



TALBOT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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January 21, 2016

GENERAL ORDER NO. 16-003

TO: All Talbot County Sheriff's Office Personnel

SUBJECT: Coded Responses for Emergency Driving and Response to Calls for Service

PURPOSE

To delineate, clarify, and issue guidance and instruction in regard to levels of emergency driving response codes consistent with call for service evaluation and prioritization.

BACKGROUND

Each call for service initiated by a citizen and the response of a Deputy to meet that need for service must be weighed with the evaluation of the call information consistent with the abilities of the Deputy to arrive at the scene in a safe manner.

POLICY

All Deputies will follow the protocol and policy as it pertains to emergency vehicle operation and emergency driving code responses consistent with the demands and needs of a call for service and the statutes that regulate the operation of emergency vehicles. All Deputies will operate police vehicles in a manner that is consistent with safety and in accordance with the provisions of the law.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Emergency Vehicle** - Any vehicle owned and properly registered by Talbot County as an "emergency vehicle" as defined by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (Maryland Transportation Article TR SS 11-118).
- B. Emergency Vehicle Operation** - All vehicles so registered and approved as emergency vehicles may be operated consistent with the standards, statutes, and required personal obligations as they apply to driving a vehicle to an emergency, as defined by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (Maryland Transportation Article TR SS 21-106).
- C. Audible and Visual Signals** - All emergency vehicles will be equipped with approved audible (siren) and visual signals (permanently mounted or portable approved emergency lighting) to qualify it for use as an emergency vehicle as defined by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (Maryland Transportation Article TR SS 22-218).
- D. Emergency Response Code** - The numeric level of response that is consistent with the need for response as based upon the information learned about the call, conditions for response, and the abilities of the Deputy to initiate a proper response.

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EMERGENCY RESPONSE CODES

A. Code 1 Response

A Code 1 response directs an expeditious response and authorizes the use of emergency lights and sirens. Operation of a vehicle during an emergency response must conform to the requirements, conditions, and statutes of operating a vehicle under emergency conditions.

A Code 1 response is usually prompted by one of the following conditions:

- a. A police officer needs help, or all instances in which the safety of an officer is directly threatened.
- b. A situation where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a human life is in jeopardy or peril, and where the police have the primary responsibility for acting or intervention.
- c. A situation where an emergency response could prevent the loss of life or serious injury.

B. Code 2 Response

A Code 2 response directs a police response in an emergency vehicle consistent with conformance to all traffic laws and guidelines. Emergency equipment may be used in certain instances to facilitate a response and expedite movement through traffic if the Deputy considers it appropriate. The "on - off" use of emergency equipment must be consistent with the call information and the need for an expedited response.

C. Code 3 Response

A Code 3 response is the general operation of an emergency vehicle when on routine patrol and when not responding to calls for service by emergency vehicle operation. All rules of the road and statute requirements for the operation of a vehicle on the highways will prevail and govern the operation of a vehicle during this type of driving.

LIFE AND DEATH EMERGENCY

A life and death emergency is when the presence of a Deputy will save a life and where reducing the arrival time can make a difference in the handling of the incident. A Life and death emergency includes the following:

- A. When another police officer has placed a call for immediate assistance.
- B. When a life-threatening crime is in progress or has just occurred.

OPERATING SPEEDS

Vehicle operation speeds during a life and death emergency may exceed the posted speed limits consistent with the safety and statutory exemptions granted to an authorized emergency vehicle when the vehicle is making use of audible and visual signals supplemented by lighted head lamps.

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MEDICAL TRANSPORTS

- A.** Emergency medical transports will be accepted or made only in bona fide emergency medical situations and only when an approved medical transport capability is not available or prudent.
- B.** An emergency is one in which the time factors may critically affect the life of the patient for whom it is intended.
- C.** Any medical items transported that are deemed critical to the health and care of a patient will be transported by an emergency vehicle while operating with a Code 2 response.

PROCEDURES

- A.** All Deputies will operate an emergency vehicle consistent with the policy and statutes that regulate and govern emergency vehicle use and operation.
- B.** All Deputies will assess information in a call for service that will determine the appropriate response for that incident, and their own role of responding as either the primary or assisting officer.
- C.** When call information has been assessed, the Deputy will determine their own appropriate response code for the call and will respond accordingly.
- D.** When multiple Deputies are responding to emergency calls for service, communication will occur between the deputy having primary responsibility for the call with other police officers responding. This effort will both determine which officer may be the closest, and what individual variation of call response codes each officer will assume. In most cases, there will not be a blanket emergency response code for all officers responding. The location from which an officer responds and other call information will govern and regulate this varied response code provision.
- E.** In Code 1 or 2 responses, the use of emergency lights will be required. The use and sounding of an audible signal or siren when approaching intersections or traffic is required for sanctioned emergency vehicle operation. The use of the siren in addition to the emergency lights is required in all cases in which the emergency vehicle encounters, or is likely to encounter other vehicles, or traffic control devices that may regulate cross traffic or not favor the emergency vehicle.
- F.** The requirement for emergency operation of an emergency vehicle is based upon the use of both audible and visual signals while being operated in an emergency mode.
- G.** Property crimes will not trigger the emergency response operation of a police vehicle.
- H.** Deputies or other police officers arriving at a call requiring an emergency response will so notify the other responding officers that a continued emergency response is not needed or necessary if so warranted.
- I.** Any police officer can initiate the emergency response of police resources consistent with life and death emergencies.
- J.** Self-initiated, police emergency vehicle operation in response to citizen calls for service that are not reported through the dispatch network will be immediately reported to the dispatch center, with the information and exigent circumstances known about the call that trigger such emergency response.

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K. Assigned response codes from other officers will be assessed and initiated by the Deputy consistent with the responding Deputy's personal safety, driving skills and abilities, existing environmental factors, and the need for a sustained response.

L. In the interest of safety and information known about the call and previous responses, any Deputy can downgrade or upgrade a response code when responding to a call for service.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND OBLIGATIONS

The operation of an emergency vehicle under certain conditions can either provide immunity for such operation, or may impose liability for negligence in operation. Call responses should be carefully evaluated and the response determined consistent with policy, statutory provisions, environmental considerations, and personal abilities.

Due care and diligence during the operation of an emergency vehicle while responding to an emergency is upon the Deputy to take all steps and care necessary during such operation. Maximum operating speed while responding to an emergency should not endanger life or property; to include the operator or the emergency vehicle and equipment that they are responsible for.

Consistent with both personal and public safety, a Deputy operating a vehicle in an emergency mode will make all reasonable efforts to stop and comply with regulated traffic control devices when other traffic is present and the police vehicle is not the favored vehicle. The use of audible and visual signals in these conditions is mandatory.

Deputies who initiate or assume an emergency response in any capacity, either as the primary officer responsible for the event or as an assisting officer supporting this or any other agency or police department will be bound by the provisions and conditions of this Order.

RESPONSIBILITY

A. Supervisors will ensure that their team members comply with this Order and the measures and provisions that impact the classification of codes for emergency response to calls for service.

B. Though in conformance with the provisions of the regulatory statutes in regard to emergency vehicles and the emergency operation of such vehicles, all aspects of coding calls for emergency vehicle operations cannot be detailed. Common sense, acknowledgement of personal skills and abilities, and the care and obligation for public safety form the basis for this directive.

This Order cancels and supersedes General Order No. 05-001 and any orders in conflict therewith and will go into effect on January 21, 2016.

**Joseph J. Gamble
Sheriff of Talbot County**

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