

Back-up Considerations

Back-up and Two-Officer Calls

Deciding whether or not to use / wait for back-up is one of the most critical decisions a law enforcement officer can make. And this decision is made several times per shift, every day on patrol.

The NUMBER ONE reason that officers are killed in the line of duty is because they did not wait for or use back-up. It only takes one time.

If possible, wait for your back-up to arrive before you engage! It does you little good to call for back-up but dive headlong into the call before the back-up unit arrives. If you are going to call for back-up, you might as well use it. If you have the luxury of time on your side, hang back and wait for that other officer.

When should you call for back-up?

Any time you feel you need it.

When those little hairs on the back of your neck stand up, go ahead and call for more units. Trust your gut. Trust your subconscious. If things are spiraling out of control, ask for back-up. Sometimes, the act of requesting back-up on the radio shows your opponent that you mean business and will help to control the situation.

Any time you know in advance that you will be arresting or putting your hands on a subject.

We should stack the odds in our favor and bring help whenever possible if we know ahead of time that we will be going hands-on with a subject. Going hands-on is a critical time when many subjects will fight. They will be far less likely to fight if there are multiple officers present.

Sometimes, you will not have the luxury of time to wait, or you may not have known ahead of time. In those situations, you must do what needs to be done. But when you are able to wait for back-up, you should. You are no good to anyone if you are killed or seriously injured.

Here are some examples of times when you'll be going hands-on with a subject, and you should plan ahead to bring fellow officers with you:

- Warrant arrests
- Contacting the suspect in a crime
- Taking custody of mentally ill patients
- Taking custody of runaways

Any time you are going to a "two-officer call."

What's a two-officer call? These are calls with a higher-than normal amount of threat. Certain types of calls are considered to be "two-officer calls." This means that as much as possible, we like to send at least two officers to handle the call.

Of course, these types of calls *can be* handled by one officer, but they *shouldn't be*.

Here are some examples of two-officer calls:

- Any time you are arresting or going hands-on with a subject (see above)
- Violent/serious crime in progress (Burglary, Robbery, Rape, Assault, etc.)
- Any call involving a weapon
- Mental illness complaint
- Building Search
- High-risk vehicle stop
- 911 hang-up
- Domestic Violence / Domestic Disturbance
- And any other call where you feel that you need it, based on the call details

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There are times to hold off on calling for back-up.

Many times, officers are dispatched to check on things. Obviously, we can't know exactly what's happening at a scene until we get there and investigate it for ourselves. So really it could be anything. But it's not a wise use of resources to request back-up for every single call you get.

When dispatched to check on something like an audible alarm call at a business, or a suspicious vehicle parked along the road, you should go and check it out for yourself. Then if you get there and decide that back-up is appropriate, you should call for back-up and additional resources at that point.

If you get to that alarm call, and see a door propped open with an empty car running nearby – now that's the time to call in the Calvary. But if you get the alarm call and the building appears secure and nothing is out of the ordinary, you can probably handle that one on your own, without using up precious additional resources.

If you arrive on that suspicious vehicle call and it looks calm, maybe you should handle it on your own. But if anything is out of the ordinary, then you can always ask for back-up.

If you are always requesting back-up much more so than your peers, this can create a problem for you. Other officers will begin to think that you are too scared to handle patrol work.

Basically we're saying this: For "two-officer calls," you should just plan ahead and have back-up with you. For the other kinds of calls, get there and check it out for yourself and then decide if back-up is needed.