

## BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

**SUBJECT:** SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS

**NUMBER:** 516

**EFFECTIVE:** February 19, 2024

**SUPERSEDES:** April 10, 2006

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Boulder County Sheriff's Office to equip, train and maintain a specialized unit of deputies and officers to deal with extraordinary, high-risk, criminal or public safety events that occur within Boulder County or, upon a mutual aid request, outside of Boulder County. The mission of the Boulder County SWAT Team is to preserve life in high-risk situations using specialized training, equipment, and tactics in a professional manner that inspires confidence in the community we serve. We deploy and operate our team in a manner consistent with our mission statement, values, and constitutional principles. This policy should be reviewed and updated periodically to address changes in law and tactics.

**RELATED POLICIES:**

- 205 – Mutual Aid
- 305 – Fitness and Essential Job Demand Testing
- 502 – Use of Force
- 507 – Boulder County Bomb Squad
- 512 – Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems
- 513 – Authorized Weapons, Use and Proficiency
- 514 – Conductive Energy Devices
- 515 – Off-duty Use of Sheriff's Vehicles
- 533 – Civil Disturbances and Public Demonstrations

**DEFINITIONS:**

Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT): A team of deputies or officers that receives specialized training and equipment to enable it to respond to, and resolve, high-risk criminal and public safety events when those events would be better suited for a unit with specialized training and capabilities that exceed the capabilities of on-duty patrol resources.

Impact Weapons: Impact weapons are systems capable of launching rubber, plastic, foam, wood projectiles and projectiles containing chemical munitions designed specifically for law enforcement and impact on human beings. This ammunition is designed to deter, distract, or disable and is intended to be less lethal.

Noise Flash Diversionary Device: A device creating a bright light and loud report designed to temporarily divert the attention of persons in the immediate vicinity, giving tactical teams a window of opportunity to exploit to their advantage.

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

Chemical Agents: Any liquid, compound, solid or gas that works by some physiological interaction with the body designed for law enforcement use to cause uncomfortable symptoms in humans.

### **PROCEDURE:**

#### **I. Organization and Structure**

- E. The SWAT team is comprised of commissioned Law Enforcement deputies and officers from the Boulder County Sheriff's Office, Lafayette Police Department, Louisville Police Department, Erie Police Department, Mountain View Fire Protection District, the District Attorney's Office, as well as employees and volunteers from the Boulder County Sheriff's Office.
- F. Supervision of the team is the responsibility of the Boulder County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office provides command and control of the team. All other agencies that participate are governed by this policy and the interagency agreement (IGA). The team is organized into three elements: the tactical unit, the negotiations unit, and the mission support staff (MSS) unit.
- G. Chain of Command
  - 1. SWAT is an auxiliary unit of the operations division and falls under the supervision of the Operations Division Chief. SWAT is a collateral duty assignment for any individual unless otherwise noted.
  - 2. The Operations Division Chief, with consent of the executive staff, appoints the SWAT Commander.
  - 3. The following position assignments are appointed by the Team Commander without regard to rank and report to the Team Commander.
    - a. Assistant Team Commander
    - b. Tactical Team Leaders
    - c. Scout/Sniper Team Leader
    - d. Negotiations Team Leaders
    - e. Mission Support Team Leaders
  - 4. In the event the Team Commander is absent, the Assistant Team Commander, Tactical Team Leader, or a designated team member assumes

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

the commander's responsibilities.

### **H. Position Functions:**

1. Commander: Develops and coordinates team response to situations, evaluates problems, and identifies the type of equipment and personnel needed to resolve the incident. The commander is responsible for the selection, assignment, and training of all SWAT team personnel. They are assisted by a Tactical Team Leader appointed as the Assistant Team Commander.
2. Tactical Team Leaders: As determined by the team commander, or his designee, may assume the commander's duties in their absence. Team leaders carry out orders and provide first line supervision and coordination of team member's assignments.
3. Tactical Operators: Perform operational tasks deemed necessary for the completion of each SWAT operation as directed. They will be cross trained to handle different tasks and may develop specialties as required by team need.
4. Tactical Unit - The tactical unit's training and equipment is geared towards the resolution of a situation through some application of force. The level and type of force used is determined by the type of incident and by the actions and level of compliance of the suspect(s) involved. The tactical unit may be divided into smaller teams with specific duties as dictated by the nature and type of the event. Those teams may be designated as, but are not limited to, any of the following:
  - a. Entry Team – Officers with the responsibility of making entry into any type of physical structure.
  - b. Arrest Team – Officers with the responsibility of physically arresting and securing a subject.
  - c. Perimeter Team – Officers with the responsibility of manning inner perimeter positions to secure an area around the target to prevent the escape of suspect(s) and prevent or control the ingress and egress of unauthorized persons.
  - d. Scout/Sniper Team – Officers who are trained and equipped in long-range marksmanship and information gathering. This team provides magnified observation capabilities and long-range shooting options.

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

- e. Crisis Response Team – Officers with the responsibility to stage and respond to developing crisis situations while more thorough response plans are being developed.
- 5. Negotiations Team Leader: As determined by the SWAT commander or his designee, the Negotiations Team Leader(s) carry out orders and provide first line supervision and coordination of negotiator team member's assignments.
- 6. Negotiators: Intercede during a crisis to establish dialogue with the parties involved to defuse/de-escalate the situation and to open communications or negotiations with the subject(s). They assist in gathering intelligence and information that can be passed on to SWAT Operations to be disseminated into the field for the tactical units to utilize in its resolution.
- 7. Mission Support Staff Team Leader: As determined by the SWAT commander or his designee, the team leader will carry out orders and provide first line of supervision and coordination of the mission support staff team member's assignments.
- 8. Mission Support Team Members: Provide overall technical support to the team to facilitate both tactical and negotiation operations. This support includes but is not limited to:
  - i. Maintain technical support to the tactical operations center (TOC), negotiations operations center (NOC) and units in the field. They may also provide technical support to the incident commander.
  - ii. Providing audio and video surveillance capabilities to the incident commander, TOC, NOC and tactical and negotiation teams.
- 9. Tactical Medics: Also known as TEMS – Tactical Emergency Medical Support. They may be sworn Law Enforcement officers who may be armed and/ or full-time medical personnel who have/maintain at least an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) B or above certification and provide overall medical support for the team. Their duties include the following:
  - a. Develop medical plans to support on-going operations.
  - b. Coordinate with other medical providers for basic and advanced care.
  - c. Provide immediate on scene medical treatment of victims, hostages,

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

team members and/or suspects.

- d. Maintain a liaison with medical providers who are treating team members requiring medical attention.

### **I. Staffing**

1. The Operations Division Chief determines authorized staffing levels in consultation with the Team Commander. The Sheriff Office recognizes operating and maintaining a SWAT team is manpower intensive and expensive. Because of the mission profiles the team must be maintain sufficient personnel to safely accomplish their missions.
2. The authorized strength is:
  - a. One (1) Team Commander
  - b. One (1) Assistant Team Commander
  - c. Two (2) Tactical Team Leaders
  - d. One (1) Scout/Sniper Team Leader
  - e. Two (2) Assistant Tactical Team Leaders
  - f. Two (2) Negotiations Team Leaders
  - g. One (1) Mission Support Team Leader
  - h. Fourteen (14) Tactical Operators (including partner agencies)
  - i. Four (4) Tactical Medics
  - j. Two (2) K9 Handlers with dogs
  - k. Twelve (12) Negotiators (including partner agencies)
  - l. Twelve (12) Mission Support Team Members, including Mission Support and Technology Staff

### **II. Eligibility**

- A. Eligible Boulder County Sheriff's Office deputies, employees and volunteers, and

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

participating partner Agencies (Erie, Lafayette, Louisville Police Departments, Mountain View Fire Protection District, along with the District Attorney's Office) may apply for SWAT positions. All appointments are made by the Operations Division Chief with the Sheriff's Staff approval and remain in effect until terminated by the Operations Division Chief or by the member's resignation. The appointment or failure to appoint; discipline or termination of appointment, is not subject to grievance.

1. Candidates for Tactical Operator positions must be current full-time POST certified peace officers and endorsed by their respective agencies.
2. Tactical medics, Mission Support Members and Negotiators are not required to be POST certified but must be endorsed by their respective agencies.
3. Candidates volunteer for appointment.
4. Candidates are not on probation at the time of appointment.

### **B. Application, Testing, and Selection**

1. Application and testing applies to all members with the exception of the Commander, who is appointed by the Operations Division Chief.
2. The selection process may include
  - a. Position announcements are posted for a minimum of ten days.
  - b. Interested members submit a letter of intent to the SWAT Commander, through their chain of command.
  - c. The letter includes a brief resume and an endorsement by the members' supervisors.
  - d. Tactical operators must successfully complete and pass the physical fitness test.
  - e. Oral board interview.
  - f. May include the completion of a written test or questionnaire.
  - g. Review the candidates' suitability with current supervisors.

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

- h. Assessment of the candidate's firearms skills and abilities through a review of firearms records, and discussions with firearms instructors. Negotiators and Mission support are exempt.

### **III. Training**

- A. New members should successfully complete a recognized basic SWAT school or training program within their area of assignment (tactical, negotiations, team leader, etc.) within one year of selection. Further, new team members are assigned a mentor to assist with their training and development.
- B. Members attend regularly scheduled unit training as determined by the commander. Training is scheduled on a yearly basis. All scheduled training is considered mandatory, and team members will report to training on time and be prepared to participate in all scheduled training evolutions. Absences must be communicated to a Team Leader prior to the training date. Excessive absences, approved or unapproved, may result in dismissal from the team at the discretion of the team commander.
- C. Tactical unit members, including snipers, are scheduled to train monthly and adhere as much as practical to the recommended number of hours as identified by a professional organization such as the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA), Rocky Mountain Tactical Team Association (RMTTA), Texas Tactical Police Officers Association (TTPOA), or a similar regional association with identified SWAT Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies to accomplish sufficient training of the critical skills. The critical skills list and amount of training time will be reviewed annually to ensure the team's competency.
- D. Negotiations unit members are scheduled to train monthly. The number of training hours will be set annually to accomplish sufficient training of the critical skills.
- E. Mission Support team members are scheduled to train, at minimum, on a quarterly basis but with adequate time spent to accomplish sufficient training of the critical skills.
- F. Training records of all members are maintained by the Personnel and Training Office to include a signed attendance roster and lesson plan(s) of each training session. An After Training Report will be completed and provided to the SWAT Commander. All training records should be completed and submitted in accordance with the agency's training policy.
- G. Physical Fitness

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

1. The Commander or his designee schedules physical fitness activities as part of the yearly training activities. Tactical officers are required to participate.
2. Tactical unit members are required to complete, and successfully pass, the physical fitness test annually. The physical fitness test is decided upon by the SWAT Commander and will remain a standard test unless the SWAT Commander recognizes a need to change it.
3. If a member is unable to successfully pass the physical fitness test, they are given 30 days to prepare and re-test. If on the second attempt, they are unable to test or successfully pass then they are placed on restricted status with the team and given another 30 days to pass the test. Repeated failure to successfully pass is grounds for dismissal from the team.
4. The minimum level of qualification for any negotiations team member is a passing score on the Sheriff's Office essential job demand (EJD) course completed annually.

### **H. Firearms Qualification Standards**

1. Tactical team members are expected to maintain proficiency in the weapons they are assigned. Members supply and carry their SWAT handgun as their primary duty weapon. Tactical members will normally deploy with a department issued shoulder-fired weapon as well (shotgun, .223 rifle, or precision rifle). Team leaders make specific weapon assignments on missions.
2. Team members are required to qualify at scheduled SWAT qualification shoots with their assigned rifle and personal handgun. The Scout/Snipers are assigned a department issued specific scoped rifle and they are required to qualify with that rifle to a recognized law enforcement standard or course of fire as determined by the Team Commander. The commander and SWAT firearms instructors, with executive staff's concurrence, approve all firearms qualification standards.

### **IV. Vehicles and Equipment**

- A. The team commander or his designee ensures that a current inventory of the team's weapons, equipment, and supplies is maintained.
- B. SWAT tactical unit members are individually assigned vehicles when possible. They should keep their assigned equipment, secured in agency provided lock boxes and weapons racks, in their vehicle to facilitate an expedited response when either on



## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

or off duty. All team members are responsible for equipment issued to them and subject to random audits to ensure all equipment is accounted for and in good working condition. Team members must report lost or damaged equipment, in writing, to the SWAT Commander as soon as discovered.

- C. Specially designed vehicles are assigned to some of the tactical team leaders where other necessary non-assigned (team) equipment is stored. Team leaders arrange for other team members to drive the response vehicles in the event of their absence.
- D. The Commander or their designee is responsible for ensuring the armored rescue vehicle is always maintained for mission readiness. They will also approve the training curriculum all department members (not limited to SWAT) should receive before being authorized to drive the vehicle.

### **V. SWAT Operations**

- A. The tactical unit of the SWAT team is generally utilized in a situation that is resource intensive, of a criminal nature and is high risk, or has the potential to become, a threat to public safety.
- B. The SWAT team provides a tactical option to the Incident Commander that normally involves the use of some level of force.
- C. The deployment tactics and level of force used is dependent on the nature of the crime, the level of threat created by the situation and the urgency that is needed to neutralize the threat.
- D. The deployment tactics can involve, but are not limited to, the use of diversionary devices, chemical agents, less-lethal weapons and devices, lethal weapon systems; various building and vehicle entry techniques and open ground movement and search techniques. Deployment of the team and use of any of these tactics is inherently high-risk.
  - 1. The team is thoroughly trained in the use of assigned equipment and individual or team deployment tactics.
  - 2. The tactics used are the responsibility of the team commander or the commander's designee.
  - 3. The tactics used are proportionate to the level of threat created by the situation and/or crime and in compliance with applicable state and federal law and Sheriff's Office policies.

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

4. The tactics are designed and implemented in a way that resolves the situation with objectively reasonable force to resolve the situation safely and effectively as urgently as required while adhering to our priority of life model.
5. Each operation is debriefed to identify issues that were successful and issues that need improvement. An After-Action Report may be completed for Command Staff review.

### **VI. SWAT Call Out Process**

- A. An executive staff member, on-duty commander, or on-duty supervisor has the authority to activate the team for any critical incident or high-risk situation. A Risk Assessment Matrix (Appendix A) is maintained and can be used as a tool to assist in determining if the SWAT team is an appropriate resource for the incident.
- B. Critical incidents consist of, but are not limited to the following;
  1. Barricaded, criminal suspect, armed with a firearm, explosives, or any other extraordinary weapon/device.
  2. Sniper incident.
  3. Hostage taking incident.
  4. High risk entries, including evictions (a known or suspected armed subject, explosives, or a history of violence involving weapons)
  5. A riot or significant civil unrest.
  6. Warrant service involving a violent felony or possibility of physical resistance.
  7. An active killing or terrorist incident.
  8. The tactical team will not, as a matter of practice, respond to a suicidal person who is not posing an imminent threat to another person. Negotiators provide expertise that can contribute to the successful resolution, and as such, can respond to assist.
- C. SWAT mobilization is required in the event of:

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

1. A barricaded subject, armed with a firearm; or
  2. A sniper incident; or
  3. A hostage incident; or
  4. A high-risk entry (a known or suspected armed subject, explosives, or a history of violence involving weapons); or
  5. A riot situation.
  6. This does not limit the responding deputies' ability to take immediate action based on established life priorities.
- D. For situations not involving mandatory SWAT mobilization, the on-scene incident commander or ranking supervisor assesses the situation and determines if SWAT is needed. The supervisor then performs the following tasks:
1. When practical, the on-scene incident commander or ranking supervisor should contact the SWAT Team Commander for a consultation prior to paging the team for an immediate response.
  2. The supervisor ensures that communications and field units are notified of the response.
  3. Informs the responding SWAT commander or his designee of all pertinent details concerning the incident.
  4. Identifies the exact location of the incident; provides directions for best approach, staging areas, incident command post; and evacuation safe zones.
  5. Provides an inner perimeter for the incident until relieved by SWAT personnel; maintains the outer perimeter throughout the incident, or until relieved or reassigned.
- C. The ranking supervisor maintains overall incident command unless relieved, and provides for support and staffing, logistics, public information officer, and security until the incident is resolved.
- D. The SWAT commander or his designee takes command of the tactical aspects of the incident upon arrival. The tactics used to resolve the incident are the responsibility of the SWAT commander or his designee, in alignment with the incident

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

commander's intent.

- E. Team members are required to always carry a pager and/or cellular phone when available for call response.
- F. Instructions and directions for a safe approach into the scene, response posture, staging areas, communication channel and command posts are sent by pager, text messaging or phone application to responding team members.
- G. SWAT command personnel respond directly to the scene to assess the situation and begin planning deployment actions.
- H. Requests for the SWAT team as mutual aid from other jurisdictions, whether in county or out, are directed to the SWAT Commander or his designee. If feasible the request should be made in writing.
- I. The SWAT Commander, or his designee, will make notification to the Staff Duty Officer (SDO) any time the team is activated. The SDO is responsible for notifying the Operations Division Chief and Sheriff of the team activation via phone call or text message. This is not required for small partial activations such as assisting with a mutual aid request for the Armored Vehicle with a driver and navigator.

### **VII. Use of Force**

- A. A team member's use of force is consistent with applicable federal and state law and Sheriff's Office policy. When considering force options, officers and deputies assigned to SWAT, and conducting SWAT operations, are held to the same standards as other Sheriff's Deputies engaged in law enforcement activities. Nothing in this policy is intended to change those standards.
- B. Members are authorized to use appropriate levels of force, without prior authorization from SWAT command, when it is apparent that the life or safety of an innocent person, or police officer is in imminent danger, and the officer is in a position to appropriately and successfully intervene based upon the following priority of life model:

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

1. The safety of hostages.
  2. The safety of innocent parties.
  3. The safety of law enforcement officers and other first responders.
  4. The safety of the suspect.
- C. In the event the SWAT commander places additional restraint on the use of force, the commander issues these orders in plain and understandable language.
- D. Extraordinary tactics such as controlled cover fire, are not to be used without prior authorization of the SWAT Commander, except in an emergency situation when the member has articulable reason(s) to believe the benefit of the tactic exceeds the risk and is used in conjunction with the priority of life model.

### **VIII. Use of Noise Flash Diversionary Devices (NFDD)**

- A. The SWAT Team maintains and trains with noise flash diversionary devices. These devices are used and maintained in accordance with this training, operator certification process, and applicable federal and state law and department policy.
- B. Noise flash diversionary devices may be used in high-risk situations where the use of such devices would likely help resolve the situation and reduce the risk of injury to officers and other persons.
- C. Noise flash diversionary devices are not used without prior authorization from the SWAT Commander except in an emergency that has the potential to cause serious injury or is life threatening.
- D. When using noise flash diversionary devices, the commander, and ultimately the team member, considers circumstances such as the location, the nature of situation, the presence of children, elderly persons, natural gas or other flammables, and other circumstances that would make the use of the device inadvisable or dangerous.

### **IX. Use of Chemical Agents, Ordinance and Special Weapons**

- A. The SWAT Team maintains and trains with various chemical agents, ordinance, and special weapons. Such agents or weapons are used and maintained in accordance with this training, operator certification process, and applicable federal and state law and department policy.

## **BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

- B. Chemical agents may be used in high-risk situations where the use of such agents would likely help resolve the situation and reduce the risk of injury to officers and other persons.
  - C. Chemical agents are not used, except as defined in X.D. below, without prior authorization from the SWAT Commander, except in an emergency that has the potential to cause serious injury or is life threatening.
  - D. In response to a protest or demonstration, deputies shall not use crowd control chemical agents or irritants prior to issuing an order to disperse in a sufficient manner to ensure the order is heard and repeated, if necessary, followed by sufficient time and space to allow compliance with the order. Department issued, individually assigned pepper spray may otherwise be used in accordance with officer training.
    - 1. If circumstances do not allow for an announcement, the commander may authorize the use of crowd control chemical agents if innocent persons or peace officers are in immediate danger.
    - 2. When using crowd control chemical agents, the commander considers circumstances such as:
      - a. The location;
      - b. The nature of the crowd;
      - c. Weather conditions such as wind direction; and
      - d. The likely presence of children or other at-risk persons.
    - 3. Chemical agents are not used against non-violent crowds or groups.
- X. Use of Less-lethal Impact Weapons and Ammunition
- A. The SWAT Team maintains and trains with various less-lethal impact weapons. Such weapons are used in accordance with this training, operator certification process, and applicable federal and state law and department policy.
  - B. In response to a protest or demonstration, when practical, a dispersal order is given including the warning of the use of these less-lethal impact weapons.
    - 1. If circumstances do not allow for an announcement, the commander may authorize the use of these less-lethal impact weapons if innocent persons or

## BOULDER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

police officers are in immediate danger.

2. Impact projectiles shall not be fired indiscriminately into crowds.
    - a. Non-direct projectiles and munitions may be used in civil disturbances where life is in immediate jeopardy, or the need to use devices outweighs the potential risk involved.
    - b. Under no circumstance shall a non- or less-lethal projectile, including kinetic impact projectiles, be discharged in a manner that targets a person's head, pelvis, or back unless lethal force is authorized.
  3. Direct fire impact munitions (e.g. beanbag and related projectiles) may be used against specific individuals who are engaged in conduct that poses an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury or significant levels of property damage.
  4. Verbal warning should be given prior to the use of impact projectiles when reasonably possible.
  5. Indirect fire munitions are not authorized for use in a crowd control incident.
- C. SWAT team members trained and certified in the use of the less lethal impact munitions may be authorized by the SWAT Commander to carry the weapon system in their regular patrol assignment. The weapon system may be deployed in addition to, or as an alternative to, other immediate and less lethal weapons such as batons, less lethal shotguns, and Conductive Energy Weapons.

Curtis Johnson  
Curtis Johnson, Sheriff

February 19, 2024  
Date

### ATTACHMENTS:

516A Risk Assessment Matrix