

# Duties expanded for reserve police officers

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Officials are expanding the role of Tulsa's reserve police officers by allowing them to respond to certain types of calls, possibly lowering call response times.

Reserve officers, who until recently enforced only handicapped and fire-zone parking and vendor-license violations, will now be dispatched to calls about road hazards, abandoned vehicles and found property and will transport prisoners, according to the Tulsa Police Department.

The reserve officers also will be assigned as secondary officers on collisions, alarm calls and 911 hang-up calls.

Having the reservists handle low-priority calls will free up full-time officers to respond to higher-priority calls, reducing the time people have to wait for officers to arrive and maximizing resources, Sgt. Skipper Bain said.

"While they're out there (enforcing parking regulations), they can help out in another way," he said.

Although the Tulsa Police Department is at its projected manpower levels, Officer Jason Willingham said, police response to low-priority calls can still take a long time. Willingham said the reserve officers will help reduce that wait time.

"If you wait two to three hours to file a burglary report, there's a need for more officers," he said, adding that using the reserve officers "is going to free up a few more officers."

So far, 13 reserve officers have been trained for their new roles, and 12 more are in the process, Bain said.

Reserve officers, who are unpaid volunteers, must have the same qualifications as Tulsa police officers.

They receive the same academy training as full-time, paid officers and complete a shortened version of the field-training program, according to the Police Department.

The department began broadening the reservists' duties on a trial basis about three months ago, Bain said.

"It's a great program," he said. "Everyone likes it. The reservists want to help. They're not there to take away jobs; they're there to help."