
Response to Calls

316.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides for the safe and appropriate response to emergency and non-emergency situations whether dispatched by the Emergency Communications Bureau (ECB) or self-initiated in the field.

316.2 RESPONSE TO CALLS

Deputies dispatched "Code-3" shall consider the call an emergency response and proceed immediately. Deputies responding Code-3 shall continuously operate emergency lighting equipment, including at minimum a steady forward facing red light, and shall sound the siren as reasonably necessary pursuant to Vehicle Code § 21055.

Responding with emergency light(s) and siren does not relieve the deputy of the duty to continue to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons. The use of any other warning equipment without a red light and siren does not provide any exemption from the Vehicle Code.

Deputies shall respond Code-3 when dispatched or when it is determined circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. All other deputies who have not been dispatched Code-3 or who have not announced they are responding Code-3 shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren.

316.2.1 PRIORITY RESPONSE

ECB Personnel assign a response priority to all calls based on the nature of the call. All calls for service shall be assigned a priority on a scale of 1-4. ECB Personnel should consider the totality of the situation in assigning the priority response. Definitions of priority responses are listed below:

1. Priority 1
 - (a) The deputy shall respond Code-3 and proceed immediately, unless the circumstances warrant a different response in the Deputy's judgment or the Deputy is directed otherwise by the Field Supervisor or Department Commander. Priority 1 includes criminal or non-criminal situations where available information reasonably indicates that the public is threatened with serious injury or death and immediate police response is needed. Examples include robberies or residential burglaries in progress, injury traffic accidents, 960X, and 997 calls.
2. Priority 2
 - (a) The deputy responds immediately. Priority 2 includes serious crimes that just occurred where no one is in immediate danger or the suspect(s) have left; any incident likely to escalate to a crime against a person; or any incident where a delay in response would likely impede further investigation or cause anyone to be in jeopardy. Examples include robberies or burglaries that just occurred, bomb threats, alarm calls, major disturbances, prowler, deceased persons, suspected hazardous material, or suspected bombs.

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3. Priority 3
 - (a) The deputy responds immediately. Priority 3 includes most report calls, crimes where the suspects have left or late reported crimes; child or property pickup; non-injury traffic accidents; suspicious persons; or a "drunk" in the area.
4. Priority 4
 - (a) The deputy responds as soon as reasonably practical. Priority 4 includes non-emergency incidents where the informant wants no contact, such as parking problems or abandoned vehicles where there is no immediate danger.

316.3 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Requests for emergency assistance should be limited to those situations where the involved personnel reasonably believe that there is an immediate threat to the safety of deputies, or assistance is needed to prevent immediate serious harm to a citizen. In any event, where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is not required, the requesting deputy shall immediately notify ECB.

As circumstances permit, the requesting deputy should give the following information:

1. The unit number
2. The location
3. The reason for the request and type of emergency
4. The number of units required

316.3.1 NUMBER OF UNITS ASSIGNED

Under normal circumstances, only one unit should respond to an emergency call Code-3. Other area unit(s) may respond Code-3 if they reasonably believe the incident warrants an emergency response. The Field Supervisor or Department Commander shall make the final determination in reference to the Code-3 response of all additional units.

316.4 INITIATING CODE 3 RESPONSE

Any Deputy who believes a Code-3 response to any call is appropriate, shall notify ECB as soon as reasonably possible and provide the location from which he/she is responding from. Notification can be made by radio or MDC.

316.5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESPONDING DEPUTY(S)

Deputies shall exercise sound judgment and care with due regard for life and property when responding to an emergency call. Deputies shall reduce speed at all street intersections to such a degree that they shall have complete control of the vehicle.

Deputy(s) shall scan intersections for danger areas as they approach and utilize the roadway position, which allows the best visibility. It is important to look in all directions (left, front, right, & left) while clearing the intersection lane by lane and to slow down or stop for safety.

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The decision to continue a Code-3 response is at the discretion of the deputy. If, in the deputy's judgment, circumstances, including but not limited to, the roadway conditions or traffic congestion do not permit such a response without unreasonable risk, the deputy may elect to respond to the call without the use of red lights and siren **at the legal speed limit**. In such an event, the deputy should immediately notify ECB. A deputy shall also discontinue the Code-3 response when directed by a Field Supervisor or Department Commander.

316.6 COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

ECB personnel shall assign a Code-3 response when a deputy requests emergency assistance or available information reasonably indicates that the public is threatened with serious injury or death and immediate police response is needed. In all other circumstances, the call taker/dispatcher shall obtain authorization from the Field Supervisor or Department Commander prior to assigning units Code-3. The dispatcher shall:

1. Attempt to assign the closest available unit to the location requiring assistance.
2. As soon as practical, notify the Field Supervisor or Department Commander
3. Confirm the location from which the unit is responding.
4. Notify and coordinate allied emergency services (e.g., fire and ambulance).
5. Continue to obtain and broadcast information as necessary concerning the response and monitor the situation until it is stabilized or terminated.
6. Control all radio communications during the emergency and coordinate assistance under the direction of the Field Supervisor or Department Commander.

316.7 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified that a Code-3 response has been initiated, the Field Supervisor or Department Commander shall verify the following:

1. The proper response has been initiated.
2. No more than those units reasonably necessary under the circumstances are involved in the response.
3. Affected outside jurisdictions are being notified as practical.

The Field Supervisor shall monitor the response until it has been stabilized or terminated. The Field Supervisor shall maintain and assert control over the response by directing units to and from the incident. If, in the Field Supervisor's judgment, the circumstances require additional units to be assigned a Code-3 response, the Field Supervisor may do so.

It is the Field Supervisor's responsibility to terminate a Code-3 response that, in his/her judgment is inappropriate due to the circumstances.

When making the decision to authorize a Code-3 response, the Field Supervisor or Department Commander should consider the following:

1. The type of call

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2. The necessity of a timely response
3. Traffic and roadway conditions
4. The location of the responding units

316.8 FAILURE OF EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

If the emergency equipment on the vehicle should fail to operate, the deputy must terminate the Code-3 response and respond accordingly. In all cases, the deputy shall notify the Field Supervisor Department Commander or ECB of the equipment failure so that another unit may be assigned to the emergency response.

316.9 "HI-LOW" SIREN CONFIGURATION

The Hi-Low audible warning sound may be used to alert specific communities of an immediate need to evacuate. The Hi-Low warning sound is intended to provide the public with audible notice that the area they occupy is in imminent threat or danger, and there exists an urgent need for them to evacuate immediately.

Use of the Hi-Low sound will include activation of emergency lights, and all traffic laws must be obeyed during operation of the Hi-Low siren configuration.

The Hi-Low audible warning sound shall not be used while responding Code-3. If Code-3 response is necessary, Wail-Yelp is the approved Code 3 siren configuration. Indiscriminate use of the "Hi-Low" siren configuration is prohibited and may diminish the public's awareness and compliance with the uniquely identifiable sound and purpose.