San Diego Police Department
Communications Division
Dispatch Priority System

The Dispatch Priority System has five levels:

Priority E: Dispatch Immediately. Priority E calls involve an imminent threat to life. Examples include: serious injury collisions; ambulance needed; attempted suicide; and no detail accidents.

Priority One: Dispatch Immediately. Priority One calls involve serious crimes in progress and those in which there is a threat to life. Examples include: felony crimes in progress; lost children; child abuse; prowlers; minor injury collisions; disturbances involving weapons or violence; hazardous material spills; bomb threat evaluations; and 911 hang-ups.

Priority Two: Dispatch as quickly as possible. Priority Two calls involve complaints regarding less serious crimes in which there is no threat to life. Examples include: prowlers who have left; traffic signals out of order; minor crimes in progress; blocked driveway when the caller is waiting to leave; injured animals; loud parties with mitigating circumstances; burglary alarms during extreme atmospheric conditions such as heavy wind, rain, etc.; and customers who refuse to pay for services.

Priority Three: Dispatch as quickly as possible after higher priority calls. Priority Three calls involve minor crimes or requests for service that are not urgent. Examples include: investigating a crime that has already occurred; taking a report; drunk persons who are conscious and not causing a disturbance; loud parties involving noise only.

Priority Four: Dispatch when no higher priority calls for the beat are waiting to be assigned. Priority Four calls involve minor requests for police service. Examples include: found property; most parking violations; etc.

Because the Dispatch Priority System is designed to be only a guide, Dispatchers must use their best judgment when assigning priorities. Depending on the dispatcher's understanding of the nature of the need, a higher or lower priority may be assigned.