

Seattle Community Police Commission

To: Mr. Brian Maxey, Chief Operating Officer, Seattle Police Department
From: Cali Ellis, Community Police Commission Executive Director
Date: April 30, 2024

Subject: Recommendations for Revising the SPD Emergency Vehicle Operations Policy

Introduction

This memo provides recommendations for revising the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) Emergency Vehicle Operations Policy based on community input and best practices from other jurisdictions. On January 17, 2024, the CPC hosted a community meeting with community members to discuss their concerns with the Emergency Vehicle Operations Policy. On March 22, 2024, SPD provided a draft revision to this policy for review. CPC staff developed these recommendations building on and guided by community input from that meeting.

Community Input

1. *Vague and Unclear Policy:* Community members shared that the current policy was perceived as vague, particularly in defining when emergency driving should take place. They said it needed clearer guidelines regarding circumstances that would justify emergency driving.

Recommendation: Provide more specificity around justifications for emergency driving, including responses to other SPD officers and other agencies. Directly address in the policy priority levels for emergency response based on agreements with other agencies.

2. *Specific Speed Guidelines:* Community members indicated that the policy should include specific guidelines on vehicle speeds during emergency responses, especially in urban areas. They suggested that setting clear speed limits based on the nature of the call and the surrounding environment could help better ensure the safety of both officers and the public. Participants also suggested, for the purpose of emergency vehicle operations (as opposed to pursuit), setting specific speed limits in specific areas under specific circumstances.

Recommendation: Determine appropriate levels of speed for emergency vehicle response in dense urban settings and set specific speed limits.

3. *Transparency in Policymaking:* Several participants emphasized the need for transparency and community input in the policy-making process. They suggested that SPD actively seek

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feedback from community members and incorporate their concerns and suggestions into policy to ensure that it adequately addresses the community's needs and safety concerns.

Recommendation: Engage community members proactively when traumatic events involving emergency vehicle operations occur. Utilize CPC as a resource to facilitate communication with affected communities and give community members a channel to provide feedback and input.

4. *Responsiveness and Accountability:* Community members expressed concerns about the lack of response from SPD to questions raised by the community and the absence of updates or accountability following incidents. Participants emphasized the importance of revising the policy to address these concerns and ensure public safety. But they also felt that SPD has not adequately addressed the degree to which this event, and its aftermath, continue to be a source of pain to many community members.

Recommendation: Be more proactive and transparent about informing community members about investigations and discipline decisions. Utilize CPC as a resource to facilitate communication with affected communities and give community members a channel to provide feedback and input.

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Revising the SPD Emergency Vehicle Operations Policy based on community input and best practices from other jurisdictions is essential to addressing concerns regarding accountability, clarity, and public safety. By incorporating the recommendations outlined above, SPD can enhance its policy framework and strengthen its relationship with the community.

Thank you for considering these recommendations from community members. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need clarification or assistance in implementing these suggestions.