



# OMBUDSMAN'S SPECIAL REPORT

## Code Three Response by the Boise Police Department

Joint Study  
by the  
Boise City  
Community Ombudsman  
and the  
Boise Police Department

Issued February 3, 2009

# Executive Overview

Over the past several years, the Boise Police Department (BPD) and the Boise City Community Ombudsman (OMB) have joined together to study a policy area, high-risk police practice, or area of community concern. As a result of these collaborative efforts, significant improvements to officer safety, police services, and reduced liability exposure have been enacted. Past joint projects include:

- A Victim-Centered Response To Sexual Assault (2004)
- Taser Use By the Boise Police Department (2006)
- Public Intoxication Ordinance Enforcement (2007)

This year's project involved a review of the policy, practices, and training governing emergency vehicle response (the use of emergency lights and/or sirens, also known as "code three") by BPD officers, along with research into best practices in other communities and key statistics concerning actual emergency responses by BPD officers over a three-year period (2005–2007). The project team included representatives from both OMB and BPD. A complete explanation of the scope of this project is contained in the Project Charter which appears below.

As a result of the project team's review and research, the following key observations emerged:

- Current Idaho State Statutes and BPD Policy governing emergency vehicle operation provide sufficient guidance to ensure public and officer safety while allowing for the expeditious deployment of police officers where and when they are urgently needed.
- While BPD officers have the authority to "downgrade" a code three response based on the circumstances and the officer's judgment and experience, the code at which an officer is dispatched to a call is based on the specific "call type" that a dispatcher entered into the system for that call. Each call type has a pre-assigned priority level which translates into a response code (one, two, or three) for the officer or officers sent to that call. These "default" response codes associated with each call type have not been reviewed for a number of years.
- BPD invests a significant amount of time and money into training new officers in the safe operation of a police car while responding code three to a call. BPD does not currently provide its officers with regular education and training in this area. Even though officers assigned to the Patrol Division, along with those in other uniformed assignments, drive code three frequently, on-going refresher training is essential to maintaining safe practices and a high level of skill.

Finally, the team made the following recommendations to Chief Masterson and the BPD Command Staff for their consideration and possible implementation:

1. Change the default response from code three to code two for five of the top ten most frequently dispatched code three calls. As always, an officer would retain the authority to upgrade his or her response depending on the circumstances or as new information came to light while en route to the call.
2. Add on-going annual training for all BPD officers to cover the following areas:
  - a. Both emergency and “routine” operation of a police vehicle.
  - b. Safe use and limitations of the opti-com system for traffic signal lights.
  - c. Decision-making skills while driving code three.

# Project Charter

## Statement of the Problem

The emergency operation of police vehicles (also known as “Code Three” operation involving the use of emergency lights and/or sirens) increases, by its very nature, the risk that involved police officers, nearby motorists, and pedestrians may be involved in a collision or suffer injury. Policies, protocols, and training are provided to dispatchers and officers regarding those circumstances in which officers may either be dispatched code three or are authorized to operate a police vehicle in a code three manner. Guidance provided to those engaged in code three vehicle operations must be based on current best practices and a thoughtful weighing of the anticipated benefits and risks associated with the emergency operation of a police vehicle in different situations and under varied circumstances. It has been more than five years since BPD conducted a systematic review of its code three policies and protocols. In that time, critical factors have changed, both internal to BPD and externally, that argue in favor of a reassessment of current risk/benefit assumptions and the policies and protocols that flow from them.

## Critical Factors

- The number of vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians on the roads has increased. Some areas of the city are experiencing traffic congestion, not only at peak commute times, but at other times of the day.
- BPD has hired over 120 new officers in the past 38 months. National statistics show that officers with less than five years of patrol experience are at increased risk for on-duty injuries, including those from traffic collisions.
- In the past three months, police officers in other states have been charged with felonies stemming from traffic collision deaths that were connected with code three driving.
- BPD officers have raised questions regarding the current protocol that calls for Dispatch to send officers code three to certain medical calls, such as an overdose.
- Officers are dispatched code three to injury traffic collisions, even though Fire and EMS are also rolling code three.
- Citizen Complaints regarding code three driving by BPD officers have increased slightly over the past two years.

- According to Risk Management and the City's insurance carrier, emergency vehicle operation is among the top three areas of liability exposure for municipalities.

### Project Sponsors

Chief Michael Masterson  
Boise Police Department

Ombudsman Pierce Murphy  
Office of the Community Ombudsman, City of Boise

### Project Scope

A cross-functional team will:

1. Gather and analyze available data relating to the nature and frequency of code three vehicle operations by BPD officers over the past three calendar years (2005 – 2007)
2. Gather and analyze available data relating to any traffic collisions, property damage, and personal injuries reported in connection with or related to code three vehicle operations by BPD officers over the past three calendar years (2005 – 2007)
3. Compile a comprehensive catalogue of all policies, procedures, protocols, practices, and training related to dispatching BPD units code three
4. Compile a comprehensive catalogue of all policies, procedures, protocols, practices, and training related to the code three operation of BPD police vehicles
5. Consult with subject matter experts within BPD, Dispatch, BFD, EMS, and other agency heads of MPD, GCPD and ACSO.
6. Benchmark against other police agencies regarding policies, procedures, protocols, practices, and training regarding the code three operation of police vehicles
7. Seek out and obtain model policies, studies, white papers, etc. regarding the code three operation of police vehicles
8. Where possible, obtain the insight and advice of experts in this field
9. Develop recommendations for consideration by the Project Sponsors

10. Produce a Project Report documenting the research, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations of the Project Team

Anticipated Benefits

- Reduced risk of injury to officers, motorists, and others resulting from traffic collisions
- Reduced risk of property damage resulting from traffic collisions
- Reduced liability exposure for the City and officers
- Improved efficiency of police services

Project Team

- BPD Patrol Lieutenant or experienced Patrol Sergeant [Lt. Dave Adams]
- BPD Police Officer with ten years or more of recent patrol experience [P.O. Larry Moore]
- Policy/data analyst [Beth Erickson]
- Ombudsman Pierce Murphy

Project Timeline

March 11, 2008	Launch project
June 1, 2008	Complete data collection and analysis
July 1, 2008	Complete benchmarking
October 1, 2008	Present preliminary conclusions and recommendations to Sponsors (original date was August 1, 2008)
December 1, 2008	Present final report and recommendations to Sponsors (original date was September 1, 2008)

# Current BPD Policies and Training

## Current BPD Policy

(last updated on October 31, 2007)

### **3.02.00 Call Response**

This policy establishes guidelines for employee response to calls for service. The response code classifications shall apply to officer-initiated calls and dispatched calls, as well as response to employee-involved critical incidents or other similar situations.

#### 3.02.01 Response Authority

Response authority shall be as follows:

- Authority of Dispatch: The Department affords the Ada County Communications Center Dispatch the authority to dispatch Boise Police units to calls for service and to assign response code classifications according to written guidelines.
- Authority of the Officer: With regards to calls for service, the officer shall respond as assigned by dispatch, unless the officer's experience and judgment provide him/her with justification for choosing a more appropriate level of response. In such cases, the officer shall have the authority to alter his/her response accordingly and shall advise dispatch immediately.
- Authority of Supervisors: Any supervisor may overrule dispatch or the responding officer in assigning the appropriate response level.

#### 3.02.02 Emergency Response

##### 3.02.02A Emergency Response Defined

An emergency response shall be defined as the expeditious response of an officer to any emergency situation in which the officer utilizes the emergency lights or lights and siren to facilitate a quick and safe arrival.

##### 3.02.02B Emergency Response Authorized

Emergency responses shall be authorized only when one or more of the following emergency conditions exist or are believed to exist based upon reliable information:

- When the situation involves the imminent potential for serious injury or death to any person
- In order to prevent or halt a crime of violence

- When a serious public hazard exists
- When an emergency response will enhance the likelihood of apprehending a felony suspect
- When a critical incident or potentially major incident has not yet been stabilized by on-scene units

Command personnel, investigative personnel, and support staff responding to the scene of a critical or major incident shall only conduct an emergency response at the request of an officer on the scene.

#### 3.02.02C Authorized Actions during Emergency Response

The officer operating a police vehicle Code Three or Silent Code Three (see **3.02.02I Code Three** and **3.02.02H Silent Code Three**) shall exercise due regard for the safety of life and property.

#### 3.02.02D Assignment to Emergency

It shall be the responsibility of dispatch to assign an appropriate number of units to a Code Three response on any non-violent emergency call. For violent or potentially dangerous emergency calls requiring multiple-unit response, all assigned units may be assigned a Code Three response.

#### 3.02.02E Response to the Scene

An officer assigned to respond to an emergency scene, whether assigned by dispatch or the primary officer, shall proceed directly to that location. An officer who is not assigned to respond to the scene will not respond to that location. When another agency is involved in an emergency response, an officer will refrain from questioning dispatch concerning the situation.

#### 3.02.02F Field Reports of Emergencies

An officer receiving information concerning an emergency from a source in the field shall immediately notify dispatch of the type and location of the emergency. If the officer receiving the report is close enough to reach the scene safely and in sufficient time to be of practical assistance, he/she shall notify dispatch and proceed to that location.

#### 3.02.02G Responsibility for Command

The primary officer dispatched to a scene is responsible for taking command of the situation, evaluating pertinent information, and modifying the response of the assisting units (if necessary).



### 3.02.02H Silent Code Three

Silent Code Three shall be defined as an emergency response in which the emergency lights and not the siren are used to facilitate a quick and safe response.

### 3.02.02I Code Three

A Code Three response shall be an emergency response in which the emergency lights and siren are used to facilitate the quick and safe arrival of the officer.

### 3.02.02J Officer Needs Help/10-33/Request for Code 3 Assist

“Officer Needs Help” or 10-33 or Request for Code 3 Assist shall be defined as an exceptional situation involving imminent danger to an officer’s life. Any officer in the vicinity and capable of rendering immediate assistance shall respond Code Three.

### 3.02.02K Code Four

The primary officer at the scene of any multiple unit response shall be responsible for notifying dispatch that a Code Four condition exists as soon as he/she has determined that further officer response to the scene is not necessary. Dispatch shall repeat the “Code Four” statement and the location to all units. All officers shall terminate response to the scene and shall resume their normal duties. This section does not restrict supervisors, command staff, or other specialized units from responding to the scene as necessary.

### 3.02.02L Code Four-Adam

The primary officer at the scene of any multiple unit response shall be responsible for notifying dispatch that a Code Four-Adam condition exists as soon as he/she has determined that further officer response to the scene is not necessary and he/she has reason to believe that a suspect may still be in the vicinity of the scene. Dispatch will repeat the “Code Four-Adam” statement and the location to all units. All officers shall terminate response to the scene and shall initiate appropriate search procedures in the vicinity of the scene as directed by the primary officer. This section does not restrict supervisors, command staff, or other specialized units from responding to the scene as necessary.

### 3.02.02M Code Four “At this Time”

Code Four “At This Time” indicates that any assist officers will continue to respond to the scene.

### 3.02.03 Non-Emergency Response

#### 3.02.03A Code One

Code One calls shall be applicable to non-urgent situations that shall be answered at the first convenient opportunity. Code One calls may be stacked and the order of response changed as the officer deems necessary. However, response shall not be unnecessarily delayed. An officer responding to a Code One call shall obey all traffic laws and shall not use the emergency lights or sirens.

#### 3.02.03B Code Two

Code Two calls shall be applicable to urgent, but non-emergency, situations requiring an immediate response. For any Code Two call, an officer shall respond as quickly and as safely as possible while obeying all traffic laws and shall not use emergency lights or sirens.

### 3.02.04 Response Outside the Boise City Limits

An officer may respond to an emergency situation outside of the Boise City limits only when requested to respond by dispatch or a supervisor of the jurisdiction involved. An officer responding outside of the Boise City limits shall assist in neutralizing the emergency situation and shall return to their area of assignment as soon as possible.

#### Current BPD Training

##### Emergency Vehicle Operation (EVO) Training

Every new (no prior law enforcement experience) officer that is hired attends the POST academy and receives 32 hours of EVO training.

Every officer hired after 2006 has attended a class on the Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT) certification during initial training; the entire department was also offered the same PIT certification training at that time. There was a five-hour refresher PIT class delivered to all officers during quarterly training in 2007.

The last time the department held a general EVO class for all officers was in 2003. That class was for a total of eight hours.

The following charts shows the number of EVO training hours (excluding training given to new officers during the Basic POST Academy) delivered to BPD officers over that past ten years.

<b>Boise Police Department - EVOC Training History for Last 10 Years</b>		
Year	Hours of Instruction	Number of Classes Taught
1998	8	10
1999	8	3
2000	8	1
2002	8	4
2003	8	10
2007*	30	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>29</b>

\*2007 class conducted during Advanced Academy.

Note: PIT training is a separate class and was taught to sworn personnel in 2006.

# Current Ada County Dispatch Center Policies and Practices

Most, but not all, code three responses by BPD units are the result of calls received by the Ada County Emergency Communications Center (Dispatch). Dispatch employees receive calls for police, fire, and EMS services. As the dispatcher is obtaining information from the caller, he or she determines the nature of the emergency or incident and assigns a specific “call type” to it. Each call type has a default code response associated with it. These associations have been programmed into the computer software that drives that computer aided dispatch (CAD) system used by Ada County. When a dispatcher enters the call type for a new incident into the computer, the CAD automatically displays the default code at which the assigned officers should respond. This can be manually overridden by the dispatcher, but it rarely happens. By the same token, officers assigned to the call can either upgrade or downgrade their own personal response code. In practice, the response codes for nearly all calls for service initiated by Dispatch are a result of the pre-assigned associations already loaded into the CAD system.

A much smaller percentage of code three responses by BPD officers are field-initiated; that is to say they are the result of an action or actions taken by officers in the field. In such cases, the decision to respond code three is made either by the responding officer or by an officer who has requested a code three response by other officers.

The following is the formal policy of the Ada County 911 Communications Center with regard to code three responses.

**ADA COUNTY 911  
COMMUNICATION CENTER  
OPERATING POLICY**

SUBJECT <b>CODE 3 RESPONSE—ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL (ETA) SEARCH</b>		SECTION <b>3.150</b>	
APPROVED BY	DATE ISSUED <b>08/15/05</b>	DATE REVISED	PAGES <b>2</b> PAGE <b>1</b> OF <b>2</b>

**POLICY:**

The policy of Ada County Dispatch is to obtain information concerning incidents which may require officer responses, as defined under Idaho Code, and relay that information to the officers closest to the event in order to provide the shortest response time.

**Code 3 – Emergency Response Defined:**

Any response by an officer to a situation in which the officer utilizes the emergency lights and/or siren in compliance with the 1988 Idaho Code, Section 49-606, "Authorized Emergency Vehicles, Defined."

**Assignment of Code 3 Response by Dispatch Personnel:**

Code 3 responses may be assigned only when one or more of the following conditions exist or are believed to exist:

- When the situation involves the imminent potential for serious injury or death to any persons.
- In order to prevent or halt a crime of violence
- When a serious public hazard exists.
- When an emergency response will enhance the likelihood of apprehending a felony suspect.

It will be the responsibility of the call taker to determine the severity of the call. The code 3 status will be automatically assigned to the incident per classification or by the calltaker changing the response. If an officer decides to upgrade his response it will be indicated in the incident history.

# Collection and Analysis of Data

## Frequency and Nature of Code Three Responses

To determine the relevant code three calls for service, several CAD queries were conducted to determine the top repeat code three calls over the three year period between 2005 and 2007. Public-initiated and officer-initiated code three calls were included in this analysis. The queries generated systematic samples of code three calls and were sorted by year, month, call type and frequency. On average, Boise Police Department officers respond to approximately 3,719 code three calls each year, with the highest call load occurring during the months of July and August.

Our research focused on the thirteen most frequent calls for service that are currently dispatched on a code three basis. We met with representatives from the Ada County Paramedics and the Boise Fire Department to understand their concerns, needs, and ideas. We also checked with a sampling of patrol officers (25 officers from different patrol teams) to get their opinions regarding how patrol officers should respond to the different call types. All of this input has been incorporated into our recommendations, below.

There are approximately 36 different "Call Types" that currently require a code three response when officers are dispatched to calls. We focused our attention on the ten call types that made up 80% of the code three responses for each year. The frequency of these calls varies slightly year to year, with a total of 13 different call types sharing a spot in the top ten in at least one of the last three years (2005 - 2007). The top four are consistently in the same order in the frequency of dispatch, with the remaining nine call types changing positions over the years. The list of 13 call types are as follows:

- 1050PI (Traffic Accidents involving injuries - however minor) - Average of **982** calls per year over the last three years.
- EMS (Paramedic Assists) - Average of **440** calls.
- OD (Overdoses) - Average of **362** calls.
- WRONG (Wrong way drivers) - Average of **324** calls.
- FIRE (Assisting Fire Department) - Average of **167** calls.
- DOMPHYS (Domestic Physicals) - Average of **151** calls.
- UNKNOWN (Unknown Problems - Average of **142** calls.
- FITE (A Fight Situation) - Average of **114** calls.

- BATTJ (Battery Just Occurred) - Average of **92** calls.
- SUICSUB (Suicidal Subject) - Average of **80** calls.
- PROWRES (Prowler in a residence) - Average of **76** calls.
- ATTSUIC (Attempted Suicide) - Average of **58** calls.
- AR (Armed Robbery) - Average of **53** calls.

A review of these calls identified that some of the top thirteen code three call types are generally the same type of calls. Some of the more similar call types were combined for ease of analysis. After combining some, the top ten most frequent code three call types over the past three years were:

- 1050PI & 1057 PI - Average of **982** calls.
- MEDICAL (EMS, OD, ATTSUIC, & SUICSUB) - Average of **943** calls.
- WRONG (Wrong Way Drivers) - Average of **324** calls.
- WEAPON (MANGUN, FITEKNF, FITEGUN, ARMSUBJ, STAB, FITEWPN) - Average of **180** calls.
- FIRE - Average of **167** calls.
- DOMPHYS - Average of **151** calls.
- UNKNOWN - Average of **142** calls.
- FITE - Average of **114** calls.
- PROWRES - Average of **76** calls.
- AR - Average of **53** calls.

Analysis was then completed on the top ten code three calls to determine the necessity and/or efficiency of maintaining the standards and/or protocols currently in place for Boise Police Department, Boise Fire Department and Ada County Sheriff's Office dispatch center. Additionally, further analysis was completed on the 'wrong' way call types to determine the underlying cause of these types of calls. The majority (76%) of the 'wrong' way code three calls are the result of officer-initiated calls generated from the reporting districts that are located on the one-way streets in the downtown core of Boise. The remaining calls (24%) were public-initiated calls from citizens reporting drivers driving the wrong way on the interstate or on various streets throughout the city.

#### Analysis of Injury Accidents and the Nature of Those Injuries

The Idaho Transportation Department's Office of Traffic and Highway Safety (OTHS) created two innovative software programs, IMPACT 2K (Idaho Mobile Program for Accident Collection) and WebCARS. IMPACT 2K is an accident information collection program and WebCARS is a program that assists in the analysis of collected motor

vehicle crash data. These two programs work together to provide information that helps safety officials identify problem areas and develop strategies for increasing safety on Idaho's roads.

Utilizing WebCARS, several year-end crash summary reports were generated to determine the number of motor vehicle accident reports filed by the Boise Police Department (BPD). Our research focused on a three year period from 2005 to 2007. An analysis of each year is provided below:

In 2005, a total of 4,179 accidents were reported by BPD. Of these, 36% (1,499) involved one or more reported injuries. A total of 2,156 injuries were associated with these accidents. Of those injured, only 24% (520) were removed from the scene by ambulance.

Of the 2,156 injuries, 93% (2,015) were reported as complaints of a possible injury or a non-incapacitating injury. Only 6% of those injured (135) resulted in an incapacitating injury while 6 injuries resulted in a fatality. The injuries were reported as follows:

<u>Injury Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
• Possible	1,493
• Non-Incapacitating	522
• Incapacitating	135
• Fatalities	6
<b>Total Injuries</b>	<b>2,156</b>

Of those involved, 159 were thrown from their vehicle, or totally ejected from their vehicle. 60 were trapped and had to be removed from the vehicle.

In 2006, a total of 3,545 accidents were reported by BPD. Of these, 43% (1,526) involved one or more reported injuries. A total of 2,180 injuries were associated with these accidents. Of those injured, only 30% (653) were removed from the scene by ambulance.

Of the 2,180 injuries, 92% (2,015) were reported as complaints of a possible injury or a non-incapacitating injury. Only 7% of those injured (153) resulted in an incapacitating injury while 12 injuries resulted in a fatality. The injuries were reported as follows:

<u>Injury Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
• Possible	1,387
• Non-Incapacitating	628
• Incapacitating	153
• Fatalities	12
<b>Total Injuries</b>	<b>2,180</b>

Of those involved, 188 were thrown from their vehicle, or partially or totally ejected from their vehicle. 63 were trapped and had to be removed from the vehicle.



In 2007, a total of 3,987 accidents were reported by BPD. Of these, 35% (1,388) involved one or more reported injuries. A total of 1,906 injuries were associated with these accidents. Of those injured, only 29% (549) were removed from the scene by ambulance.

Of the 1,906 total injuries, 92% (1,745) were reported as complaints of a possible injury or a non-incapacitating injury. Only 8% of those injured (155) resulted in an incapacitating injury while 6 injuries resulted in a fatality. The injuries were reported as follows:

<u>Injury Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
• Possible	1,245
• Non-Incapacitating	500
• Incapacitating	155
• Fatalities	6
<b>Total Injuries</b>	<b>1,906</b>

Of those involved, 178 were thrown from their vehicle, or totally or partially ejected from their vehicle. 48 were trapped and had to be removed from the vehicle.

During the three year period from 2005 to 2007, 4,413 (38%) of reported accidents involved one or more injuries. Since only 28% (1,722) of the injuries associated with these injury accidents were serious enough to require transport via ambulance to a medical facility, it can safely be concluded that more than two thirds of the injury accidents that BPD officers responded code three to during that period involved only minor or possible injuries.

#### Citizen Complaints About Code Three Driving

In the three years under review in this study (2005 – 2007) a total of seven (7) complaints were received from the community regarding perceived unsafe emergency driving on the part of one or more BPD officers. This figure includes complaints made directly to BPD, as well as those made to OMB. Two of the incidents were related to vehicle collisions that did not directly involve a BPD police car but which took place in connection with or immediately after a BPD vehicle passed through an intersection while operating code three.

None of these complaints resulted in a sustained finding of unsafe vehicle operation against an officer.

#### Officer-Involved vehicle Collisions & Code Three Responses

During the same three-year period, BPD vehicles operating in a code three status were involved in 13 collisions. One of these collisions resulted in injuries, including the hospitalization of the civilian driver.

We looked for any common factors among the 13 collisions and noted the following:

1. Five took place as the BPD vehicle was entering or passing through and intersection.
2. Three happened as a result of another driver turning in front of the BPD vehicle.
3. Two collisions occurred as the operator of the BPD vehicle executed a U-turn.
4. Three took place under other circumstances (backing, driving between parked cars, etc.).

Also of note was the fact that ten of the 13 officer-involved, code three collisions involved at least one other moving vehicle, while the remaining three collisions involved BPD vehicle striking a parked vehicle or a fixed object.

# Best Practices Review

Research was completed through the International Association of Law Enforcement Planners (IALEP) member database and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) policy database. Approximately, one dozen agencies were contacted directly to determine their standards of practice. Policies were obtained from these benchmark agencies and from local agencies in the Treasure Valley. These agencies were selected because of their location (in the West) and because their cities and agencies were respectively close to that of Boise Police Department.

These are the agencies contacted and those that responded to the query:

Ada County SO (ID)	Albuquerque PD (NM)
Billings PD (MT)	Boulder PD (CO)
Caldwell PD (ID)	Colorado Springs PD (CO)
Garden City PD (ID)	IACP Model Policy
Idaho State Police (ID)	Meridian PD (ID)
Nampa PD (ID)	Portland PD (OR)
Seattle PD (WA)	Spokane PD (WA)

The majority of these agencies (9 out of 14, or 64%) identify specific criteria or certain conditions that must be met in their policy when a code three response may be assigned. However, when the field officer evaluates the totality of the circumstances he or she is authorized to assign a code three response for ‘sudden occurrences’ unbeknown to others. Generally the criteria for a code three response must meet one or more of the following conditions:

- human life is in danger
- public safety requests emergency response
- in-progress crimes or circumstances
- authorization by a supervisor
- injury accidents, medical assist, and suicidal subjects

A minority of agencies (3 out of 14, or 21%) authorize the field officer to evaluate the totality of the circumstances and, if circumstances dictate, upgrade the call to a code three response. These agencies include: Billings PD, Colorado Springs PD, and Seattle PD.

An even smaller number of agencies (2 out of 14, or 14%) require the authorization of a field supervisor or communications personnel before a code three response may be assigned. Again, in ‘sudden occurrences’ a field officer may assign a code three response if the specific circumstances are unbeknown to either communications or the supervisor. These agencies include: Caldwell PD and the IACP model policy.

# Conclusions

After reviewing the data and considering policies and best practices from other agencies, it was our conclusion that current BPD policy regarding the operation of BPD vehicles in code three status provided sufficient guidance to officers with regard to the safe operation of those vehicles. We recommend no changes to policy as a result.

Our analysis of the nature and frequency of dispatched code three responses led us to evaluate the possibility of downgrading the “default” response status of some of the more frequent calls for police service from code three to code two. After our preliminary recommendations had been forwarded to the Chief’s office, the Chief and the Ombudsman took the opportunity to introduce the project recommendations to department leaders holding the rank of Lieutenant, Captain and Deputy Chief at a special meeting in December 2008 and invited their comments and feedback. Additionally, since the Ada County 9-1-1 Communications Center provides dispatch services for six agencies including ACSO, MPD, GCPD, EMS, BFD, and the Boise Police Department, the Chief convened a meeting with leaders from each of these agencies and reached consensus on standardizing these protocols for all emergency response countywide.. The executives engaged in productive dialogue that challenged the group to think about the collective citizen and responder safety needs which ultimately assisted them in standardizing these changes for the dispatching of law enforcement call types County wide. As a result, Sheriff Raney and Chief Masterson introduced the dispatch protocol recommendations listed below to a countywide consortium of fire and EMS emergency responders in January 2009 seeking agreement and approval to adopt them as consistent, standard protocols for the 9-1-1 Communications Center. Fire and EMS leaders are in the process of providing their input and approval for the proposed changes which will be adopted as county wide response protocols no later than March 1, 2009

Finally, it was our strong belief that the risk of property damage and personal injury to officers and the general public could be reduced by providing BPD officers with annual refresher training in the operation of an emergency vehicle. Specific recommendations for this are shown below.

# Procedural Recommendations

In considering recommending changes to BPD's code three Policies and Procedures, our guiding principal was to maintain the proper balance between getting BPD patrol resources as quickly as possible in an emergency to where they are needed, without endangering either the officers responding or the general public whose safety BPD officers are sworn to protect.

The following recommendations are intended to reduce the numbers shown above, so officers are only responding code three to those calls that really require an emergency response; situations in which a matter of seconds can literally make the difference between life and death. Since every call has its own facts that can change an officer's response, the recommendations made are only for the "default" code that officers are dispatched. If there is additional information that warrants a more rapid response for any Call Type - any Officer, Dispatcher, Paramedic or Fire Department personnel can request that the responding Officer upgrade to code three.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. 1050PI & 1057PI: The current protocol is to send two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** The primary officer responds code three, while the assist officer responds Code two.

2. MEDICAL (EMS, OD, ATTSUIC, & SUICSUB): Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** The primary and assist officers respond code two with a tone alert. If any one of the three following criteria exist in the call, report of a combative person, weapon involved, or a threat or risk of violence the call will be dispatched as a code three. EMS, Fire, or the primary BPD officer can upgrade to code three if circumstances require it.

3. WRONG (Wrong Way Drivers): Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** Since a wrong way driver is inherently more dangerous on the interstate due to higher speeds and lack of exits, we recommend two officers be dispatched code three to I84 and I184 calls, while two officers respond code two to wrong way calls on city streets.

4. WEAPON (MANGUN, FITEKNF, FITEGUN, ARMSUBJ, STAB, FITEWPN): Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** No change.

5. FIRE (Assist Fire Department): Currently one or two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** One or two officers Code two. Fire can request a code three response if they consider it necessary.

6. DOMPHYS (Domestic Battery in progress): Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** No Change.

7. UNKNOWN (Unknown Problem): Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** No Change.

8. FITE (Fight/Battery just Occurred): Currently two officers Code two to fights without a weapon, and two officers code three to fights with a weapon.

**Recommendation:** No Change. This call varies widely, as sometimes one of the participants has left, or there is a crowd and more officers are needed. As with all the other calls, the information received during the incident dictates any change in number of officers that respond code three.

9. PROWRES (Prowler in a Residence): Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** No Change. Although the vast majority of these calls turn out to be unfounded, BPD officers always respond to these calls assuming there actually is a prowler in the residence.

10. Armed Robbery: Currently two officers code three.

**Recommendation:** No Change.

# Training Recommendations

## Code Three Police Vehicle Operation Training Recommendations

1. The department needs to have a yearly refresher on driving skills both in the emergency driving and 'routine' driving. This could be accomplished using the current quarterly training schedule.
2. Officer training on the opti-com and its limitations in changing the traffic signals.
3. Training should be strong on decision making skills while responding to emergency calls using the emergency equipment.
4. Basic training of officers should have strong emphasis on decision making during code three responses.

### Background:

Review of most recent crashes involving officers responding code three involved decision making errors (driving beyond the operator's skill and limitations of the vehicle) and reliance on the opti-com to change traffic signals.