



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NO. 442

Crisis Negotiations

Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standard 46.2.4

Date Issued September 19, 2023	Date Effective September 19, 2023	Revision No. 1	No. of pages 5
Review Date: January 14, 2027			

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; while striving to avoid unnecessary risk and injury to law enforcement personnel, citizens, and victims by utilizing negotiators in an effort to de-escalate the incident.

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 or incidents involving persons in crisis.

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 de-escalate the incident, negotiators utilize communication skills grounded in empathy and respect that allows them to work with the person in crisis toward a peaceful resolution. **MPAC 46.2.4**

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. This model is designed to promote officer safety and the safety of the individual in crisis.

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 810).

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 for the purpose of furthering a criminal act; facilitating an escape; or to compel a third person or governmental organization to take some action. There are two broad categories of hostage situational conditions:

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

- 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, who is contained and refuses to comply with the lawful orders of law enforcement personnel to surrender.

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 to kill, maim or injure themselves and/or others.

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 reasonably believes is likely to result in serious injury to themselves and/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 to reduce or eliminate the need to use force including, but not limited to, verbal persuasion, warnings, slowing down the pace of an incident, waiting out a person, and requesting additional resources to resolve the incident including, but not limited to, calling in medical or licensed mental health professionals, as defined in M.G.L. c. 111, § 51½(a), to address a potential medical or mental health crisis.

4. PROCEDURES:

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 risk and injury to law enforcement personnel, citizens, and victims.

Crisis Negotiators may be used as a de-escalation tool to diffuse potentially life-threatening situations through the use of proven verbal, active listening, and negotiation techniques.

The negotiation process is not tactical in nature, but rather an integrated resource where careful planning and strategies are coordinated with tactical units.

Incidents involving barricaded subjects, hostage takers, or persons threatening suicide represent especially stressful moments for law enforcement personnel who respond to them. Negotiators utilize active listening skills to demonstrate empathy and build rapport with subject(s) during ongoing crisis negotiations.

Implementation

Upon responding to crisis situations (hostage, barricaded, jumper or emotionally disturbed person), the responding officer shall consider the feasibility of CNT response given the circumstances and dynamics of the situation. When conditions allow to utilize negotiators, first responding officers shall attempt to isolate and contain the subject(s), by first utilizing de-escalation tactics, which can be essential to establish conditions necessary to initiate the negotiation process.

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 listed below). This includes utilizing current WPD call-in procedures. The Operations Division official on scene, if unable to contact a Crisis Negotiation Officer or Supervisor via radio or phone, should contact the Service Division immediately to contact the Crisis Negotiation On-Call or On-Duty supervisor. On-Call or On-Duty Crisis Negotiation Supervisor will determine the number of trained negotiators required to be effective based on the current situation and arrange via phone, or radio; the location for Crisis Negotiators to report. After consultation with the Operations Official in charge, if available and whenever practical, the use of trained mental health professionals may be used to assist negotiators as a subject matter resource during an event. The Operations Official, is in charge of the scene, and any decisions regarding the incident. The Operations Official may direct duties related to the successful negotiation of a subject to the certified Crisis Negotiation Official(s) or Crisis Negotiation Officer(s) on scene. The Crisis Negotiation Official will work with WPD SWAT and Operations Officials for a peaceful negotiated resolution.

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 when feasible:

- First Responding Officer's Initial Actions
 - a. Arrive safely to the scene and notify dispatch
 - b. Assess the totality of the circumstances taking in all potential hazards
 - c. Secure the area
 - d. Determine the threat to hostages and/or bystanders.
 - e. 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)
 - f. Request additional units, if needed
 - g. Notify the Operations Supervisor of the situation and provide a full briefing to the Supervisor upon arrival
 - h. Transfer command, when the arriving Operations Supervisor takes over the scene

Operations Supervisor Actions:

- a. Assess the totality of the circumstances
- b. Determine if trained Crisis Negotiators are needed as outlined in this policy
- c. Consider a request for activation of WPD SWAT or other resources necessary
- d. Incident Command System (ICS) principles should be put in place for any prolonged incident.

Debrief

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

Per:



Paul B. Saucier
Interim Chief of Police

Revisions:

January 2026: No revisions. MPAC optional standard 46.2.4 noted.