



Wilmington Police Department

Directive: .09.01
Special Weapons and Tactics



CALEA Standards: 33.6.2, 46.2.1, 46.2.2
NCLEA Standards: 2.08, 7.04



Last Revised: 01/12/2026

I. Purpose

This policy governs selection, training and operation of the Special Weapons and Tactics Team of the Wilmington Police Department.

II. Definitions

A. SWAT Commander

The Team Commander both directs and delegates to other members, as he deems necessary for the proper administration and functional readiness of the team. The Team Commander will be physically present in the command center of any hostage/barricaded subject incident (or other incidents where a formal command center has been established) unless that duty is delegated to a Team Leader; in exigent circumstances, someone from SWAT other than the Team Commander or Team Leader may be in the command center.

B. Team Leader

The full time Team Leader is responsible for team organization, training, equipment, operational deployment (missions), records and overall administration. Team Leaders are in command of independent subdivisions that exist within SWAT (i.e. Entry Team, Sniper/Observer Teams). Team Leaders also assist the SWAT Commander as appropriate and function as the SWAT Commander should they be absent.

C. Marksman

Deploys as directed to conduct surveillance, gather intelligence, cover team movements and entries, counter sniper fire, and provide surgical fire. Marksman may be deployed as an observer for another marksman and to provide security for the marksman/observer team. A marksman may provide relief for another marksman. A marksman will be used as a utility member when not deployed as marksman.

D. Utility Member

The utility member conducts surveillance; gathers intelligence; makes entry on warrant services, arrests, searches and rescue missions. The utility member may be deployed as an observer for a marksman when necessary. The utility member will perform any other functions as directed by the team leadership.

III. Procedures

A. Notification and Utilization of Special Weapons and Tactics Team (Missions)

Supervisors shall be familiar with the following callout criteria so that they will more readily call out SWAT when they are needed:

- 1.** If SWAT is needed, they can be called out by contacting front desk personnel, who maintain current contact lists and procedures for calling out SWAT. When SWAT is called out, the circumstances will dictate their response. A threat/risk assessment will be completed prior to any SWAT activity dependent on any exigent and emergency circumstances.
- 2.** Requests for any non-emergency SWAT mission will be made to the Special Operations Division Commander. Such missions may merely supplement patrol efforts in high crime areas. Additionally, SWAT may be requested through their chain of command to assist in tactical training.
- 3.** In an emergency, a Lieutenant or above may request a SWAT mission. A Division Commander, Assistant Division Commander, the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief of Police or Deputy Chief of Police may activate SWAT in an emergency. The use of energetic breaching and other non-traditional methods can be authorized by the Team Commander when situation dictates the immediate use thereof.
- 4.** The Incident Commander and Officers on the scene are responsible for containing the situation to the best of their ability until SWAT arrives. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a)** Containing and isolating the incident scene, establishing an inner containment perimeter and, as time and resources permit, establish an outer containment perimeter to control pedestrian and vehicular traffic into the area.
 - b)** If possible, evacuate occupants of affected residences and businesses to a point beyond the perimeters.
 - c)** Gather and assess available information about the incident and the individuals involved.
 - d)** Remain on the scene until directed by a supervisory officer to leave.

B. SWAT Deployments and Missions

1. The SWAT Team may be utilized for any of the following:

a) Hostage Incidents

With any hostage situation SWAT should be contacted as soon as possible. If SWAT officers are on-duty, they can respond along with Patrol units until the situation has been immediately resolved or determined a false call. If it is determined to be a legitimate hostage situation SWAT unit can assist in containing the situation and providing the manpower needed for an emergency assault team. The Incident Commander can then determine along with the SWAT Commander or Team Leader the amount of manpower power needed to contain and resolve the situation (CNT, K-9, additional SWAT units, etc.)

b) Barricaded subject(s)

As with Hostage Incidents, when a barricaded subject call comes in, or is determined by officers on scene, SWAT units can respond to assist Patrol or other WPD units with Inner Perimeter containment. Inner Perimeter SWAT units will be equipped with a variety of weapons not issued to other officers in the department to include but not limited to (long guns, less-lethal 40mm, and less-lethal 12 gauge). These SWAT units will provide this function until the situation is resolved. The Incident Commander and SWAT Team Leader can then determine what other units and how many will be necessary (CNT, SWAT, K-9, etc.).

c) Service of Warrants

When detectives or officers in the department are obtaining a search warrant, SWAT can be contacted to assist in its execution:

- 1.** Any standard search warrant that is not deemed as high-risk can still be served by SWAT. The SWAT units will respond and execute the search warrant in street uniforms and will safely clear and secure the residence and detain any subjects. Once secure, officer and/or detectives can search the residence pursuant to the search warrant.
- 2.** All high-risk search warrants, to include no-knock warrants, shall be executed by SWAT. When a detective is in the process of obtaining these types of search warrants, they are to contact SWAT as soon as practical to allow the SWAT officers to perform reconnaissance of the location, contact the needed team members, and develop a plan of action.

3. SWAT can also be utilized for serving high-risk arrest warrants. When an arrest warrant has been obtained for a violent or gun related crime (armed robbery, violent assault, rape, other gun related crime, etc.), SWAT will attempt to locate the subject and serve the warrant. SWAT should be contacted by US Marshal Task Force Detectives when they are tracking or doing surveillance of these subjects. SWAT can perform the high-risk traffic stop, open air take-down, or surround and call out of a residence to arrest them to reduce the risk to officers, civilians, and suspects.

d) Surveillance/Stake Outs

SWAT can be utilized for surveillance/stake outs to assist, NID, CID, Patrol, and other units in the department. They can also supplement these units with marked vehicles and uniformed officers if necessary.

e) VIP/Dignitary Escorts

SWAT officers are trained in providing Protective Duties. Individual SWAT officers, or the SWAT Team, can be utilized in conjunction with uniformed and/or plain clothes officers to provide VIP/Dignitary escorts and protection. In addition to providing protection for persons, SWAT can also provide escorts for property. Example: when the department is transporting items for destruction, the SWAT team can provide a security escort. The SWAT Commander will prepare a written plan prior to initiating any VIP/Dignitary Security Detail or Operation.

f) Crowd/Riot Control

SWAT has access to specialized equipment (gas, various non-lethal weapons, etc.) that can quickly resolve unruly crowd/riot situations before they have a chance to grow out of control. SWAT should be contacted immediately should such an event occur.

g) Suicide Intervention

When Patrol receives a suicidal subject call that poses a threat to officers, SWAT may be utilized in an advisory capacity or for the utilization of specialized equipment.

2. The Chief of Police or Assistant Chief of Police will authorize any other missions they deem appropriate.
3. SWAT team members are required to wear all issued ballistic protection for all operations unless authorized by the Incident Commander.

4. SWAT will have less lethal options on pre-planned operations and callouts. The operator assigned to less lethal will have the option to carry 3Xact iMPact round and/or Direct Impact OC round.
5. A qualified Tactical Medic shall be assigned to the team during operations and the Tactical Medic will request an EMS transport unit to be on standby in a nearby area during an operation.

C. Command

1. The Special Weapons and Tactics Team shall be supervised by the Special Operations Captain.
2. The Special Operations Captain will make a recommendation to the Chief of Police as to whom to assign as the SWAT Team Commander. The Chief of Police will appoint the SWAT Team Commander, who will be the direct supervisor of the team.
3. The SWAT Team Commander will make recommendations to the Special Operations Captain as to whom to assign as SWAT Team Leaders. The Special Operations Captain will appoint SWAT Team Leaders who will assist the Team Commander and will supervise SWAT in the absence of the team commander.
4. If SWAT is assigned a mission in the absence of the Team Commander and Team Leaders, the Chief of Police or Assistant Chief will:
 - a) Remove SWAT from the mission, or
 - b) Assign other members of SWAT as the acting Team Commander and/or acting Team Leader.
5. The Chief may authorize additional team members from other public safety disciplines (EMS, Fire, etc.).
6. In hostage or barricaded subject incidents, SWAT is under the command of the Incident Commander. A member of SWAT will not be the Incident Commander.
7. When SWAT is activated to assist in operations other than those mentioned in III, B, 1 – Hostage Incidents, SWAT Leaders will work jointly with other departmental components in the planning stages.
8. When SWAT is used to support other operational departmental components (such as service of warrants or high-risk arrests) SWAT Leaders are responsible for ensuring any identified and potential threats are overcome.

D. Membership Criteria and Selection Process for SWAT Team Members

1. Application Procedure

- a) Whenever a vacancy exists or a vacancy is anticipated, the Special Operations Captain will cause an announcement to be made pursuant to departmental directives regarding vacancies.
- b) Interested officers (applicants) will submit a memorandum through their chain of command to the Special Operations Captain.

2. Minimum Criteria for Application

- a) 2 years of service, unless waived by the Chief of Police
- b) No sustained findings of excessive force in IA file
- c) Most recent handgun qualification score of 85 or higher
- d) No more than a first written reminder within the last 24 months
- e) Letter of recommendation from current supervisor
- f) Letter of interest

3. Selection Process

- a) Applicants will submit to physical fitness and psychological evaluations.
- b) The Special Operations Captain and SWAT Commander will evaluate work performance and training records. This will include personnel file information, performance evaluations, and any use of force actions. The purpose of this evaluation is to verify that all SWAT applicants meet the minimum standards as specified in the job posting, before the applicants are allowed to proceed in the process.
- c) Each applicant must participate in an applicant review process.
 - 1. The process may include, but is not limited to:
 - i. Firearms drills and combat shooting
 - ii. Written Examination
 - iii. Team building exercises
 - iv. KIMS memory testing
 - 2. The process shall include:
 - i. Physical fitness drills which will include the SWAT Physical Fitness Evaluation with a maximum time of 7:20.

- ii. Minimum qualification score of 85% on the handgun qualification course
- iii. Failure to meet the minimum requirements for the two previous requirements is an automatic removal from the tryout process.
- iv. An interview board composed in accordance with departmental directives will be convened to interview the candidates. The raw results (no opinions or weighting system used) of the psychological exam, firearms drills/physical fitness drills, and SWAT Physical Fitness Evaluation will be sent to the interview board for consideration, as they compile their ranked list for the Chief.

4. Training, Criteria for Membership and Team Assignment

- a) SWAT will be composed of full-time members of the Wilmington Police Department and members from the regional area who are under the Cape Fear Regional Mutual Aid Agreement unless authorized otherwise by the Chief of Police. SWAT will be considered a collateral duty.
- b) Members must attend a Basic SWAT introductory training course from a recognized tactical response school and successfully complete 100 hours of additional SWAT related training before participating in a primary function/critical role as a team member.
- c) Mandatory SWAT team tactical in-service training will be conducted bi-weekly, in 8-hour blocks, coinciding with City of Wilmington pay dates, for a recommended total of 16 hours per month.
- d) Annually, members must attend a one-week (40 hour) SWAT in-service training.
- e) Maximum passing time on the SWAT physical fitness evaluation of 5:30 which will be conducted annually.

1) POPAT Guidelines:

- i. 200-yard run
- ii. 50-foot sled drag
- iii. Climb over a set of stairs 3 times carrying a battering ram
- iv. Run to designated location to perform 20 push-ups and 20 sit-ups
- v. Return and climb over a set of stairs 3 times carrying a battering ram
- vi. Climb over a fence
- vii. 20 push-ups
- viii. 20 sit-ups

- ix.** 200-yard run
- x.** Finish with a 50-foot sled drag
- xi.** The total weight of the sled will be 125% of the person's body weight

- f)** Be in compliance with the departmental firearms policy and achieve a score of 92% or higher on qualification courses.
- g)** Non-smoker.
- h)** Comply with all team related training requirements.

5. Criteria for Regional Membership

- a)** Must be off probation with their current agency of employment and have the approval from the head of their agency.
- b)** The selection process for SWAT will be conducted in accordance with the specialty assignment selection process of WPD, in accordance with applicable state and federal law, and as outlined within this policy.
- c)** Once selected, new SWAT team members must complete the training requirements as mandated by this policy and the SWAT SOP.
- d)** A test will be conducted when a vacancy is available. A list of qualified candidates will be comprised and individuals on the list will remain eligible for appointment for a period of six months.
- e)** The Team Commander will review the candidate list and authorize the appointment of a new member to the SWAT team with the approval of the WPD Chief of Police and the Chief/Sheriff of the member's law enforcement agency.

6. Resignations or Removals

- a)** Any member may resign by submitting a memorandum to SWAT Commander with a copy to the Special Operations Division Captain. The member should give a thirty-day notice prior to the resignation becoming effective.
- b)** Failing to meet training requirements, firearms qualifications, physical fitness standards, psychological evaluation standards, sub-standard regular (i.e. patrol officer, investigator, etc.) job performance or unsatisfactory SWAT mission performance may result in removal.

- c) As necessary, the Chief of Police may remove a member upon the recommendation of the Special Operations Division Captain.
- d) A removal may occur at any time for failure to meet any of the standards outlined within this policy or incompatibility with team concepts as determined by SWAT Commander and with the approval of the Special Operations Division Commander.
- e) When a SWAT member leaves the Unit, they must turn in ALL of their SWAT equipment to their SWAT Team Leader within ten working days. The equipment must be clean and serviceable. **Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action.**
- f) Any member who has left in good standing and wishes to rejoin the team will need approval from the Team Commander and Special Operations Captain. The individual will have to wait until a vacancy is open and shall pass the POPAT and Qualification requirements to be reinstated onto the team.

E. After Action Report and Debriefing

1. Immediately following any incident/mission of Special Weapons and Tactics Team, a debriefing of the incident/mission will be conducted. A written After Action Report (AAR), which is a synopsis of the debriefing, will be prepared by the team leader within 5 working days from the conclusion of the incident/mission. The report will be forwarded to the Special Operations Division Captain. The report will include at a minimum, but not limited to:
 - a) Description of mission,
 - b) Members participating in the mission,
 - c) Actions taken during the mission,
 - d) Narrative describing the reasons for the action,
 - e) Areas of success,
 - f) Areas needing improvement or additional training needed,
 - g) Specialized equipment used,
 - h) Additional equipment needed,
 - i) Staging area that was used
 - j) Planning responsibilities and summaries
 - k) Extraordinary logistical/financial impacts
 - l) Any other information deemed appropriate by SWAT Commander, Team Leaders or requested by the Incident Commander or Chief of Police.