



POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF BURLINGTON

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **New Priority Response Plan Implemented by Burlington Police Department may Increase Response Times to Some Incidents**

***With decreased staff resources and increasing activity across the City, Police response times to some incidents may be delayed***

Burlington, VT – On May 2nd, 2021, the Burlington Police Department (BPD) implemented a new Priority Response Plan where incident types will be sorted into three Priority groups, allowing BPD to stack calls for service, only when necessary. The Priority Plan was developed by reviewing 130 different incident types to determine which can be stacked when staffing resources are low or the volume of calls for service is high.

The newly implemented Priority Response Plan did not have an immediate impact on police response time, but on May 19th the BPD experienced a high volume of incidents, a number of which required a multi-officer response. As a result, some Priority 3 incidents received a delayed police response. BPD expects the trend toward increased incident volume to continue.

“The Burlington Police Department is committed to maintaining the level of public safety service that Burlingtonians want and deserve. The Priority Response Plan has been designed to achieve this in a period in which the number of officers is far below historic levels, and significant new resources to respond to incidents are not yet ready to deploy,” said Mayor Miro Weinberger. “It is important for the community to understand that in serious incidents, when you need help, the BPD will respond. The community should also know that the Administration is focused on multiple strategies to keep this period of dramatically constrained public safety response resources as short as possible.”

“Our primary goal remains keeping people safe,” said Acting Chief of Police Jon Murad. “There’s warm summer weather ahead, and a return to public life as the pandemic emergency comes to an end, and with that comes an increase in incidents. I want our neighbors to know that, when call volume is high and staffing is low, some calls may have to wait.” Murad also said the BPD is working diligently to hire additional Community Service Officers as authorized by the City Council, and is hopeful that onboarding those positions will minimize the occasions in which priority response is put in effect.

*Information is preliminary and subject to change.*

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### **Examples of Incident Categories**

The Priority Response Plan is only put into effect when BPD resources are absorbed by Priority 1 and Priority 2 incidents. For example:

- Assaults, Driving Under the Influence, Overdoses, Robberies, and Vehicle Crashes with death or injury are examples of Priority 1 incidents and will always get a response. Many Priority 1 incidents require a multiple-officer response.
- Disorderly Conduct, Mental Health Issues, and Trespass are examples of Priority 2 incidents. Many Priority 2 incidents are situationally dependent, and may be elevated to Priority 1 or downgraded to Priority 3 if they are in-progress or being reported after the fact. The Officer In Charge, a police supervisor, will make that determination.
- Noise Complaints, Vandalism, and Motor Vehicle Complaints are examples of Priority 3 incidents. When all but two or fewer officers on a shift are occupied, Priority 3 incidents will be “stacked” and will not receive a response until resources allow.

A detailed outline of the new Priority Plan and more information on BPD staffing and scheduling can be found [here](#).

### **Background**

Following the Burlington City Council’s action to reduce the number of sworn officers in the department through attrition in June of 2020 the department had considered dramatically reducing the overnight shift when officer counts dropped to a level requiring curtailed service. Acting Chief Murad developed the Priority Response Plan as an alternative to previously discussed options that preserves, at least for now, a slightly larger overnight shift. The Priority Response Plan accounts for new staffing levels by eliminating one officer position from each of the three shifts.

As of April 1st, BPD employed 82 sworn officers; approximately 77 of those 82 are “effective,” or deployable for service.

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