



Policy Number: 308 – Officer Response to Calls

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Approved By: Denis Otterness, Chief of Police

308.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides officers with the Montana State University Billings Police Department (Department) 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.

308.2 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.

308.3 RESPONSE TO CALLS

Officers responding to non-emergency calls shall proceed accordingly, unless they are sent or redirected to a higher priority call, and shall obey all traffic laws.

308.3.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

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

Officers should only respond to a call as an emergency response when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. When in pursuit or apprehending a violator or suspected violator.
- b. When responding to a reported emergency involving possible personal injury, death or significant property damage.
- c. When immediate assistance is requested by an officer or partner law enforcement agency.

If an officer believes an emergency response to any call is appropriate, the officer shall immediately notify City/County Dispatch.

Officers not responding to a call as an emergency response shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren.

308.4 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

When requesting emergency assistance, the involved officer should reasonably believe there is an imminent threat to the safety of him/herself or another person, or that assistance is needed to prevent imminent serious harm to the public. If circumstances permit, the requesting officer should provide the following information:

- Identifying call sign
- Location of the emergency situation
- Suspect information, including weapons
- Reason for the request and type of emergency
- The number of officers or resources required
- Hazards and any known or potential dangers for responding officers

In any event where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is not required, the requesting officer shall immediately notify City/County Dispatch.

308.5 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 light, stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- Exceed the posted speed limit so long as the officer does not endanger life and/or property.
- Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.
- Park or stand in prohibited areas.

308.6 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 a supervisor of the equipment failure.

308.7 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/or 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 immediately give the location from which s/he 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 City/County Dispatch of his/her determination. Any subsequent change in the appropriate response level should be communicated to City/County Dispatch by the officer on scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

308.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated or requested, the supervisor, when available, shall verify that:

- a. The proper response has been initiated.
- b. No more than those officers reasonably necessary under the circumstances are involved.
- c. Affected outside jurisdictions are being notified as practicable.

The 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.

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

(Cancel and Replaces 103.3 – Emergency Response and Vehicular Pursuit)