

Crowd Management

When encountering crowds, law enforcement efforts should focus on protecting individual rights related to assembly and free speech; preventing loss of life, injury, or property damage; and minimizing disruption to persons who are not involved.

- The **primary goal** of all law enforcement crowd response should be to protect individuals and their associated rights, including, but not limited to, those associated with assembly and free speech.
- Whenever possible, law enforcement agencies should attempt to make **advance contact** with event organizers to gather information about the event to ensure accurate assignment of personnel and resources. By establishing positive communication channels and working relationships in advance, law enforcement can help mitigate possible confusion and negative outcomes during the event.
- An **incident command system (ICS)** should be utilized in crowd management and civil disturbances to ensure control and unified command. In the United States, this may include the use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- Agencies should develop an **event action plan (EAP)** prior to any event involving large gatherings of individuals. The EAP should address items such as command assignments and responsibilities, need for special response teams, staging points, traffic management, and communications plans.
- Officers should be deployed to **monitor crowd activity**. These officers should wear their badges, nameplates, or other personal identification on their uniforms or helmets in a manner that is clearly visible at all times and should refrain from engaging in contentious conversations with participants.
- **Mass arrests** in crowd situations should be avoided unless necessary.
- A **means of egress** must be available to all individuals at all times.
- In crowd situations, officers should be permitted to use only the **level of force** that is objectively reasonable to protect themselves or others from physical harm; to restrain or subdue a resistant individual; or to bring an unlawful situation safely and effectively under control.
- In situations where a demonstration or civil disturbance occurs **spontaneously**, the first officer on the scene should observe the situation from a safe distance, notify communications, request assistance from a supervisor, and attempt to identify any crowd leaders. Once additional resources are available, the goal should be to disperse the disorderly or threatening crowd in order to eliminate the immediate risks of continued escalation and further violence.
- In some situations, **crowd dispersal** techniques may be necessary. However, all potentially necessary equipment and personnel, such as law enforcement, fire, and EMS, should be on hand prior to beginning the dispersal.