or conveyance is furnished for the preservation of life, or when expediting movements of supplies and personnel for the armed forces during a national emergency.”
4. 17004 C.V.C “A public employee is not liable for civil damages on account of personal injury to, or death of any person, or damage to property resulting from; the operation, in the line of duty, of an authorized emergency vehicle while responding to an emergency call, or when in the immediate pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law, or when responding to, but not returning from a fire alarm or other emergency call.”

B. Response Considerations

1. Code 1 response
  - a. Officers will proceed to the call obeying all traffic laws and upon arrival park his/her police vehicle legally, unless otherwise required in the performance of his/her duty.
  - b. A Code 1 response will be utilized in responding to non-emergency calls including, but not limited to:
    - 1) Routine calls for assistance;
    - 2) Crimes reported after the fact;
    - 3) Property damage accidents that do not create a serious traffic hazard or immediate hazard to the public;
    - 4) Minor offenses that do not pose a potential life threatening or physically dangerous situation; and
    - 5) Alarms (not in progress).
  - c. All police calls are Code 1 unless otherwise specified.
2. Code 2 response
  - a. Code 2 response is utilized in incidents involving a moderate sense of urgency.
  - b. Officers responding Code 2 will proceed to the scene promptly and safely, using the posted speed limit as a guide.
  - c. The officer will activate emergency equipment including the audible siren and blue and red lights when violating any traffic laws. Any traffic laws violated must be done so only to the extent necessary to arrive promptly and safely at the scene.
  - d. A Code 2 response will be utilized in responding to urgent calls including, but not limited to:

- 1) Crimes in progress that do not pose a life threatening or physically dangerous situation.
- 2) Medical assistance that is not of a life threatening nature.
- 3) Alarms (if notification is such that the dispatcher has knowledge of a burglary in progress, the response may be changed to a Code 3 response).

### 3. Code 3 response

- a. A Code 3 response will be utilized on emergency calls where an immediate response is required.
- b. The types of calls justifying a Code 3 response include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) Personal injury accidents/motor vehicle accidents if the condition is unknown or there are known injuries;
  - 2) Violent crimes;
  - 3) Active domestics or assaults;
  - 4) Calls involving life threatening or physically dangerous situations;
  - 5) Serious medical calls (heart attacks, choking, serious bleeding, etc.)
  - 6) Burglary or robbery in progress.
  - 7) Immediate pursuit.
  - 8) A unit at the scene requests another unit Code 3.

## C. Responsibilities

### 1. Officers responsibilities

- a. Each officer is charged with the responsibility of using discretion as to the speed at which he/she shall drive, and will proceed at a rate of speed which is conducive with the existing conditions; i.e., weather, traffic and road conditions.
- b. Officers should keep in mind the civil liability involved and the public observation and scrutiny of his/her actions.
- c. Officers responding to calls for assistance are expected to arrive promptly and safely.
- d. The situation itself may dictate the type of response required based on information provided by the dispatcher, or previous experience with the persons or location involved.
- e. Officers responding to calls, regardless of the seriousness, must exercise due caution in their response and their actions must meet the test of reasonableness.
- f. When responding Code 3, the red lights are never to be used alone. If the blue and red lights are used, the siren shall also be used in conjunction with the blue and red lights.
- g. The siren should be operated throughout its entire tone scale, fluctuating from a high to low pitch.
- h. Where the possibility of traffic conflict is present, the blue and red lights and siren should be actuated sufficiently in advance so that

pedestrians and motorists may have adequate warning of the approach of an emergency vehicle.

- i. Under the following circumstances an officer may proceed Code 3 without direction from the watch commander:
    - 1) The immediate pursuit of a suspected or actual violator of the law.
    - 2) As the result of an observation of an “emergency situation.”
    - 3) When the watch commander is not available and from information received from the dispatcher, the officer deems a life-threatening situation exists.
  - j. An officer will immediately notify the dispatcher that he/she is proceeding Code 3, and give the circumstances
2. Dispatcher responsibilities
    - a. Upon receiving calls for assistance, the dispatcher will obtain sufficient information to:
      - 1) Determine the nature of the call; and
      - 2) Assign the appropriate response codes and units.
    - b. In cases where the dispatcher needs assistance in determining the proper response, they will contact the watch commander for assistance.
  3. Supervisor responsibilities
    - a. Watch commanders are responsible for monitoring response modes for calls for assistance and have the authority to upgrade or downgrade assigned modes.
    - b. Watch commanders will monitor the response mode of responding officers and ensure that the policies set forth in this directive are adhered to.

#### D. Use of Emergency Warning Devices

1. When responding in an emergency response mode, emergency lights and siren may be deactivated at a distance from the scene so as not to alert subjects to law enforcement proximity.
2. When emergency warning devices are deactivated, the operator of the emergency vehicle must comply with posted speed limits, obey all traffic control devices and comply with all laws and rules of the road.
3. Emergency lights/siren may be used to stop a motor vehicle and to provide a safe environment for the vehicle operator, officer and the public.
4. Officers may activate emergency equipment when required to facilitate the safe and orderly flow of traffic and when assisting motorists.

#### V. APPENDICES: None.