



Model Policy

Active Shooter

Updated: April 2018

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide protocols for assessing the threat and immediately responding during active shooter situations to limit serious injury or loss of life. While the term “active shooter” is used throughout, this policy applies to all situations where there is an active assailant or assailants posing an ongoing deadly threat, to include, but not limited to, those from firearms, vehicles, explosives, and knives.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this agency in active shooter situations where ongoing deadly force is reasonably likely to be employed by a suspect—and delay in taking law enforcement action could result in injury or death—that immediate action by officers at the scene is necessary when such actions are deemed reasonable to prevent further injuries or loss of life.

III. DEFINITIONS

Active Shooting: An incident in which one or more armed persons have used, or are reasonably likely to use, deadly force in an ongoing manner, and where persons have been injured, killed, or are under imminent threat of death or serious bodily harm by such persons.¹

Casualty Collection Point (CCP): A forward location where victims can be assembled for movement from areas of risk. Based upon 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.

Contact Officer or Team: The first officer(s) at the scene of an active shooting tasked with locating the suspect(s) and stopping the threat.

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. Only law enforcement should operate in the hot zone.

Immediate Action: Rapid response by one or more officers to an active shooting based on a reasonable belief that failure to swiftly seek out and address the threat would result in death or serious bodily injury.

Incident Commander (IC): The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all operations at the incident site. Responsibilities of the IC can be assumed by the officer handling the original call to the chief executive of the agency and any additional qualified officers, depending on the size, scope, and complexity of the incident or event.²

Inner Perimeter: An area established to keep the threat contained to a specified location.

Outer Perimeter: An area established to keep the inner perimeter secured and to prevent outside elements from entering the incident.

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

Staging Area: An area or location near the incident where outside resources respond and are quickly inventoried for utilization and assignment at the incident. There may be more than one staging area per incident.

¹ Additional terms that may be used to describe these incidents include active killing, active threat, and mass casualty attack.

² See the IACP *Model Policy on Incident Command* at http://www.theiacp.org/model-policy/model_policy/incident-command/.

Unified Command (UC): An incident command system used when there is more than one agency with incident jurisdiction, or when incidents cross political jurisdictions. Agencies work together through designated members of the UC, often the senior person(s) from agencies and/or disciplines participating in the UC, to establish a common set of objectives and strategies. The IC responsibility is shared within the UC, with the function most important at the time taking the lead role. The lead responsibility may shift as the incident progresses.

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.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Situational Assessment

1. Based on available information, dispatched responders or officers already at the incident scene may verify that an active shooter situation exists through information provided by communications personnel; from persons confined within or exiting the target location; from witnesses; by reports of, or sounds of, gunfire; or through related means.
2. When available and as time permits, witnesses, or others should be asked about the location and number of suspects, the suspects' weapons, persons injured, the number and location of persons in possible jeopardy, and the use or location of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).
3. Upon completion of the initial assessment, the first arriving officer(s) shall
 - a. advise communications and request resources as deemed necessary, and
 - b. determine whether to take immediate action alone or with another officer or wait until additional resources are available.

B. Individual Officer Intervention

1. In some instances, an individual officer may be present within or near the active shooting location, such as a mall or school. Whether on or off duty, in uniform or civilian clothes, he or she may determine that immediate action is necessary and reasonable to stop the threat. That decision may take into consideration the officer's capability to effectively intervene, based on his or her training.
2. As soon as practical, officer(s) shall notify communications that an active shooter situation exists. The officer(s) should provide the following information and updates as available

- a. the identity, location, manner of dress, and proposed actions of the officer(s) at the scene;
 - b. information about the suspect to include a physical description, weapons, equipment such as body armor, and current location and actions; and
 - c. available information on persons injured or under threat, their locations, emergency resources required, and recommended points of entry.
3. When displaying firearms while in plain-clothes, 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.
 4. If officers are unarmed, they can still play a critical role in active shooter response through the following actions
 - a. facilitating evacuation by
 - (1) locating points of egress and directing people to those evacuation points if reasonably safe for them to do so; and
 - (2) locating and directing persons hiding in unsecure locations (e.g., under desks, inside unlocked rooms) to evacuation points.
 - b. if evacuation is not possible,
 - (1) 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;
 - (2) directing individuals to silence all personal electronic devices, take cover, and remain silent; and
 - (3) 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.
- ### C. Contact Officer or Team Response
1. The mission of the contact officer or team is to locate and stop the threat. Even if the threat seemingly has been terminated, contact officers or teams are required to render the location safe, assist in screening and the orderly evacuation of persons to a designated area, and locating any other persons still in hiding.

2. Normally, only one contact officer or team shall be deployed at any given time. Additional officers or teams may be deployed at the direction of the IC to provide tactical advantage. The IC shall ensure that each team is aware of the other officers' or teams' locations and actions.
 3. The contact officer or team shall be provided a clear communications channel to supply the following types of information:
 - a. The officer or team's progress and location.
 - b. The location and number of victims and their medical needs.
 - c. The estimated number of suspects involved.
 - d. The suspect's description and weapons if known.
 - e. The location of any booby traps or explosives. If discovered, the contact officer or team leader shall determine whether to post an officer near it, report it, or mark it for later removal.
 4. The contact officer or team shall locate the suspect(s) in the most expeditious manner possible in order to stop the threat. In doing so, officers should not stop to render aid or assistance to victims, but may, where reasonably possible, inform them that RTFs are forthcoming and direct them to a safe point of egress or hiding if they are ambulatory and it is deemed safe for them to do so.
 5. 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.
 6. 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.
 7. Once the location of the suspect(s) is known and any immediate threat is eliminated, the contact officer or team should proceed to clear all portions of the location in the event that more suspects are in hiding. If victims are encountered who require immediate trauma care, the contact officer or team shall provide such care prior to continuing to clear the location. Arriving tactical or other officers should be called upon to help clear the location of potential suspects, locate and evacuate persons in hiding, and render safe any dangerous munitions or armament.
 8. The contact officer or team shall switch its focus to providing trauma care as necessary when the primary mission is completed.
- D. Rescue Task Force (RTFs)
1. Once the contact officer or team is deployed, and as officers and resources arrive at the incident scene, the IC 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.
- E. Unified Command
1. Unified incident command shall be established as soon as possible.
 2. The IC shall ensure that the following actions are accomplished:
 - 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 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. (This area should be staffed with appropriate personnel, such as public information officers.)
- 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 such time as 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 rapid transport of the injured.
 - h. Contact appropriate aviation resources to control air space for possible medical evacuation resources and to establish restricted air space for law enforcement use only.
 - i. Request emergency medical assistance.
 - j. Initiate intelligence gathering on possible suspects.
 - k. Summon chaplains and peer support officers to provide information to relatives of victims.
 - l. 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.
 - m. Assign a recorder to document actions at the command post.
3. When available on the scene, a tactical team 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.
- F. Community Notification
- The PIO or other designated individual(s) shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate information is distributed in a timely manner 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.
- 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. Training
- This agency shall provide active shooter training to all sworn and civilian personnel, including simulation exercises conducted in schools and other facilities and partnering first response agencies, where appropriate.

Every effort has been made to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. Readers outside of the United States should note that, while this document promotes procedures reflective of a democratic society, its legal basis follows United States Supreme Court rulings and other federal laws and statutes.

Law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no “model” policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered, and should therefore consult its legal advisor before implementing any policy.

This document is not intended to be a national standard.

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