

PUBLIC SAFETY

Update from Police Chief Mangseth

As a public safety agency, the St. Anthony Police Department (SAPD) partners with its communities and various city services to ensure a safe place to live, work and play. And when SAPD officers respond to your calls for service, you can count on them to provide a community-service approach and adhere to recommended social-distancing practices and guidelines as prescribed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).



Policing services and COVID-19 variants

As we begin to encounter challenges associated with COVID-19 variants, the SAPD will continue to follow recommendations from health experts, and adjust in-person services (as needed) to ensure the safety of our staff and members of the public. For example, we have made modifications to low-priority service calls by handing them over the phone or through a self-reporting form (in lieu of in-person contact).

This temporary measure is taken to best serve our communities by collaborating with local first responders, healthcare partners, and emergency management partners.

Additional crisis-situation resources

Police officers often spend an inordinate amount of time responding to 911 calls for quality-of-life issues, such as noise, blocked driveways, or public intoxication. Others are for problems like drug abuse, homelessness, or mental health crises that would be better resolved with community-based treatment or other resources—not a criminal justice/police response. These types of responses can exhaust police resources and expose countless people to avoidable criminal justice system contacts.

There is a pressing need for data-informed strategies to identify 911 calls that present a true public safety emergency that require an immediate police response, while responding to other calls in ways that promote better outcomes for the people involved and the communities where they live and work. County 911 Dispatch Centers are in the process of identifying additional resources that can be employed (in lieu of a police response) when an individual calls 911. Our dispatch centers are taking steps to evaluate and learn how 911, policing and alternative options intersect. There seems to be a willingness of our policy makers to explore and fund programs and alternatives to issues that have been traditionally presented to the policing profession at the street level. Through training, experience and community feedback, I have come to understand that a safer, stronger, and fairer justice system hinges on our ability to deploy enforcement only when necessary. Developing a deep systemic understanding of 911 calls, criminal justice responses, processes, outcomes, and opportunities for improvement, are key to providing our communities with greater service.

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. Police officers at every level have countless opportunities to listen to citizens and collect information and intelligence about what’s happening in the community”.
- Winston Churchill

This famous quote can easily be applied to our current era of policing. I’d like to emphasize that as a public safety agency, we are listening and evaluating our policies and practices. We will endeavor to maintain a culture of community service that embraces the concepts of community-orientated policing. ■