	FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITY SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT	Operations Order 1.10.00 New 12/15/25 PAGE 1
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PURPOSE

- A. This policy establishes guidelines for officers during First Amendment activities. This policy is also applicable to incidents that escalate into civil disturbances.

POLICY

- A. The Department supports and respects the rights of people to peaceably assemble. The Department recognizes each assembly is unique, and a large and visible presence of law enforcement may impact the demeanor and behavior of a crowd. As such, it is the policy of the Department to respond according to the nature, size, and behaviors of the crowd in an efficient and equitable manner.
- B. During an assembly, the Department shall allow the assembly to continue for participants lawfully exercising their First Amendment rights, while being mindful of enforcement action, de-escalation, officer safety, and community safety.
- C. Decisions about crowd dispersal and strategies about crowd control or planned uses of force, are to be made at the level of the Incident Commander (IC) or above.


GENERAL DIRECTION

- A. The Department is committed to ensuring the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article II, [5](#) and [6](#) of the Arizona State Constitution, are protected for all individuals, while also preserving the peace, preventing crime, protecting life and preventing the destruction of property.
- B. All employees shall respect these fundamental rights:
 - (1) **The Right to Free Speech and Expression**, including sharing social or political views through various forms of communication.
 - (2) **The Right to Free Press**, which protects the media's ability to operate independently and without censorship, allowing them to observe, record, document, and report events in public forums.
 - (3) **The Right to Freely Organize and Participate in Lawful Assemblies and Protest** in parks, on sidewalks, and other public forums near the object of the assembly or protest.
 - (4) **The Right to Observe and Record the Actions of Law Enforcement** officers in the discharge of their public duties in all public spaces (including sidewalks, parks, and other locations for lawful public protest), as well as all other areas in which persons have legal right to be present (including a person's home or business and common areas of public and private facilities and buildings), without being subject to retaliation.

NOTE: If an individual is recording from a position that impedes access for emergency services, endangers public safety, or interferes with an officer's duties or safety, officers may direct these individuals to a reasonable safety zone.

DEFINITIONS

A. Civil Disturbance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the purposes of this policy, an individual, group, or crowd that engages in disruptive behavior in public, often, but not always, to make a political statement or respond to a current event. These disruptions involve criminal acts that require law enforcement intervention to restore order.
B. Crowd Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques used to address unlawful public assemblies, including a show of force, crowd containment, dispersal equipment and tactics, and arrest procedures.


	FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITY SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT	Operations Order 1.10.00
	PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT	New 12/15/25 PAGE 2

4. **DEFINITIONS** (continued)

C. Crowd Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques used to manage lawful assemblies before, during, and after the event to maintain lawful status through event planning, pre-event contacts with event organizers, information gathering, personnel training, and other means.
D. First Amendment Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An assembly of persons engaging in First Amendment-protected activity. These may be scheduled events or spontaneous gatherings, including but not limited to, demonstrations, marches, protests, and other assemblies.
E. Incident Commander (IC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A supervisor responsible for conducting the overall operation of an event, including the development of strategies and the ordering and allocation of resources.
F. Irritants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray, 2-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile (CS), pepper spray/PepperBall®, MK-9 pepper fogger, smoke, OC Vapor, REPULS®, and other approved substances that cause temporary discomfort.
G. Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any individual who gathers, produces, and disseminates news to the public in any form. This includes, but is not limited to, an employee of a news organization, as well as self-employed individuals, independent contractors, or freelancers. These individuals must comply with orders issued by law enforcement.
H. Planned First Amendment Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A First Amendment demonstration that the Department becomes aware of in advance, allowing sufficient time to dedicate appropriate resources and develop a plan.
I. Public Safety Response Team (PSRT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A unit of specially trained officers assembled to provide a rapid, organized, and disciplined response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Civil disturbances and crowd control * Large crowds with a potential for civil disturbance * Other tactical situations involving large crowds
J. Riot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person commits a riot if, with two or more other persons acting together, such person recklessly uses force or violence or threatens to use force or violence, if such threat is accompanied by immediate power of execution, which disturbs the public peace. (See ARS 13-2903)
K. Spontaneous Event/Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An event or incident that is not anticipated and for which the Department does not have adequate time to develop a plan or otherwise prepare for the event.
L. Unlawful Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A breach of the peace by a gathering of persons where there is violence or a threat of collective violence, destruction of property, or other unlawful acts. (See ARS 13-2902 Unlawful Assembly)

5. **PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONSE TEAM (PSRT) RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The Department shall maintain a specially trained and equipped Mobile Field Force known as the Public Safety Response Team (PSRT) to maintain public order and effectively manage large crowds and/or riotous behavior to:
- Preserve life
 - Protect property
 - Allow safe ingress and egress throughout the city
 - Restore and maintain civil order
- B. Sworn personnel in the following units will be required to maintain PSRT certification:
- Downtown Operations Unit (DOU)
 - Tactical Training Detail (TTD)
 - Transit Enforcement Unit (TEU)
 - Precinct resource teams
 - Select detectives from the Violent Crimes Bureau (VCB)
- C. Each precinct will maintain an extra contingency of PSRT trained personnel in addition to their resource teams.
- D. Overall PSRT operations will be at the direction of an Assistant Chief.

	FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITY SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT	Operations Order 1.10.00
	PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT	New 12/15/25 PAGE 3

6. PROCEDURES

A. Planned Events


- (1) Planned events are those the Department is aware of in advance, either through a permit request or other means which allow for the planning of resources and response procedures.
 - (2) When large-scale, planned, or permitted events are anticipated:
 - (a) The Community Engagement Unit (CEU) and Homeland Defense Bureau (HDB) will conduct an assessment of the event to identify the specific groups or individuals who will participate. This is to ensure the event is conducted safely, lawfully, and without significant disruption to the public.
 - (b) CEU detectives will make every effort to contact the event leader or organizer prior to the event to gather information needed to assign personnel and allocate resources. This information will be provided to the CEU Commander or their designee.

NOTE: Information gathered about participants, or an event, shall be obtained in accordance with Department policy.

 - (c) CEU personnel will act as a liaison establishing and maintaining contact and communication with the event leader and/or organizer before, during, and after the event.
- (3) The Department is not responsible for approving or denying permit applications.
 - (4) For information on permits – whether to close a City street or reserve a City park, visit the [Street Transportation](#) or [Parks and Recreation](#) department pages.

B. Unplanned Events

- (1) An unplanned event is an occurrence the Department does not know about beforehand. Such events may consist of spontaneous gatherings or demonstrations. A plan shall be prepared in case the event rises to a level that requires law enforcement support.
- (2) The initial response to unplanned public events, which remain in a lawful state, is carried out by an assembly of patrol officers who have completed basic crowd control training.
 - (a) The first unit to arrive on scene **will:**
 - Notify a supervisor.
 - Evaluate the scene and determine if the gathering is peaceful, violent, or has the potential to turn violent.
 - Attempt to identify a leader or representative of the event and communicate any safety issues or concerns.
 - (b) The on-duty supervisor will notify their precinct commander and CEU to determine if additional resources are needed.
- (3) If the assembly has escalated to the level of a civil disturbance or unlawful assembly, reasonable efforts will be made to restore order. If order cannot be restored, PSRT resources will respond to the incident.

	FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITY SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT	Operations Order 1.10.00
	PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT	New 12/15/25 PAGE 4


6. B. (4) If escalation continues or is imminent, the Downtown Operations Unit (DOU)/PSRT Commander, or designee, shall be requested to respond to the scene and assume command of the event as the IC. At this stage, Law and Fire Departments should be notified for response.

C. Response to Areas of Civil Disturbance

- (1) Civil disturbances are public disruptions often, but not always, sparked by reactions to current events. The Department will tailor its response according to behavior and dynamics observed, intervening or providing support as needed to restore order.
- (2) It is the Department's policy to make reasonable attempts to gain compliance, when it is safe and feasible to do so.
- (3) Before declaring an unlawful assembly, the IC or designee shall determine whether lesser alternatives may be effective to bring the situation under control. These alternatives may include:
 - (a) An initial attempt to gain voluntary compliance by imposing reasonable restrictions on time, place, and manner of assembly. These restrictions shall be narrow and designed to provide access to traditional public forums and ensure safety for all.
 - (b) Provide safe exit instructions for those who wish to avoid enforcement of an unlawful assembly. These warnings shall be communicated by reasonable and available methods (e.g., speech, amplified device, bullhorn, etc.)
 - (c) Inform the crowd of all applicable state and local offenses being committed (e.g., trespass, disorderly conduct, blocking traffic, etc.) and instruct them to stop.
 - (d) Remove individuals engaged in unlawful behavior and allow peaceful participants to continue exercising their First Amendment rights, when safe and practicable.
 - (e) Individuals in the affected area, including members of the media, are required to comply with law enforcement orders.
- (4) Declare an unlawful assembly if the crowd does not comply.

D. Declaration of Unlawful Assembly


- (1) Unlawful Assemblies/Dispersal Orders
 - (a) Declaration of unlawful assembly is rare and should only be made when the assembly threatens collective violence, destruction of property, or disruption of public order.
 - (c) The decision to declare an unlawful assembly can only be made by the IC or above.
 - (d) Dispersal orders shall be issued by a lieutenant or their designee, and only after the declaration of an unlawful assembly.

	FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITY SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT	Operations Order 1.10.00
	PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT	New 12/15/25 PAGE 5

6. D. (1) (d) [ARS 13-3804](#) establishes a duty for officers to disperse an unlawful assembly. To accomplish this requirement, the dispersal order **will** include:
- Repeated announcements given in a manner reasonably believed to be heard and understood by the participants.
 - Department approved warnings administered in English and Spanish.
 - Documentation on body-worn camera or other audio/video recording device.
 - Warnings about the intent to deploy irritants and less-lethal weapons.
- (e) Safe exit routes and reasonable time to leave the area will be provided.
- (f) Dispersal orders are unique to each site of assembly and must be re-issued if the site of assembly changes.
- (2) Approved Crowd Control and Dispersal Methods
- (a) At the direction of the IC, officers shall employ approved dispersal methods to move a non-compliant crowd toward desired exit routes. These methods **may** include, but are not limited to:
- Police formations
 - Deployment of OC irritants
 - Use of less-lethal launchers
 - Arrests
- (b) Use of CS gas requires authorization from the Police Chief, or their designee.
- NOTE:** In exigent circumstances **AND** when its use is in the best interest of public safety, the IC may approve the use of CS gas without prior authorization.

E. Use of Force

- (1) The use of force or threat of force should be avoided whenever possible to prevent a chilling effect on individuals' willingness to participate in First Amendment activities.
- (2) Force may be necessary to extract officers and individuals in danger, and individuals committing crimes.
- (3) Force **will only** be used against a crowd after an unlawful assembly has been declared and a dispersal order has been given.
- (4) Less-lethal and lethal weapons **will not** be used against an individual operating a moving vehicle, including a motorcycle or other personal transportation device (e.g., standard or electric bicycle, scooter, etc.), unless the officer reasonably believes there is an immediate threat of death or serious physical injury to the public, another officer, or themselves.
- (5) This policy does not prevent officers from using force against individuals engaged in criminal behavior as set forth in the Department's Use of Force Policy (see [Operations Order 1.5.00, Use of Force](#)).
- (6) Use of Force incidents that occur during PSRT operations will be reviewed by the Force Evaluation and Review Unit (FERU) (see [Operations Order 1.5.02, Use of Force Reporting and Administrative Review](#)).

	FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITY SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT	Operations Order 1.10.00
	PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT	New 12/15/25 PAGE 6

6. F. Arrest Procedures

- (1) The Department is committed to employing alternative tactics and strategies as the primary means of restoring order to the community.
- (2) When applicable, subjects will be cited in lieu of detention (CLD) for misdemeanor offense/s that qualify for a CLD (see [Operations Order 7.6.00, Arizona Traffic Ticket and Complaint \(ATTC\)](#), for ineligible offenses).
- (3) A City legal representative may be consulted to ensure processes are managed effectively and in compliance with the law.

G. After-Action Reporting

- (1) A report will be completed at the conclusion of any event involving the use of force or other police actions. Reports **will** be completed as follows:
 - (a) An executive summary will be completed by the PSRT Commander, or their designee, if police action was taken.
 - This summary must be completed within **7 calendar days** after the conclusion of the event.
 - If additional time is required, a request must be submitted through Department approved correspondence and approved by the appropriate Assistant Chief.
 - (b) An After-Action Report (AAR) will be completed by the Organizational Integrity Bureau (OIB), after a significant event, where PSRT was deployed.
- (2) Reports documenting use of force will be reviewed by the Police Chief, or their designee, and City Executives.

Last Organizational Review:
New 12/2025