



# CITY OF BRISTOL VIRGINIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **BVPD Alters Response to Calls for Service due to COVID-19**

**BRISTOL, VA – 03/17/2020, 4:00 PM**

In order to maintain the health and safety of the public, our officers and staff, the Bristol Virginia Police Department will be implementing the following procedures in response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) threat that we currently face.

1. Dispatchers/E-911 Operators will be asking callers for information on any travel out of the United States they may have had and any sickness or exposure at the location of the call for service. This will help operators and first responders decide the call will be addressed. Emergency calls will continue to be handled as emergencies. Non-emergency calls may incur some delay in response, and responding officers may take precautions to prevent or minimize exposure. Please candidly tell dispatchers if you are sick, believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, or have traveled outside of the country.
2. Police officers will not enter private residences unless necessary to properly handle the call for service.
3. Police officers will attempt to a personal distance of at least six (6) feet. According to the CDC, this significantly reduces the chance of the virus being transmitted person to person.
4. Some calls for service that may only require a police report being made may be handled over the phone by an officer. If this happens, the dispatcher will take the caller's contact information and an officer will call back as quickly as possible. Some other minor services that the police department performs may be temporarily suspended for the duration of this event.
5. If it is likely that a police officer, or other emergency personnel, may be exposed to the virus, they may be wearing protective masks, eye protection, gloves or clothing. With the number of people

police officers deal with every day, these precautions are necessary to protect citizens and police officers alike in hopes our members can avoid quarantine and continue to report for duty during the COVID-19 event.

6. If anyone has been charged with a traffic or criminal violation and is scheduled to appear in court anytime in the near future, they should call the court or check their websites for schedule changes as all court dates are being postponed until a future time. Notices will be sent from the courts. The BVPD does not control these dates.

It is the Bristol Virginia Police Department's desire that these efforts will help in reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus and allow us to return to normal operations as soon as possible. The Police Department and city officials are staying in constant contact with state and local health care professionals to monitor the state of this virus, its spread and plan for any other changes that may be needed. If more drastic measures are implemented, the BVPD will keep the public as well informed as possible.

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