



SAMMAMISH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Daniel Pingrey, Chief of Police

From the Desk of the Chief – COVID-19 & “Stay at Home” FAQs:

This past Monday, Governor Jay Inslee issued Proclamation 20-25; an unprecedented “Stay at Home” directive in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) health crisis. The proclamation can be viewed in its entirety at:

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/proclamations/20-25%20Coronavirus%20Stay%20SafeStay%20Healthy%20%28tmp%29%20%28002%29.pdf>

Over the past week, members of the Sammamish Police Department, have been asked numerous questions about law enforcement’s role during this time in our society, and in our City.

In an effort to keep you informed, we have compiled frequently asked questions (FAQs), along with information to address each question.

The national media has reported that some police agencies are not making arrests during the COVID-19 outbreak – Is this the case in Sammamish?

No. Sammamish Police Officers are on duty 24 hours a day, on active patrol, and making arrests when it is deemed necessary to ensure the safety of our community and the protection of victims.

In order to protect staff and the public, officers have been instructed to take lower priority, non in-progress calls via the phone (phone reports) when appropriate. This is a common practice even during “normal” circumstances, but I have stressed that SPD staff utilize this practice as much as possible to ensure social distancing until the COVID-19 outbreak subsides. Police officers will respond in to in-progress, emergency calls, or criminal activity that an officer observes while on patrol. If your situation requires officers to be on-scene, they will be there!

Our District court, in Issaquah, is operational, but closed to the public for obvious reasons. The only change in their service has been extended scheduling of cases, but they are still conducting in-custody arraignments.

The jail services we use have implemented some new intake and booking restrictions in an attempt to minimize exposure of staff and the contamination of the jail population. These restrictions do not affect serious felonies, and crimes that require mandatory in-custody arrests by state law, at this time.

Are we under Martial Law?

*No – and we (Sammamish and Washington State) are nowhere near such a situation. Martial Law is a significant and extreme government action, initiated at either the state or federal level, and done so under intense legal scrutiny. This measure is only reserved for the most extraordinary circumstances. Martial Law is only enacted in order to reestablish or maintain law and order because achieving such cannot be accomplished without utilizing military/Federal resources and severely curtailing civil liberties. The current “Stay at Home” Governor’s proclamation **IS NOT** a Martial Law action. Furthermore, we*

have no indication from either the state or federal government that any form of Martial Law will be implemented, or is even being considered.

Is the Governor's "Stay at Home" proclamation legally enforceable?

Yes. Pursuant to RCW 43.06.220 State of Emergency—Powers of Governor Pursuant to Proclamation, a violation of this proclamation is a Gross Misdemeanor, and could result in arrest.

While Sammamish Police Officers can arrest for the willful, wanton and deliberate violation of the Governor's proclamation, enforcement through arrest is not our goal or first course of action. Our community has shown that they understand the severity of the situation and are doing all they can to keep themselves, their families and neighbors safe and healthy.

When Sammamish Police Officers encounter someone –or a group of people- not in compliance, we will focus on education of the proclamation and awareness on how to keep themselves, the community and especially our most vulnerable citizens safe.

DO NOT confront individuals or groups that you think are not complying with the "Stay at Home" proclamation. *Keep in mind there are exemptions to the proclamation, and you may not know the entire situation you are observing. Please use maturity and discretion when calling the police if you feel there is a violation of the "Stay at Home" proclamation. The Sammamish Police Department continues to prioritize and modify police services in order to safely address the COVID-19 threat.*

We are here to serve you, and you make the decision to call upon us whenever you feel it's appropriate – but please, remember the traditional reasons for calling 9-1-1 remain the same: a need for police or fire services for a genuine emergency or serious crime. It is even more important to be mindful of the legitimate reasons to call 9-1-1, when available emergency services may become overtaxed due to the current extraordinary public health situation.

As stated above, if you need us, we will be there. Your police officers do not have the option to "stay at home," and they are working hard to protect you during this time – you can protect them by STAYING AT HOME. Self-regulating and following the "Stay at Home" proclamation will allow the Sammamish Police Department to continue its core duties of providing emergency services, crime prevention and overall public safety within our community.

What is the Sammamish Police Department's enforcement philosophy during this time?

During this health crisis, and especially while we are all adhering to the "Stay at Home" proclamation in our community, the Sammamish Police Department's enforcement philosophy and service priorities are, but are not limited to:

- 1) Preserve the peace, health and welfare of our community.*
- 2) Proactive suppression and deterrence of crime, and the support of public order, especially around closed businesses and areas most impacted by the current health crisis.*
- 3) Swift and efficient response to in-progress incidents and calls for service.*
- 4) To provide assistance and comfort to our community focused on supporting public health officials, safety education and guidance on non-medical safe practices against COVID-19.*

This is an unprecedented time for law enforcement in our state and nation. As the Chief, my priority is to ensure staff safety so we can provide emergency police services to Sammamish for an indefinite period of time, under all conditions. This means being prepared to provide Sammamish adequate police services

even if we are forced to work at reduced staffing levels due to ill or quarantined officers. Because of these considerations, we have to do everything we can to minimize possible exposure of police employees, and prioritize the calls Sammamish Police Officers actually have to respond to in person, as opposed to handling remotely. Our partnership with the King County Sheriff's Office will help support us in maintaining these services.

The media has reported that some public safety agencies do not have enough equipment to protect staff from COVID-19. What about the Sammamish Police Department?

Every Sammamish Police employee has been issued Personal Protective Equipment (P.P.E.), and associated training on pathogen precautions.

The Sammamish Police Department trains annually on an "all hazards" approach to preparedness and public safety. While no one could have anticipated a global pandemic, taking a proactive approach to general readiness has helped us deal with the extraordinarily fluid conditions we now find ourselves in. While we cannot forecast the escalation of COVID-19, currently we have the resources to operate for an extended period of time. We are developing intermediate and long-term contingency plans for supply and stock replenishment if the situation worsens. Recently the Sammamish Chinese community provided cleaning supplies and masks to local fire departments, police and hospitals. Another community member donated a generous supply of hand sanitizer.

I saw a Sammamish Police Officer wearing a mask and gloves, should I be concerned?

*No – in fact, you should feel more secure. As part of our pathogen precautions and training, officers have been instructed to use P.P.E. (Personal Protective Equipment) whenever they deem it necessary in order to keep them and the public safe. An officer **WILL NOT** be working if they are ill or have a confirmed case of COVID-19. If you see any of our staff wearing protective equipment it's only as a precaution, based upon the circumstances they are dealing with. We are not medical experts, so we cannot make a determination of someone's medical condition – but officers have been told, when in doubt, wear P.P.E. Police officers also commonly encounter other infectious diseases during the course of their normal duties, to include Tuberculosis, MRSA and Hepatitis.*

This means the protective equipment you observe our officers wearing may not be related to COVID-19. Either way, officers' P.P.E. is as much for your safety as it is for theirs – no need to worry.

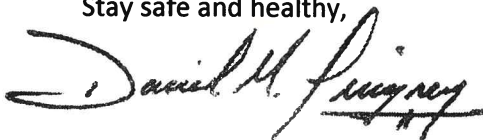
The above FAQs are a conglomeration of many of the legitimate questions we are being asked – all with three common themes: COVID-19, the "Stay at Home" proclamation, and DPD's role during this time. I hope the answers to these questions provide some clarification. Please note, we are not responding to questions or comments posted on social media.

If you are reporting a crime or suspicious incident, please only use the following numbers:

- **Non-emergency dispatch: 206-296-3311**
- **Emergency / In-progress crimes: 9-1-1**
- **On line reporting: www.reporttosheriff.org**

In closing, we understand this is a stressful and uncertain time. We are here, and proud to serve the Sammamish community. If you need us, call us - We will be there.

Stay safe and healthy,



Chief Daniel Pingrey