

# Seattle Community Police Commission

June 9, 2023

Adrian Diaz, Chief

Seattle Police Department

Dear Chief Diaz,

Thank you for your response to our letter dated February 15, 2023 regarding the Seattle Police Department's emergency vehicle response training and policy. In your letter, you wrote that SPD officers receive three different phases of emergency vehicle operation (EVO) training: (1) a 40-hour course provided by the Washington State Patrol at the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) for new recruits; (2) a 3-week post-BLEA training on SPD policy at the Education and Training section; and (3) ongoing training with a Field Training Officer. Furthermore, your letter states that "[o]fficers receive emergency vehicle operation training every other year."

We are writing because since receiving your letter we have learned new information that seems to contradict your previous statements about the training your staff receives. Specifically, on May 4, 2023 Amy Radil of KUOW reported that after passage of SB 5352 related to vehicle pursuits, you wrote in an email to your staff that 'effective immediately no Seattle officer may engage in a vehicle pursuit unless the officer had the training required by Senate Bill 5352.'<sup>1</sup> SB 5352 requires, in part, that the pursuing officer have completed an emergency vehicle operator's course and have completed updated emergency vehicle operator training in the previous two years.<sup>2</sup> According to Radil's reporting and her sources at SPD, 'very few officers have taken this training yet, and that it may take a significant amount of time to get more officers to complete the training' due to a backlog of recruits waiting to attend. This discrepancy between your previous letter and the new reporting raises the following questions:

1. What is the total number of officers required to take the training?
2. What is the total number of officers who have completed the EVO training? Of that number, how many are up to date on their training? How many officers are not up to date on their training as of May 25, 2023?
3. Of the officers who are not up to date on EVO training, what training, if any, have they received? Please provide a breakdown on a per-officer basis.
4. What is your plan to update the EVO training of all SPD officers?
5. Would you please provide more specific information on EVO training? Where is it held and what does it entail? Has it changed in recent years to be more (or less) robust? If so, how?

---

<sup>1</sup> [KUOW - Police vehicle pursuits mostly on pause in Seattle due to lack of training](#)

<sup>2</sup> [5352.SL.pdf \(wa.gov\)](#)

Seattle  
Community  
Police Commission

6. To what extent has city funding for SPD training impacted the quality and frequency of EVO training?

Although, as you state in your letter, pedestrian deaths and other tragic events in the course of EVO may be “an exceedingly rare happening,” much like vehicle pursuits, emergency driving is incredibly dangerous for both the officer and community members. Under the SPD’s vehicle pursuit policy 13.031 section 5, when weighing the decision whether to respond using emergency driving, officers must consider the following factors: whether the incident is life-threatening, road conditions, vehicle and pedestrian traffic, weather, speed, lighting, their own driving abilities, and the priority level of the call. However, SPD’s EVO policy 13.030 does not include a mandate to consider these factors. Like the vehicle pursuit policy, we believe the policy governing emergency vehicle response should reflect the gravity of the choice to do it. To that end, please answer the following questions related to SPD’s emergency vehicle response policy:

1. Why does SPD’s EVO policy 13.030 not require officers to consider the same factors as those under the vehicle pursuit policy 13.031, either in the decision to initiate or continue an emergency response? Does SPD have a plan to update its EVO policy to include the requirement to consider the same community safety factors as contained in the vehicle pursuit policy? If not, why not?
2. Currently, the priority level of the call is not a factor in emergency vehicle response under policy 13.030. As you wrote in your letter, while a priority 1 call may warrant emergency driving under current policy and training, not all priority 1 calls do and officers must consider the totality of the circumstances. Why does the SPD policy on EVO not include a more detailed and explicit threshold that must be met before an officer makes a decision to engage in emergency driving (like there is with the vehicle pursuits policy)?
3. Before engaging in emergency driving, are officers required to activate emergency lights and use their sirens as necessary to warn others of the emergency nature of the situation? If so, why is this not spelled out in the policy 13.030?

We also request a complete answer to question 5 of our original letter, dated January 31, 2023. Question 5 states: If there is a collision with a pedestrian or motorist during an emergency response, what is the SPD expectation of the officer to stop and perform life saving measures? What is the SPD training and policy on the officer’s duty to render aid in this circumstance?

Thank you for your attention to this. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Reverend Patricia Hunter, Co-Chair



Reverend Harriett Walden, Co-Chair



Joel Merkel, Co-Chair