

WOONSOCKET POLICE DEPARTMENT

THOMAS F. OATES, III
CHIEF OF POLICE



TYPE OF ORDER	NUMBER/SERIES	ISSUE DATE	EFFECTIVE DATE
General Order	320.16	12/24/2020	12/27/2020
SUBJECT		PREVIOUSLY ISSUED DATES	
Active Threats Response		7/19/2015, 3/6/2018	
ACCREDITATION		RE-EVALUATION DATE	
CALEA Standards: 41.2.1, 41.2.4, 41.3.6, 46.1.4 RIPAC Standards: 7.5, 10.4, 10.12		11/9/2020, 1/9/2023	
INDEX		DISTRIBUTION	
Patrol Functions		Sworn Personnel Communications Personnel	

ACTIVE THREATS RESPONSE

I. PURPOSE

The goal of police intervention in active threat incidents is to neutralize the threat by preventing access to potential victims, rescuing injured persons and potential victims, or a movement to neutralize the threat. This goal can be achieved by various means, up to and including, the use of deadly physical force.

II. POLICY

The objective of this policy is to establish guidelines and assign responsibility for the appropriate police response to an active threat situation.

It is the policy of this Department to protect life by any legal means possible. Officers responding to an active threat incident have the authority and responsibility to take action by any legal means possible based upon their training and experience; to make contact with the active threat and stop their activity.

III. DEFINITIONS

Active Threat: Any deliberate incident that poses an immediate danger to others. Although these events often involve the use of firearms by perpetrators, they may also involve the use of other types of weapons or implements with the intent to cause harm.

Active shooter: An “active shooter” is an armed person who has used deadly physical force on other persons and continues to do so while having unrestricted access to additional victims. Their activity is not contained and there is an immediate risk of death or serious injury to potential victims.

Barricaded Subject/Hostage Taker: A suspect who is no longer actively engaged in the act of immediately using deadly force. The suspect may have access to firearms, edged weapons, explosive devices, etc. and despite intent, capability and opportunity is contained and NOT an active threat.

Casualty Collection Point (CCP): A forward location where victims can be assembled for movement from areas of risk. Based on incident dynamics, such as the number and location of victims, multiple CCPs may be required.

Cold Zone: A geographic area where first responders can operate with minimal threat to personal safety or health.

Hot Zone: A geographic area consisting of the immediate incident location, with a direct and immediate threat to personal safety or health. All violent incidents are considered hot until law enforcement determines otherwise.

Warm Zone: A geographic area where law enforcement has either cleared or isolated the threat to a level of minimal or mitigated risk; can be considered clear, but not secure.

Immediate Action Rapid Deployment: The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to ongoing, life-threatening situations where delayed deployment could otherwise result in death or serious bodily injury to innocent persons. Immediate Action Rapid Deployment tactics are not a substitute for conventional response tactics to a barricaded subject or hostage-taker.

Dynamic Situation: The situation is evolving very rapidly, along with the suspect’s actions.

Static Situation: The situation is not evolving nor in motion and the suspect’s actions appear to be contained.

Rescue Task Force (RTF): A team consisting of fire/emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, paired with police officers. Fire/EMS personnel are tasked with initial treatment and triage of victims in the warm zone. Police officers are assigned as protection for this team and should not separate from the Fire/EMS personnel.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. INTRODUCTION:

It is not unusual for a tactical team to arrive at the scene of a barricaded incident and find that patrol personnel has contained the suspect within a secure perimeter. There is generally a time for the tactical team to deploy their personnel without serious concern of the suspect(s) escaping. Once the incident has been isolated, time enables patrol and/or tactical personnel to formulate a structured and deliberate plan.

However, some scenarios require immediate action and rapid deployment of patrol personnel before the arrival of the tactical team. In these cases, delayed deployment could have catastrophic consequences. These scenarios often involve an ongoing "shots fired or downed officer/citizen rescue". It may also necessitate the immediate and rapid deployment of law enforcement personnel to contain and prevent the escape of an armed and dangerous person(s).

Over the past several years, our nation has experienced a growing trend of mass violence committed by individuals. These episodes have been termed "active shooter" incidents and are unique in that the behavior of the suspects is very different from that typically associated with other violent behaviors. Suspect(s) generally begin to shoot at numbers of people without warning. Active Shooter incidents suggest that the typical police response involving containment, isolation, and negotiation may not be adequate. Unlike most criminals, active shooters are likely to continue to use deadly physical force until an intervention occurs or until the shooter decides to stop.

B. RESPONSE OBJECTIVES

RI 10.12.c

The department's objective is to stop the active threat before they can take the lives of others. Initial responding officers must use all legal means to stop the active threat.

Their prioritization of activities is:

1. Stop the active threat;
2. Rescue victims;
3. Provide medical assistance;
4. Preserve the crime scene; and
5. Protect property.

C. RESPONSE GUIDELINES

Active threat incidents are unique such that effective handling cannot be reduced to procedures. These procedures are not meant to limit conventional police tactics, which are appropriate to a crisis. The significant factors regarding these tactics are that they represent a means of intervention available to the officers and there is the potential of elevated risk to bystanders and officers. The risk is acceptable in light of the potential these tactics have for saving lives. Another significant aspect of the active threat tactical doctrine is that officers arriving at the scene of an active threat

incident are authorized to intervene before the arrival of command personnel and special units.

1. Communications Center personnel:

Communications Center personnel shall:

- a. Obtain as much information as possible as to the nature and location of the threat;
- b. Keep the caller on the line to provide real-time information that may be forwarded to responding officers;
- c. **Immediately** dispatch ALL available police officer personnel to the scene, including all patrol staff, detectives, sworn administrative police staff, and any available officers assigned to training or other duties. This includes clearing any officer not on an emergency call and directs them to the scene;
- d. **Immediately** advise the Officer-in-Charge (OIC)/Patrol Supervisor of the incident;
- e. Communications Center personnel will also be responsible for coordinating the response of other emergency service responders such as:
 - 1) Special Reaction Team (SRT);
 - 2) Rhode Island State Police or any surrounding agencies for on-duty mutual aid response;
 - 3) Woonsocket Fire Department, for on-duty Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response; and/or
 - 4) Mobilization of full department recall of off-duty personnel as needed.

Note: Depending upon the dynamics of the situation; and the effectiveness of initial units in stopping the active threat; some of these notifications may not occur until after the threat has been stabilized and may be deferred to an Incident Command System (ICS) Command Post.

- f. Allow only emergency radio traffic, to the extent possible;
- g. Prioritize all other requests for police assistance and defer non-life-threatening calls, pending sufficient staffing;
- h. Designate a single dispatcher or police officer to coordinate radio communications with officers at the active threat scene; and
- i. When directed by a supervisor, or the Incident Commander (IC) once established, activate any Public Safety Alerts and Warnings System, as defined in procedures to respond to unusual incidents (*360.04 Emergency Operations Plan*).

2. Responding Unit Responsibilities:

RI 10.12.b
RI 7.5

- a. All sworn personnel responding to the scene shall:
 - 1) Adhere to the guidelines as defined under the employment of the ICS (*360.06 Incident Command System*);
 - 2) Wear their issued ballistic vests; and
 - 3) Bring other appropriate issued protective gear and weapons.
- b. The first responding officer will do the following:
 - 1) Conduct an assessment:
 - a) Obtain as much information as possible while en route to the situation and on the scene;
 - b) Include the suspect's actions;
 - c) Whether the suspect and/or the situation, is dynamic or static;
 - d) The suspect location, description, and identified weapons;
 - e) Basic victim information, such as number, location, and status;
 - f) Upon arrival, position themselves in the best possible location, weighing available access and cover; and
 - g) Determine if there is an active threat or a barricade situation.
 - 2) Communicate the Assessment:
 - a) Communicate this assessment information to all other units; and
 - b) Indicate the best approach and access for other responding units.

RI 10.12.c

- c. Quick Intervention:

If a dynamic, active threat exists, the initial responding officer(s) will take immediate action to locate, identify, and neutralize the threat. When feasible, individual officers can utilize back up officer(s), Contact Team concepts, while searching for an active threat. However, when time is of the essence, each officer must assess the need for immediate action in place of the presence of an additional officer(s). It may be necessary for initial officers to respond alone or even to pass over injured victims and persons requiring medical attention while still moving to the location of the threat who is still engaged in actions causing potential loss of life or serious injury.

- d. Plain Clothes or Off-Duty Personnel

- 1) When displaying firearms while in plainclothes, officers shall verbally identify themselves as law enforcement officers, and conspicuously display their badges and/or other law enforcement identification to alert security personnel, arriving officers, or civilians who may be armed.

- 2) If officers are unarmed, they can still play a critical role in active shooter response through the following actions:
 - a) Facilitating evacuation by:
 - i. locating points of egress and directing people to those evacuation points if reasonably safe for them to do so; and
 - ii. locating and directing persons hiding in unsecured locations (e.g., under desks, inside unlocked rooms) to evacuation points.
 - b) If evacuation is not possible,
 - i. helping locate and direct persons to safer locations, preferably with thick walls and solid doors with locks; or, in the absence of such locations, rooms that can be barricaded with heavy furniture or objects;
 - ii. directing individuals to silence all personal electronic devices, take cover, and remain silent; and
 - iii. taking any actions possible to distract, disrupt, divert, or incapacitate the suspect using surprise attacks and any aggressive force possible.
 - c) When possible, assisting with the injured and directing incoming teams to injured persons.
- e. Contact team:
 - 1) The first responding officers, regardless of rank, will form a contact team to enter the building.
 - 2) This team can consist of one up to four or five officers.
 - 3) They will go in immediate pursuit of the active threat, based on the best information available.
 - 4) The objective is to make contact as soon as possible and stop the threat by arrest, containment, or use of deadly force.
 - 5) If possible, the contact team will make use of advanced protective equipment, including ballistic helmets, ballistic shields, patrol rifles, and breaching equipment.
 - 6) The contact officer or team should employ tactical advantages such as avoiding the use of the main entrance to provide an element of surprise and to bypass potential booby traps or ambush. They will continue on past victims or harmless distractions. The location of any victims may be relayed to a rescue team, if available.
 - 7) The contact officer or team should not attempt to conduct a thorough clearing of the location, but should follow sounds, such as gunfire, yelling, and screaming; observations of victims and bystanders; and related information to help locate the suspect(s) as soon as possible.

- 8) Should a contact or rescue team encounter an explosive or a suspected explosive device, they shall:
 - a) Report the location(s);
 - b) Not touch or move the device; and
 - c) Move past and continue the assault on the threat.
- 9) Once an active threat has been stopped, the Contact Team must be aware of the possibility of additional assailants.
 - a) If more shooting, screams, or intelligence information leads to the conclusion that a second, third, or more active threats are present, they will continue the mission until all threats have been stopped.
 - b) In any event, the Contact Team will continue their search until the entire building has been cleared and they have stopped all active threats.
- 10) Later responding officers may join the initial Contact Team if time and security permits.
- 11) Additional Contact Teams will only be deployed to search for the active threat if the initial Contact Team has been rendered incapable of continuing their mission.
 - a) If there are multiple active threats in different locations of the building, and it would not put the initial Contact Team in jeopardy, a second Contact Team may be formed to address a secondary threat at a different location.
 - b) All Contact Teams must remain in communication with each other and the Communications Center to ensure they are responding to separate areas of responsibility.
- 12) The contact officer or team shall switch its focus to providing trauma care as necessary when the primary mission is completed.

RI 10.12.d

f. Containment and Isolation:

RI 10.4.a

- 1) Later responding officers, who are not needed as a Contact Team, shall form a perimeter to stop the escape of an active threat and to form security of the scene. Active threats emerging from cover or concealment are to be stopped by perimeter officers using all lawful and necessary force.
- 2) It is anticipated that innocent civilians will be fleeing the active threat. Fleeing victims are to be searched and directed to a place of safety designated by the on-scene OIC.

RI 10.4.e

- 3) Later responding officers will maintain the command post and staging area.
- 4) Later responding officers will also maintain an outer perimeter as well as direct and control traffic.
- 5) The security of the scene will be maintained to conduct a post-incident investigation.

RI 10.4.b

g. Rescue Task Force (RTFs)

- 1) Once the contact officer or team is deployed, and as officers and resources arrive at the incident scene, the Incident Commander should ensure that RTFs are formed to provide trauma care and help evacuate victims.
- 2) RTFs shall be organized under a team leader, deploy in tactical formations consistent with agency training, and be prepared to respond to hostile action as rapidly changing circumstances may place them in contact with suspects. In such instances, the RTF shall be prepared and equipped to serve as the contact team.
- 3) RTFs shall be deployed only after the contact officer or team has made entry, provided a status report, notified the command post of the location of victims, established warm zones, and determined that rescue efforts may begin.
- 4) Wounded and injured persons shall be quickly searched, if reasonable, for weapons, quickly treated for obvious life-threatening injuries, and removed to the designated CCPs with cover and movement of such persons provided by RTF members. If emergency medical personnel are not yet in place, basic trauma care shall be the responsibility of RTF members until they are relieved by medical personnel.
- 5) Rescue and recovery operations shall continue until the IC has declared the scene clear and safe.

D. Incident Command:

RI 10.4.c

1. The **ICS** should be utilized to every extent possible, during an active threat incident.
2. The first supervisor on the scene, who is not a part of the contact team or rescue team, will assume the role of Incident Commander and will establish a command post at a safe location. The Incident Commander shall:
 - a. Organize and establish unified interagency communication(s).
 - b. Establish an inner perimeter to control access to and egress from the area of risk.
 - c. Establish an outer perimeter.
 - d. Establish staging areas in the cold zone for the following purposes and notify communications of their locations:

- 1) For responding officers and other emergency personnel (An officer should be assigned to this staging area to brief arriving personnel, maintain communication with the contact officer or team, and assign duties as directed by the IC.);
 - 2) For the treatment of the injured and evacuation by EMS or medevac (CCP);
 - 3) Where individuals without injuries should be directed for identification and debriefing (evacuation area);
 - 4) To accommodate arriving family members of persons at the incident scene (notification center); and
 - 5) For the media. News media will not be allowed at the initial scene. (Assign the Public Information Officer (PIO), or designee, to assist media in a safe location for briefings).
- e. Ensure that officers assigned to the notification center maintain custody and control of all persons and document their identities until they can be reunited with family or others. Victims and witnesses suffering from emotional and/or physical trauma or shock should be kept under the observation of medical personnel until they may be safely transported to a hospital or home in the care of family or friends.
 - f. Request mutual aid if necessary.
 - g. Establish traffic control and management for the ingress and egress of public safety vehicles. Special consideration should be given to maintain open routes for the rapid transport of the injured.
 - h. Request emergency medical assistance.
 - i. Initiate intelligence gathering on possible suspects.
 - j. Summon chaplains and peer support officers to provide information to relatives of victims.
 - k. Coordinate with owners or officials of the target location for floor plans; site layout; and a roster, including emergency contact information as available, of employees, students, residents, visitors, or others believed to be on-site.
 - l. Assign a recorder to document actions at the command post.
3. When available on the scene, the Special Response Team (SRT) may be assigned as appropriate to:
 - a. Contain the location;
 - b. Assist RTFs;
 - c. Help locate the suspect(s) or relieve the contact officer or team;
 - d. Help locate and safeguard explosives pending removal; and
 - e. Provide special weapons and equipment as needed.
4. Additional officers shall be deployed to control access to the location and monitor the perimeter.

E. Community Notification

The PIO or other designated individual(s) shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate information is distributed promptly to the community. This may include

1. Shelter in place warnings for nearby locations during active shooter situations;
2. Alerts to avoid the area due to heavy law enforcement activity and potential road closures; and
3. Specific directions for individuals who elect to visit the scene.

F. Crime Scene:

Once the active threat has been stopped and all injured persons are being addressed properly, the building will be considered a crime scene.

The IC shall assure that the scene is handled as follows:

1. Perimeter – Officers will be posted at all entrances to the building or area to prevent unauthorized entry.
2. Building Clearing - The **SRT** will clear the entire building and make sure all human threats are cleared.
3. Explosives Check - The entire building will be searched for explosives with the assistance of the Rhode Island State Fire Marshal Bomb Squad.
4. Investigation - Detectives from Woonsocket Police will work in conjunction with the Office of the Medical Examiner, crime scene investigators, and any other adjoining law enforcement and/or school investigation teams to fully investigate and document the incident.

G. Debriefing

As soon as reasonably possible after the incident, the agency shall conduct a debriefing of essential personnel involved in the incident. The debriefing shall identify areas of potential improvement and determine whether changes in operational protocols, policy, or training may be warranted.

H. Development

The Department will develop tactics to deal with active threat incidents and will provide appropriate training to personnel of all ranks. These tactics will be developed under the following guidelines:

1. Personnel will be trained to conduct an immediate assessment;
2. Tactics will conform to and capitalize upon existing skills; and
3. Tactics and training will be basic and flexible.

RI 10.12.e

I. Training

1. All sergeants and patrol officers will receive active threat training on an annual basis. The training can be in the form of classroom lectures, simulator, or Roll Call Training.
2. At a minimum, superior officers (Lieutenants and above) will receive training on the tactics, methods, and any response plans utilized by officers when responding to an active threat incident.
3. A documented annual review of this order and training needs will be conducted.

V. ATTACHMENT

Characteristics of an active shooter

Per order,

Thomas F. Oates, III

Chief of Police

Written directives published within PowerDMS are in full force and effect on the referenced dates and have been approved by the Chief of Police

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

The following is a list of characteristics commonly associated with active shooter suspects. The list is compiled from descriptions of past active shooter incidents across the nation and not meant to be a comprehensive list describing all active shooters. Each active shooter situation is unique.

1. Active shooters usually focus on assaulting persons with whom they come into contact. Their intention is usually an expression of hatred or rage rather than the commission of a crime.
2. An active shooter is likely to engage more than one target. Active shooters may be intent on killing many people as quickly as possible.
3. Generally, the first indication of the presence of an active shooter is when he or she begins to assault victims.
4. Active shooters often go to locations where potential victims are nearby, such as schools, theaters, concerts, or shopping malls. Active shooters may act in the manner of a sniper, assaulting victims from a distance. Active shooters may also engage multiple targets while remaining constantly mobile.
5. Tactics such as containment and negotiation, normally associated with standoff incidents may not be adequate in active shooter events. Active shooters typically continue their attack despite the arrival of emergency responders.
6. Active shooters are often better armed than police, sometimes making use of explosives, booby traps, and body armor. Active shooters are not limited to the use of firearms in accomplishing their attacks on victims. They may use bladed weapons, vehicles, or any tool that, in the circumstance in which it is used, constitutes deadly physical force.
7. Active shooters may have a planned attack and be prepared for a sustained confrontation with the police. Historically, active shooters have not attempted to hide their identity or conceal the commission, of their attacks. Escape from the police is usually not a priority of the active shooter.
8. Active shooters may employ some type of diversion.
9. Active shooters may be indiscriminate in their violence or they may seek specific victims.
10. Active shooters may be suicidal, deciding to die in the course of their actions either at the hand of others or by a self-inflicted wound.
11. Active shooters usually have some degree of familiarity with the building or location they choose to occupy.
12. Active shooter events are dynamic and may go in and out of an "active" status; a static incident may turn into an active shooter event or an active shooter may go "inactive" by going to a barricaded status without access to victims.