



Colorado Springs Police Department

Standard Operating Procedure

DL-1210-01 Assembly & Mass Event Operations

Section 1200 – Critical Incident Functions

Active Date: 10/25/2024

Supersedes Date: 4/1/2021

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to outline department procedures when responding to assemblies and mass events.

.02 Cross-Reference

[GO 101 First Amendment Rights](#)

[GO 121 Fair and Impartial Policing](#)

[GO 500 Use of Force](#) (and all associated SOPs)

[GO 1210 Assemblies & Mass Events](#)

[GO 1220 Incident Command System](#)

[GO 1840 Staffing Availability](#)

[DL-1000-02 Law Enforcement Decision Making](#)

[DL-1210-02 Public Order Response Team](#)

[DL-1210-03 Mass Arrest Operations](#)

[DL-1200-05 Checkpoint Procedures](#)

[DL-1501-03 Acoustic Hailing Device](#)

[DL-1840-02 Callout Criteria for TEU](#)

.03 Definitions

Command-level IC: Means an Incident Commander who is a staff officer at the rank of commander or higher.

Community Liaison Officer: An officer trained to communicate with event organizers before and during an event to help keep an event lawful.

Crowd Control: Techniques used to address unlawful assemblies, civil disturbances, or mass events to include a show of force, crowd containment, crowd dispersal equipment and tactics, and preparations for multiple arrests.

Crowd Management: Techniques used to manage lawful assemblies before and during the event for the purpose of maintaining lawful status.

Safety Priorities: As defined in [DL-1000-02 Law Enforcement Decision-Making](#).

.04 Procedure

The type of response to an assembly or mass event may vary based on dynamic factors, including but not limited to the number of participants, location, and information regarding possible unlawful activity. It is important to remember that most assemblies and mass events are peaceful. The department's response may range from sharing information for situational awareness to a full deployment of resources depending on the circumstances. The department's response is content neutral, meaning it does not depend on the substance of what is being communicated by those participating in an assembly or mass event.

Planned Events Response

Planned events include both those that follow the permitting process and those the department otherwise knows about in advance. The department may learn about planned events being organized through the official permitting process, word of mouth, crowd sourcing, social media, and other means. When there is sufficient advance notice, the department may develop an operations plan, or Incident Action Plan, should it be necessary based on the facts known at the time.

Command staff and other appropriate department personnel will be notified of any assemblies or mass events when they come to the attention of police personnel.

Upon notification, the patrol division commander of the location where the event will likely occur will work with the Specialized Enforcement Division (SED) Commander regarding the event. If an operations plan is developed, it will include coordinating all necessary resources to monitor and respond to the event.

As needed, the SED Commander will:

- Coordinate all aspects of the event plan with the affected elements, units, and personnel
- Coordinate activities with other departments within the city of Colorado Springs
- Coordinate activities with other agencies, including local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, as necessary
- If appropriate, designate Community Liaison Officers to contact and work with assembly or mass event leaders before, during, and after the event
- Coordinate with the Protective Security Lieutenant to translate the Operations Plan into an Incident Action Plan (IAP) in accordance with [GO 1220 Incident Command System](#)

Strategic Operations Planning

When CSPD has advance knowledge of an assembly or mass event that may include unlawfulness, the SED Commander will ensure strategic operations planning is completed, including planning of resources and staffing.

Strategic operation planning for assemblies or mass events will include the following actions:

- The SED Commander will coordinate and plan all related preparations for response in collaboration with impacted division commanders.
- The agency response will be based on the information available regarding the:
 - Assembly location
 - Estimated number of participants
 - The level and type of activity from the participants
 - Time and location of the assembly/event
 - Special circumstances of individuals involved (e.g., special needs, disabilities)
 - Ability to contact event leaders for effective communication
- After evaluating and determining the type and level of activity, the SED Commander's designee will prepare an operations plan. The plan will contain provisions for the following:
 - Incident Commander (IC) assignments and duties
 - Staffing, unit structure, assignments and deployment
 - Liaison officer with assembly/event leaders, if known
 - Liaison with mutual aid agencies, when appropriate
 - Command post location
 - Traffic closures, if permitted
- The identified IC will disseminate copies of the operations plan to all CSPD command staff, the duty lieutenant, and all supervisors involved in the assembly or mass event.

First Officer and Supervisor On-Scene Response to Unplanned Assemblies & Mass Events

Unplanned or spontaneous assemblies or mass events occur without prior notice or warning and often come to the department's attention through a call for service. When a police response is necessary, patrol officers and supervisors are typically the first to arrive on scene of an unplanned assembly or mass event.

First Officer Responsibilities

The first officer on scene to an unplanned assembly or mass event will:

- Observe the situation, participants' behavior, and general atmosphere to establish the dynamics of the assembly/event

- Request a supervisor to respond and make initial contact with event leaders
- Notify the responding supervisor and Communications Center of:
 - The approximate size of the assembly/event
 - The atmosphere of the event and behavior of those involved
 - The presence of weapons and whether they are openly displayed or utilized in a threatening manner
 - Participant personal protective equipment (PPE) or other protection gear being displayed or stockpiled
 - Description and behavior of vehicles actively involved in the assembly/event
- If unlawfulness or criminal activity is observed:
 - Provide the Communications Center descriptions of the involved suspects
 - Intervene only if exigency dictates it is necessary for preservation of life. Otherwise, officers should wait until sufficient resources and a supervisor are on scene for engagement.
- While forming the initial agency response, safety priorities must remain the paramount consideration.

On-Scene Supervisor Responsibilities

Upon arriving on scene, the responding supervisor will:

- Establish (if not already established) and operate as the IC until relieved by higher rank. As the IC, additional responsibilities are found below under “Incident Commander Responsibilities.”
- Determine the type of property where the event is occurring using [GO 101 First Amendment Rights](#). If in question, contact the duty lieutenant who will determine if contact with the Public Safety City Attorney is needed for clarification.
- Make consensual contact with group organizers or leaders. These contacts must be recorded by body worn camera.
- During the consensual contact, take the following actions:
 - Identify informal or formal group leader(s)
 - Ask questions, if they are amenable to answering:
 - Number of people expected to attend
 - How long event is expected to last
 - Planned activities of event
 - Who is in charge of the event, who can serve as a point of contact
 - Do they have any literature or flyers they are willing to give you
 - Ensure contact is approached as mutually cooperative with supervisor providing education on lawful assembly.
 - Do not make any promises, “if you do [this], then we will do [this]...”. Situations are too dynamic to make promises about future actions.

- Share information about local laws and ordinances to assist in the assembly remaining lawful, including but not limited to:
 - Public (including non-traditional public forum) vs private property
 - Cannot block streets or traffic without a permit
 - Cannot block other members of the public's free passage on sidewalk
 - Amplified noise requires a city permit
 - No tents in the park or other public areas
 - Exchange contact information
- Ensure safety priorities remain the paramount factor for all subsequent responses and actions by CSPD personnel.
- Ensure any contact with people exercising their rights involves principles of procedural justice and de-escalation.
- Assess and communicate the level of PPE to be utilized by officers during the initial response if applicable.
- Ensure officers are working in pairs for safety.
- Ensure officers initiate arrests only when individual probable cause exists and only when enough personnel and resources are available on scene to manage the arrest, as well as the crowd.
- Contact the duty lieutenant and coordinate responses and personnel mobilization if not able to manage with on scene/shift resources. The duty lieutenant will contact the Specialized Enforcement Division (SED) PORT Lieutenant if needed.

If assemblies or mass demonstrations have a high potential for or are actively engaging in unlawfulness, an on-duty patrol lieutenant must respond to the event and assume initial IC duties. In addition to other notifications, the duty lieutenant will ensure the division commander or Staff Duty Officer is notified. If it appears an assembly or mass event may need to be declared unlawful, a staff officer at the rank of commander or higher must respond to the scene and assume command as a command-level IC. If it is during normal business hours and the SED Commander is available, they will be the staff officer that responds and assumes command.

Incident Commander Responsibilities

An IC must be identified and implemented as soon as possible to establish command over the response to an assembly or mass event. Incident command may be established by any officer, who will be relieved by a supervisor. In the case of a planned assembly or mass event, the IC is identified in the Operations Plan and Incident Action Plan.

The primary responsibility of the IC is the rapid mobilization of sufficient personnel to provide a safe environment for the assembly or mass event.

The IC will be responsible for the following actions:

- Assessing crowd behavior, lawfulness, and potential for escalation
- Monitoring the safety of participants, observers, and bystanders
- Planning for the safe travel of pedestrian or vehicular traffic through the assembly or mass event location
- Establishing and maintaining effective communication with organizers or representatives of the assembly or mass event
- Providing regular updates to the chain of command, SED Commander or Staff Duty Officer (SDO) if after hours. This will include notification of any escalations in safety concerns and/or the need for a specialized response.
- Ensuring the response follows department policy, City ordinances, and Colorado law
- Ensuring compliance with IC objectives identified in this directive and [GO 1220 Incident Command System](#)
- If applicable, following the Operations Plan (generally for planned events)
- Ensuring that coordination of the following assembly information is continuously provided to the IC regarding the:
 - Location of the assembly
 - Estimated number of participants
 - Activities of the participants (e.g., marching peacefully, blocking traffic, destruction of property)
 - Direction of participant's travel
 - Ingress and egress routes for emergency vehicles
- Determining the response for crowd management, continuously assessing the response, and directing any changes in response to crowd behavior
- Coordinating appropriate responses and order deployments as necessary to address changes in the event response
- Establishing a field command post from which the IC will oversee and coordinate police operations
- Establishing a secure staging area for all responding personnel and equipment.
- Requesting a staged medical response, if needed
- Deploying personal protective equipment as necessary to prevent or minimize injury to officers
- Ensuring all involved sworn personnel are directed to complete a report or supplement that describes their involvement in the incident

A Command-level IC is additionally responsible for:

- If necessary, order police lines to be set up as described in city Ordinance 9.2.108. The Mayor, Chief of Police or designee may make this order.

- Ordering personnel mobilization as necessary
- Deciding to declare an assembly or mass event unlawful, when necessary
- Ordering the issuance of loud audible warnings to disperse an unlawful assembly or mass event
- Authorizing specific use of force applications to disperse an assembly or mass event that has been properly declared unlawful in compliance with department policy

Personnel Mobilization

Specialized Units

If the SED Commander or designee arrives on scene, they will evaluate whether they will assume incident command.

Once the Public Order Response Team (PORT) team is on scene, the IC will provide direction to the PORT Lieutenant or designee, who will coordinate and direct all movements of PORT in accordance with [DL-1210-02 Public Order Response Team](#).

Additionally, other specialized units may provide support directly to assembly or mass event responses, including but not limited to:

- Metro Division for information gathering and dissemination
- Tactical Enforcement Unit to conduct officer and/or citizen rescues and protection for PORT
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit to monitor for potential explosives and responding to suspicious objects

Full Personnel Mobilization

When full mobilization of personnel is deemed necessary by a command-level IC, all members of the department must be prepared to assist in assigned support positions.

These assignments may include but are not limited to:

- Interacting with participants to assess intended actions
- Establishing a crowd control front line, if PORT is not responding
- Arrest teams for PORT
- Arrest processing teams
- Transport van drivers
- Perimeter security
- Traffic control

- Security at assigned facilities or buildings
- Additional support positions as deemed appropriate

Crowd Management

The IC determines the appropriate response for crowd management.

Crowd Observer Role

When unlawfulness is anticipated, personnel will be positioned to monitor the assembly or mass event for the purpose of:

- Ensuring lawfulness and safety
- Assessing the behavior of the crowd; relaying observations and information to IC

Officers in the role of crowd observers will be dressed in the uniform of the day unless otherwise specified by the operations plan or the direction of the IC. They will be positioned, when feasible, in a manner that minimizes physical contact with the assembly or mass event.

Role of Supervisors

- Continuously observing and interacting with officers under their charge, to ensure compliance, provide situation updates, and ensure that they are aware of probable responses to changes in crowd behavior
- Watching for personnel who are exhibiting signs of stress or fatigue and providing temporary relief as able

Personal Protective Equipment

Authorization of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All sworn personnel are issued basic PPE, including ballistic helmets and gas masks. While officers are required to have this equipment available during every shift, it should not routinely be donned during a lawful assembly or mass event. This equipment will be donned when an event turns unlawful or if violence appears imminent. The IC will direct officers regarding donning PPE, but officers are allowed to don their PPE without such direction in exigent circumstances (e.g., projectiles are being thrown).

Additional Protective Equipment

Each of the four patrol divisions and the Police Operations Center maintains a small cache of equipment that could be useful if a lawful protest turns violent. This equipment includes

protective shields and shin guards. The IC will arrange for this PPE to be deployed and used by the officers participating in the event as needed.

Unlawful Assemblies or Mass Events

Declaring an Assembly or Mass Event Unlawful

Only a staff officer at the rank of commander or above is authorized to make this declaration, acting on behalf of the Chief of Police. If the IC is not command-level, a staff officer at the rank of commander or higher will be contacted, respond, and assume the position of Command-level IC.

The order of authority to make this decision is as follows:

- Command-level IC
- If IC is not command-level, SED Commander if regular business hours or they are otherwise involved in the incident outside those hours.
- If SED Commander is not available, a staff officer at the rank of commander or higher. This will generally be the SDO.

The staff officer that declares an assembly or mass event unlawful will also authorize the IC to begin dispersal orders and warnings at their discretion.

A decision regarding whether to declare an assembly or mass event unlawful must consider many factors, including but not limited to:

- A significant number of participants are engaging in unlawful activity against other persons or property
- Violence is occurring or there is an imminent threat of violence
- Addressing only individuals in the crowd would reasonably be ineffective in protecting life and property

Issuance of Warnings and Crowd Dispersal Orders

Warnings

When an assembly has unlawful behavior occurring in the crowd, including acts of physical violence and/or property damage, a warning to the crowd can be issued. The goal of this warning is self-regulation by those involved to keep the assembly lawful, so the warning should be repeated as often as needed. The issuance of this warning will be done at the direction of the IC and can be done in conjunction with a supervisor speaking to the leaders of the crowd. This warning does not prevent a law enforcement response to address specific unlawful behavior of individuals.

The warning must be loud enough through amplification and repeated enough to reasonably believe they can be heard by the entire assemblage. The number of pre-dispersal warnings required will be determined by the IC. Any use of a Long Range Acoustical Device (LRAD) will comply with existing department policy.

The pre-unlawful assembly warning will follow this format:

“Attention, this is the Colorado Springs Police Department. We are committed to protecting your right to peaceably assemble. While committed to protecting your rights, we are seeing unlawful behavior within the crowd, including acts of physical violence and/or property damage. If the unlawful behavior continues, this assembly may be declared unlawful and could result in tactics and force being used against you.

Repeating: Attention, this is the Colorado Springs Police Department...”

Crowd Dispersal Orders

The Command-level IC will direct the use of crowd dispersal orders when an assembly or mass event has been declared unlawful as described in this directive.

The Command-level IC should have a response plan that has been communicated to involved officers before issuance of the orders.

The Command-level IC will instruct the PORT Lieutenant or their designee, if available, to issue dispersal orders to the crowd. When a PORT Lieutenant or their designee is not on scene, the IC will designate an appropriate person to give the dispersal orders. Orders must be loud enough through amplification and repeated enough to reasonably believe they can be heard by the entire assemblage. If appropriate the Command-level IC should consider whether the announcement needs to be made in different languages. Any use of an acoustical device (i.e., Long Range Acoustical Device) will comply with existing department policy.

The dispersal order will follow this format:

“Attention, this is Commander (name) of the Colorado Springs Police Department. On behalf of the Chief of Police, I hereby declare this an unlawful assembly because of acts of physical violence and/or property damage taking place within the crowd. I command you to leave the area immediately. Doing so will guarantee your safety. If you do not leave the area immediately, tactics and force will be used against you, and we can no longer guarantee your safety.

Repeating: Attention, this is Commander (name) of the Colorado Springs Police Department...”

Two (2) avenues of egress will be identified and given by the LRAD operator to the crowd at the conclusion of the repeated announcement. These directions will be repeated two (2) times each time the dispersal order is given.

Example: *“You can leave the area North on S. Nevada Ave. or you can leave the area West on Rio Grande. Repeating: You can leave the area North on S. Nevada Ave. or you can leave the area West on Rio Grande”.*

A minimum of three (3) orders to disperse with directions for egress should be issued.

To enforce the order after it has been properly given, the following must occur to the best of the department’s ability:

- The department must ensure there are at least two clear, unobstructed routes of egress for safely exiting the unlawful assembly and that announcements have been given with the dispersal orders that instruct participants how to exit through these routes
- Sufficient time must be given to allow the crowd to disperse following the orders and warnings

Nothing in this section prohibits an officer from effecting an arrest for unlawful acts in accordance with probable cause requirements and safety priorities.

Use of Force Response

Any use of force must comply with [GO 500 Use of Force](#), associated SOPs, and statutory and case law. Officers who deploy less lethal tools will only do so in accordance with equipment they have been assigned and successful completion of related training. Each use of force must be independently justified.

Only a staff officer at the rank of commander or above may authorize the use of force to disperse a crowd in an unlawful assembly or mass event, acting on behalf of the Chief of Police.

The order of authority to make this decision is as follows:

- Command-level IC
- If IC is not command-level, SED Commander if regular business hours or they are otherwise involved in the incident outside those hours
- If SED Commander is not available, a staff officer at the rank of commander or higher. This will generally be the SDO.

The IC that proceeds with use of force to disperse a crowd after proper authorization is responsible for:

- Ensuring the use of force complies with all applicable policy, law, and is a reasonable response in order to accomplish the dispersal of the unlawful assembly or the arrest of individuals violating the law.
 - The use of force to disperse a crowd in an unlawful assembly or mass event has additional restrictions, found in [GO 1210 Assemblies & Mass Events](#), Section .50 Less Lethal Munitions.
- Developing and implementing a plan for the use of force and arrests
- Assessing the need for and authorizing the use of specialized tools such as hand thrown less lethal munitions by trained members of PORT. In exigent circumstances, the Tactical Enforcement Unit may be directed to utilize these less lethal munitions as appropriate.

Mass Arrest

Mass arrests will be made in accordance with [DL-1210-03 Mass Arrest Operations](#).

Medical Responses

The IC will ensure emergency medical services have been notified of a large-scale assembly or mass event. When needed, the IC will request a staged medical response from the Colorado Springs Fire Department, AMR, and/or TEMS to expedite medical requests.

Mass casualty kits with medical supplies for treating multiple injured persons are available in all patrol supervisor vehicles and School Resource Officer Sergeant vehicles.

Relief of Personnel

Every effort will be made to ensure that personnel are given a period of relief as conditions allow. Each unit supervisor will be responsible for arranging a schedule of relief for personnel under their command.

As needed, an assigned department member will arrange for the delivery of food and beverages to pre-determined locations at pre-determined times. The assigned department member will provide the locations of food and beverages to supervisors.

Event Documentation

The IC is responsible for providing direction to those involved in an event for completion of all required reports. If arrests are made or force is used during the event, all department employees involved in the event, up to and including the IC, will complete a supplemental report documenting the actions they took or if they took no actions during the event. The IC is responsible for assigning a department member to complete the initiating case report. All arrests made at the event and in one operational period will be completed under one case report number.

In addition to general requirements for writing a case report, documentation by department members will include but not be limited to:

- Incidents requiring the use of force
- Tactical orders issued to personnel
- Orders received from higher authority
- Significant acts on the part of the participants
- Arrests of individuals
- Issuance of pre-unlawful warnings
 - The basis for the issuance of the warnings including unlawful behavior
- Issuance of dispersal orders and warnings
 - The basis for the issuance of the warnings including unlawful behavior

Use of force reporting is required as described in [GO 510 Reportable Force](#). The BlueTeam Next Gen Manual includes information on completing reports for force used in crowd control.

After Action Reports

At the direction of the Chief of Police, the IC will ensure an after-action report (AAR) is completed. If an AAR is completed, it will include the items listed in [GO 1220 Incident Command System](#).

Attachments

[Potential Charges for Unlawful Activity at Assemblies or Events](#)