



POLICY AND PROCEDURE **NO. 442**

Crisis Negotiations

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4 Pages

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide responding officers with guidance for handling incidents involving hostage situations, barricaded subjects and emotionally disturbed persons in a controlled manner, in order to ensure the safety of all involved parties.

2. POLICY:

The Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) may be activated according to Department Policy to negotiate in an attempt to peacefully resolve hostage/barricade situations, suicide attempts, and other crisis situations through the use of proven verbal, active listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, and crisis intervention skills. In conducting their duties, members of the WPD Crisis Negotiation Team shall utilize communication strategies with the goal of de-escalating the crisis situation in an effort to gain voluntary compliance, in order to ensure the safety of the subject, other members of the public, or police officers.

3. DEFINITIONS:

A. WPD Crisis Negotiation Team

A specialized group of law enforcement Officers trained in communicating with subjects who are threatening violence or are in a crisis situation. In an effort to utilize verbal, active listening and other communication skills, team members take a position of control to attempt to end a situation through peaceful resolution. This group assists SWAT and uniformed personnel with this unique and specialized skill when requested by the Operations Division.

B. WPD Crisis Intervention Team (C.I.T.)

First responders trained in the innovative "First Responder Model" of police-based crisis intervention training to help persons with mental health disorders and/or addictions access medical treatment rather than place them in the criminal justice system due to illness related behaviors. C.I.T. Officers can be utilized to assist Crisis Negotiators with specialized training dealing with persons in a mental health crisis. In many instances this team can resolve or help de-escalate situations themselves.

C. Worcester Police Department, Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT)

Trained special tactical response team utilized throughout the City of Worcester to manage dangerous persons and situations. (See Worcester Police Policy 416 Special Weapons and Tactics Team.)

D. Hostage Situation

A crisis situation in which a perpetrator(s) takes a person(s) under his or her control and subjects that person to the threat or risk of injury/violence to force or compel another party to fulfill substantive demands. There are generally two types of hostage situations:

A classic hostage situation, in which the hostage-taker is contained within a specified area (i.e., room, building, store, or other physically segregated area).

The mobile hostage situation, in which the hostage-taker is on the street or another location where he or she is not restricted by any clear physical boundaries.

E. Barricaded Person(s) Situation

A crisis situation characterized by a subject who has taken a position in a physical location (i.e., structure or vehicle) known or believed to be armed with a dangerous weapon, and does not allow the police tactical access, or is threatening violence toward himself/herself, other persons, or law enforcement officers. The person(s) taking a barricaded position generally does not have hostages but may attempt to use persons in the area to create such a situation.

F. Suicide Intervention

A crisis situation in which a person plans to harm themselves in any way, fall or jump from a potentially deadly elevated position, with the intention of ending their life or causing physical harm.

G. Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP)

A person who presents themselves to be in a mental health or emotional crisis, and is conducting himself or herself in a manner which a police officer believes is likely to result in serious injury to himself or herself, or others.

H. De-escalation Tactics (Defined by MA Police Training Council): Proactive actions and approaches used by an officer to stabilize a law enforcement situation so that more time, options, and resources are available to gain a person's voluntary compliance and reduce or eliminate the need to use force, including verbal persuasion, warnings, slowing down the pace of an incident, waiting out a person, creating distance between the officer and the threat and requesting additional resources to resolve the incident.

4. PROCEDURES:

A. General Information

The goal of the crisis negotiation process is to save lives and resolve critical incidents using communication skills; while striving to avoid unnecessary use of force.

Crisis Negotiators may be used as a de-escalation tool to diffuse potentially life-threatening situations through the use of proven verbal, active listening, problem solving and conflict resolution skills. De-escalation techniques and negotiation skills are also important tools that can be used in many other situations during day to day operations.

The negotiation process is not tactical in nature, but rather an integrated resource where careful planning and strategies are coordinated with tactical components of an emergency response. Crisis Negotiators should be deployed in a manner that assists those on scene Operations Division personnel who may be in contact with the subject in an incident, to ensure they have

full access to available resources to successfully end the incident with a peaceful resolution whenever possible.

Incidents involving barricaded subjects, hostage takers, or persons threatening suicide represent especially stressful moments for law enforcement personnel. Such incidents require that law enforcement officers use an organized, planned approach that concentrates on the use of communication and problem-solving skills in an effort to preserve life.

B. Implementation

Upon responding to crisis situations (hostage, barricaded, jumper or emotionally disturbed person), the responding officer shall consider the feasibility of requesting a Crisis Negotiator.

C. Crisis Negotiator Utilization

The Operations Division official on scene may notify a Crisis Negotiator(s) to report to the scene of an incident (Types of Incidents to Request a Crisis Negotiator are listed in section D below).

D. Types of Incidents that may require the use of a Negotiator

Hostage Situations

Barricaded subjects

Emotionally Disturbed Persons

Suicide Intervention, i.e., “jumper”

Kidnapping with suspect

When requested in conjunction with another operational mission of the WPD SWAT Team

Any other incident where the skills of trained negotiators would help resolve a situation safely by achieving subject voluntary compliance rather than an alternative use of force situation.

When handling crisis situations such as hostage situations, barricaded suspects, and emotional disturbed persons; Officers may use the following procedures during these situations.

E. First Responding Officer's Initial Actions

Arrive safely to the scene and notify dispatch

Assess the totality of the circumstances taking in all potential hazards

Secure the area

Determine the threat to hostages and/or bystanders.

Determine if evacuating the immediate area in incidents capable of harming the innocent (i.e. explosive device or firearm incident capable of being discharged into area)

Request additional units, if needed

Notify the Operations Supervisor of the situation and provide a full briefing to the Supervisor upon arrival

Transfer command, when the arriving Operations Supervisor takes over the scene

F. Operations Supervisor Actions:

Assess the totality of the circumstances

Determine if trained Crisis Negotiators are needed as outlined in this policy

Consider a request for activation of WPD SWAT or other resources necessary

Incident Command System (ICS) principles should be put in place for any prolonged incident.

G. Debrief

At the conclusion of an incident, a debriefing will take place to self-analyze and to review the incident.

Per:

Paul B. Saucier
Chief of Police