

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

October 31, 1989

NO.

600-1

REFERENCE:

Supersedes General Order
600-1 dated August 5, 1987

SUBJECT: **RESPONSE PRIORITIES**

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this General Order to establish priorities for handling multiple calls for service simultaneously, based on comparative threat to human life and property, probability of apprehension, the nature of the offense involved, and the nature of the police service required.

1 RECORDING RESPONSE TIMES

When a call for service is dispatched, the police dispatcher will designate the appropriate response priority. After assigning the initial response priority, the dispatcher may alter the response code based upon additional information received from a field unit, a supervisor or another unit that responded to the call.

If another unit is closer to the call-for-service location than the dispatched unit, the closer unit will notify the dispatcher of its location, and the dispatcher may assign the closer unit and disregard the unit which was originally dispatched.

Officers will immediately inform the dispatcher of their arrival time, the disposition of their calls and the time at which they return to service. The dispatcher shall record the arrival times, the disposition, and the clearance times for all calls.

2 RESPONSE PRIORITY DESIGNATIONS

Response priority designations reflect the urgency of the call for service and subsequently sets the manner of response within a specific set of standards. This includes whether an emergency, immediate, direct, delayed, or diverted (Teleserve), response is the most appropriate. The various response priorities are:

Priority 1

Priority One assumes that a potential threat to life or the potential threat of serious bodily injury is in progress. Standard response to Priority One calls is with red light and siren; however, if circumstances are such that the officer believes a nonstandard response (i.e., Priority One Silent) is most appropriate, then he may opt to run the call in that mode, but the dispatcher must be advised of the deviation. The responding officer will proceed directly to the scene and will not stop any traffic violators.

Responsibilities associated with Priority One calls:

Officer Responsibilities

When responding to Priority One calls, with or without the use of emergency equipment, officers must drive with due regard for the safety of citizens and fellow officers.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors shall do the following:

- a. Ensure that a proper unit-response is made;
- b. Decide whether to recommend that the dispatcher modify some aspect of the response, when such modification is warranted;
- c. Ensure that the dispatcher has been properly notified as soon as the situation has been adequately controlled and no additional units are required.

Dispatcher Responsibilities

In most situations, the dispatcher will be responsible for sending out all units requested by on-scene personnel. When the Priority 1 call is of an extended nature and the S.W.A.T. Detail or any other specialized unit must be called to the scene, the dispatcher shall do the following as soon as possible:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

When a Priority One call is received from an officer needing emergency assistance, the procedures described below will be followed:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- d. If the officer requesting assistance does not specify his location or the number of units needed, or sufficient information is not available, or if a citizen rather than an officer initiates the call, a basic response team consisting of the following shall be dispatched to the scene:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- e. Each subsequent unit to reach the scene shall advise the dispatcher of his arrival. As soon as the situation is under control, the first unit on the scene shall provide an evaluation of the situation to the dispatcher.

Priority 2

Priority Two calls deal mainly with in-progress property crimes and/or a threat to human welfare, and assume that if not in-progress, the event recently occurred, or response to the scene is urgent. Standard response to Priority Two calls is Silent; however, if the situation clearly warrants the use of emergency equipment, the officer had the prerogative to use that mode, but that decision must be communicated verbally to the dispatcher. Officers are reminded that Priority Two calls may be held in queue for ten minutes prior to dispatch. Obviously, an expedited response at that point in time would probably be ineffective. Additionally, the time delay in reporting the incident to the Emergency Communications Division is important information that the officer should consider when determining the appropriate response posture. The responding officer will proceed directly to the scene, obey all traffic laws, (unless utilizing red light and siren), and not stop any traffic violators.

Priority 3

Priority Three calls are ones for which no known emergency exists, but which nevertheless should be handled expediently. This call classification requires a directed response, which means that the officer must proceed to the call without unnecessary delay. However, if while en route, the officer on-views a situation that obviously requires immediate action, then;

- a. The officer must immediately inform the dispatcher of his location and activity, and;
- b. Once the immediate situation has been handled, the officer must proceed directly to the Priority Three call originally assigned.

If the on-viewed situation is one where the officer cannot proceed to the assigned call in a timely fashion, he must inform his supervisor of the situation causing the extended delay. The supervisor then has several options which may be exercised. These include, but are not limited to :

- a. Advise the officer to disregard the original Priority Three call and to go ahead and handle the on-viewed situation. If this option is exercised, the supervisor must decide what alternate unit is to run the original call, and communicate that information to the dispatcher (e.g. disregard 20G50 from the wagon call and have 20G20 run it);
- b. Approve an extended delay in response and advise the officer to handle the on-viewed situation, and then proceed to the original call. If this option is exercised, the supervisor must ensure that the reportee on the Priority Three call is informed of the delay;
- c. Advise the officer to clear the on-viewed situation, and to proceed directly to the assigned call.

Officers responding to Priority Three calls will not use emergency equipment, will obey all traffic laws, and, with the exception noted above, will proceed directly to the scene.

Priority 4

Priority Four calls are those which require an on-scene response by a field unit, but for which response may be delayed for an undetermined amount of time.

Officers responding to Priority Five calls will not use emergency equipment, and will obey all traffic laws.

Priority 5

Priority Five consists of Teleserve-eligible incidents, but in the below cases a field response is necessary:

- a. A citizen has requested a field response;
- b. A call is referred to the field for systems related reasons (i.e., computer down, Teleserve queue full, etc.);
- c. During the course of taking a report, a Teleserve officer finds that a field response is needed (i.e., evidence at the scene).

Officers responding to Priority Five calls will not use emergency equipment, and will obey all traffic laws.

Priority 6

Priority Six consists of activities which originate with the officer rather than with the dispatcher (i.e. on-view activity, Out to Garage, etc.).

3 EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION VIA RADIO COMMUNICATIONS




Lee P. Brown
Chief of Police