

	ALERT Best Practice Policy	
	Policy - Violent Encounter Response Strategies	
	Effective Date:	Replaces:
	Approved: _____ <div style="text-align: center;">Chief of Police</div>	
	Reference: Texas Best Practice Policy 7.34	

I. POLICY

An active attack is defined as one or more subjects actively killing or attempting to kill multiple unrelated people. The subject's overriding objective appears to be mass murder rather than other criminal conduct such as robbery or kidnapping.

It is the policy of this agency to respond to and neutralize an active attack or other violent encounter and administer aid to the victims, in close cooperation with other first responder agencies. Safety priorities shall be: innocent civilians, first responders, suspects/actors.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide protocols for assessing an active threat or violent encounter and immediately responding to it to stop the killing, stop the dying, and provide rapid casualty evacuation. This policy applies to all situations where there is an active assailant posing an ongoing deadly threat but is unrelated to other violent criminal offenses like hostage/criminal barricades. This policy is consistent with best practices as found in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Standardization is essential to interoperability among multiple organizations in incident response. NIMS defines standard practices that allow incident personnel to work together effectively and foster cohesion among the various organizations involved.

III. DEFINITIONS

Area Command: when very complex incidents, or multiple concurrent smaller incidents, require the establishment of multiple Incident Command Systems (ICS), an Area Command can be established to oversee their management and prioritization of scarce resources.

Cold Zone: a geographic area with no direct or indirect threat to personal safety.

Forward Control Point (FCP): an area within the warm zone and within sight of the incident that is staffed by law enforcement, fire and EMS representatives who are responsible for the development of incident objectives and ordering and releasing resources. In the traditional ICS model, this will become Operations or OPS.

Ghost or Echo calls for service: calls for service that follow the known crisis and report possible violence or armed actors at a different location. These calls are often erroneous and can lead to

resources being pulled away from the crisis site, if they are not managed effectively.

Hot zone: a geographic area with a direct and immediate threat to personal safety. All violent incidents are considered a hot zone until determined otherwise by law enforcement. Law enforcement should operate solely in the hot zone.

Incident Command (IC): the individual(s) responsible for all incident activities at the crisis site, including the development of incident objectives and ordering and releasing resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for the management of all operations at the crisis site and can be held by any law enforcement person of any rank. Rank does not matter; someone must take command. Incident Command begins with the first arriving officer and may be relinquished to others as the situation continues.

Law Enforcement Rescue Model: when an agency does not have enough resources to fully integrate police, fire and EMS at the crisis site, the agency may need to transport casualties to local hospitals or awaiting ambulances. For example: for jurisdictions that have volunteer fire services, it is impractical to wait for the creation of Rescue Task Forces. Instead, agencies will need to implement their own rescue model to ensure rapid casualty evacuation occurs.

Rescue Task Force (RTF): a team consisting of police and fire/EMS personnel who are paired together for initial triage, treatment and transport to awaiting ambulances.

Staging Area: An area or specific location near the incident but in the cold zone where resources and personnel are resourced, inventoried and made-ready for assignment to the crisis site. Staging may include police, fire, EMS, outside agencies, and other community resources that have not yet been assigned by IC to the crisis site.

Unified Command (UC): When more than one agency has incident jurisdiction, or when incidents cross political jurisdictions, the use of UC enables them to perform the functions of Incident Command jointly. In UC, there is no one incident commander. Instead, the UC manages the incident by jointly approved objectives. A UC allows these participating organizations to set aside issues such as overlapping and competing authorities, jurisdictional boundaries, and resource ownership to focus on setting clear priorities and objectives for the incident. Each participating agency maintains authority, responsibility, and accountability for its personnel and other resources.

Warm Zone: geographic area that is best represented by law enforcement personnel who are present and thus providing a level of security. There is no active violence occurring inside a warm zone.

IV. PROCEDURES

Mutual Aid (TBP 1.5)

Upon being dispatched to the scene of an active attack, the Department should implement their mutual aid agreements with other police agencies, as well as fire and rescue agencies. The Department shall declare a **Level 1 Tactical Alert**, which will require:

1. Activation of Incident Command
2. All countywide agency patrol shifts are held over
3. Oncoming patrol shifts and investigative units are mobilized
4. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is requested by Unified Command

Department Priorities

Officers who respond to a violent encounter shall prioritize the following objectives: stop the killing; stop the dying; and rapid casualty evacuation.

Command

History of active attacks is replete with examples of poor command and control.

COMMAND is critical, regardless of rank or assignment. To ensure this agency effectively mitigates the loss of life, COMMAND will be central to all responses. It is a philosophy that will permeate all operations in support of an active attack response. COMMAND is established by the first responding law enforcement officer. As the incident unfolds, COMMAND will mean different things to different divisions and groups who are operating at or in support of the incident. It is helpful to consider active attack response in three phases. Phase 1 is Stop the Killing in the hot zone, and it will last 5-7 minutes. Phase 2 is Stop the Dying in the warm zone, and it will last 7-20 minutes. The goal of Phase 2 is to get all casualties out of the crisis site and to definitive care as quickly as possible, otherwise called Rapid Casualty Evac. Phase 3 occurs when senior leadership arrives in the cold zone and creates Unified Command; it occurs in 20 minutes and lasts for the duration of the mass casualty incident.

Solo Officer Rapid Deployment

Whether on or off duty, in uniform or civilian clothes, an officer may determine that immediate action is necessary and reasonable to stop the threat. The first arriving officer to the scene will have many responsibilities, including COMMAND. How that officer initially deploys and communicates can have a significant impact in the manner that follow-on responders deploy as well as the overall outcome for the event. The solo officer must consider the following:

- A. In preparing for deployment prior to arriving at the crisis scene, the Patrol Rifle, Go-Bag and Ballistic Plate Carrier (Level IV armor) should be donned and/or readied so there is no delay once the officer arrives. If available, shields should be readied for use.
- B. Do not park in a manner that blocks or impedes other responders including fire apparatuses and ambulances. When parking, consider cover and concealment, and consider parking on sidewalks, grassy areas, or other unimproved surfaces that ensure ingress/egress routes are not blocked.
- C. Upon exiting the vehicle, the solo officer should begin evaluating. If an exigent response exists based on gunfire, citizens fleeing or other driving forces, the responding officer shall move immediately to the threat. A solo officer should communicate **“Confirmed Active Attack”** and communicate at minimum an LCAN report:
 1. **Location** (I am entering the Charlie-2 door, for example)
 2. **Conditions** (people fleeing, gunshots heard, etc)
 3. **Actions** (I am entering because I hear shots fired...or other driving forces exist)
 4. **Needs** (I need follow-on responders to enter the Charlie-2 door and move to me)
 5. I have **COMMAND**.

The officer should not attempt to conduct a thorough clearing of the structure, but should follow sounds, such as gunfire, yelling, or other driving forces. The primary objective is to stop the killing by distracting, isolating and neutralizing the threat.

- D. If entry is made and the threat is located inside a room, the officer should perform a hasty threshold evaluation. This provides a tactical advantage, as it affords some level of concealment, the ability to stop and shoot from outside the room, and it provides

distance between occupants in the room and the officer. The solo officer still has COMMAND. If force is used to stop the threat, the solo officer shall communicate an updated LCAN and enter the room. Once inside the room, the solo officer can hold cover until responding officers link up.

- E. If an exigent response does not exist at the time of arrival, the solo officer should move to the structure and find an entry point. The officer should hold at the entry point for follow-on responders while continuing to evaluate and communicate an LCAN report on the radio.

Plain-Clothes Response Considerations

Off-duty officers, or officers in plain-clothes, who respond to an active attack as a solo officer should remember:

1. Speed is security. A solo officer cannot maintain 540-degrees of coverage. A static, stationary responder is more vulnerable to threats. The officer should move direct-to-threat and neutralize the threat.
2. After any deadly force encounter, the officer should orient themselves away from any door openings and not attempt to handcuff any persons. Because they may not be wearing body armor, the officer should position themselves in plain sight and away from any room entry, as to afford maximum visibility to responding officers.
3. If the threat has been neutralized, the officer must now focus on not being perceived as a threat to follow-on responders. The officer should consider holstering their weapon and having their badge readily identifiable, accompanied by visual and verbal identifications as "Police."

2-5 Responding Officers Deployment

Additional responders should group together if time allows and enter the involved structure. Their primary objective is to stop the killing. Officers should identify and communicate locations of victims needing medical attention. Absent a continued threat of violence, or with known information that a suspect(s) has been apprehended, officers should start emergency medical care on victims. Should a driving force occur while officers are performing emergency medical care, some of them should move immediately to neutralize the threat while others continue triaging victims.

Concepts and Principles

Safe, effective responses to active threats are designed around concepts and principles. The first responding officers should:

- A. **Stay together as much as possible** and enter the involved structure quickly. Responders' protection comes primarily from effective fire, not from hiding behind hard cover. Therefore, responders should stay together and resolve the most pressing issue(s) first, then work the SIM model (Security, Incident Command, Medical...in that order or simultaneously if circumstances allow)
- B. **Communicate effectively** by using plain speech; keep sentences short and concise, and ensure feedback is received to ensure the communication was effective.
- C. **Conduct threshold evaluations** (commonly referred to as slicing the pie) when systematically searching the building.
- D. **Maintain 540 degrees security.** Responders must work together to see the suspect before he/she sees them. Therefore, Responders need to continually look for threats by scanning 360 degrees around them, and at high and low angles. Responders must also be aware of the position of their team members and ensure

they are not exposed to uncleared danger areas.

E. Differentiate between **Direct to Threat** and **Deliberate** speeds and use the appropriate speed for the circumstances. Responders must realize there is no one correct speed of movement for an active attack. They should move only as fast as they can think and engage accurately. The appropriate speed during a response often depends on whether a driving force exists. If a driving force exists, then direct-to-threat speed is necessary to distract, isolate and neutralize the threat. Deliberate speed is used when systematically searching the structure and the threat's location is unknown.

Follow-On Responders

Until enough responders are inside the structure, follow-on responders should be directed to victim locations if there is no active threat. The goal is to stop the dying, assuming the threat has been neutralized or has fled the site. Guidelines for follow-on responders include:

- A. Do not enter a hallway unannounced that is occupied by other officers. Announce "Blue, Blue, Blue" or use white light (flashlights) until officers receive feedback, then move to link-up.
- B. Unless clear on what other officers may be communicating, move to them after announcing the intent to move and conduct a face-to-face meeting.
- C. Establish and maintain security in the area that responders occupy, while considering the involved area as unsearched. Depending on how many victims there are and where they are located, a Casualty Collection Point (CCP) may be warranted. However, a CCP is not a default requirement, as evidence-based research has shown that moving patients several times increases injury.
- D. Work the SIM Model:
 - a. **Security** – clear the space, secure the threat, briefly interview person(s) in the space to determine what happened.
 - b. **Incident Command** – Designate a single person to facilitate the correct application of SIM and continue COMMAND inside the crisis site, and until COMMAND is relinquished to the warm zone command that will be established outside of the crisis site. Fully communicate an If / Then plan in anticipation of more threats; assign an officer to remain in the door threshold and to facilitate link up; communicate an LCAN report to all.
 - c. **Medical** – determine if any citizens have medical training, then provide casualty care and thereafter leave unconscious casualties in the Recovery Position.
- E. Designate a person(s) to facilitate link ups, identify closest egress for patients, establish a security corridor for the ingress/egress of Rescue Task Force (RTF) units, identify security for an external casualty/ambulance exchange point where ambulances can assemble, and fully communicate the casualty exchange point while controlling RTF requests.
- F. Direct uninjured civilians into a cleared and secure room, and preferably separate from the injured victims, unless they have medical knowledge that can assist with victims. For those not assisting, they will be searched, evaluated and eventually evacuated in an effort to ensure the most critically injured receive emergency medical care first. These individuals should be contained and later interviewed as witnesses.
- G. Communicate with all involved responders to ensure the area remains secure while facilitating victim treatment.

Incident Command (IC) at Forward Control Point (FCP)

Once sufficient officers are inside and/or there is no additional ongoing violence, an officer or supervisor will remain outside of the structure and request COMMAND from those inside the location. The responsibility of the outside Incident Command (IC) may be assumed by any law enforcement officer regardless of rank. Establishing IC early is critical to effective communications, resource management, co-located command with police and fire, stopping the dying and rapid casualty evacuation. The FCP is a forward control point and within sight of the crisis, making it easier to facilitate resources to and from. It is simply a geographical location, and it denotes where Incident Command is set up in the warm zone. Once the IC assumes command, this shall be communicated to Dispatch to ensure radio traffic is diverted to the IC. Dispatch should ensure Fire is aware of IC's location so Fire and EMS representatives can be sent to the forward control point, thus ensuring co-located command has been established. The IC will confirm if/when there are enough officers inside, whereupon IC will request Dispatch send all additional responders to Staging. This helps mitigate self-dispatching and over-convergence at the crisis site and assembles resources ready to be deployed with Rescue Task Forces, and more.

With co-located incident command at the FCP (police and fire at minimum), the IC will manage resources and deployments to and from the crisis site. This includes RTF requests and deployments, patient tracking, and security.

Building Sectorization

To ensure all first responders apply the same sectorization and thus reduce confusion, responders should consider the following:

- A. Responders will avoid using north, east, west and south designations.
- B. Responders will use a 3-position digital system
 - a. The first position is the floor of the building (1,2,3...). The second position is the side of the building (Adam, designating the front or main entrance, Boy, Charlie and David, clockwise). The third position is the "Point of Interest," which may be a window or door. Responders will read from left to right, as they are looking at the building.
 - b. For example: 2-A-2 would designate the second floor, Adam side, second window from the left.

Unified Command

As senior executives begin arriving, it is detrimental to operations for them to be co-located at FCP. Ultimately elected leaders will arrive, so senior executives will establish Unified Command offsite and in the cold zone. Unified Command should include representatives of police, fire, EMS, the involved facility, and other stakeholders who will add value to response and recovery. Unified Command will be responsible for designating Incident Command at the Forward Control Point as Operations (OPS). OPS will continue to coordinate resources for casualty management, including the deployment of Contact Teams, breachers, RTFs, and more.

Unified Command shall coordinate resources as such:

- A. Designate the FCP as Operations (Tactical OPS) and allow OPS to maintain tactical authority of the crisis site
- B. Implement 24/7 operations, including the recall of personnel and request for mutual aid
- C. Create inner and outer perimeters
- D. Assign security at local hospital(s) for arriving casualties
- E. Assign intelligence activities associated with the incident and begin comprehensive investigation
- F. Ensure a lead detective(s) is assigned and communicated to all stakeholders
- G. Assign security and investigation associated with the suspect(s) vehicle and residence and all other crime scenes
- H. Activate the EOC
- I. Create of a unit(s) comprised of several law enforcement and possibly fire to respond to reported “ghost or echo calls”
- J. Establish Patrol Supervisor and associated staffing to ensure unrelated calls for service are managed
- K. Create a media staging area and proactive community messaging
- L. Coordinate elected leaders
- M. Summon chaplains and peer support to provide onsite services as directed by Unified Command.
- N. Create Area Command if multiple offenses/locations are involved
- O. Establish a Reunification Branch to facilitate offsite reunification, to include transportation and a venue(s).

Rescue Task Force (RTF)

(This section pertains to agencies with full-time Fire and EMS assets/staffing, or to agencies that can pre-stage Rescue Task Forces in anticipation of large events. All other agencies or instances can refer to the Law Enforcement Rescue Model as another alternative for rapid casualty evacuation.)

In an effort to save as many lives as possible and rapidly move the critically injured from the crisis site to advanced medical treatment, Police and Fire will operate under a co-located command and work together to establish a Rescue Task Force(s). RTF's shall be organized under a team leader and deploy in tactical formations consistent with agency training, and be prepared to respond to rapidly changing circumstances.

- A. The Fire Department or the IC will set a staging area from which the RTF's will deploy to the crisis site.
- B. The IC will direct officers either to the crisis area or to the staging area as needed, after enough officers are inside the structure. In many instances, outside law enforcement agencies will be directed to Staging to assist with the creation of RTFs.
- C. In the absence of a Police Staging Supervisor, the Fire Staging Supervisor will be responsible for both police and fire assets to assign personnel and deploy the RTF's.

- D. An RTF will consist at minimum of two police officers and two fire medics. Officers will provide security at all times, escorting medics into and out of the crisis site. Officers will not leave fire medics.
- E. Each RTF will remain intact any time outside of the Casualty Collection Point.
- F. Each RTF will be deployed through the IC with information including route of travel and entry point.
- G. Police assets will be assigned to secure the casualty/ambulance exchange point from which the casualties will be transported.
- H. Once inside, RTF's will consider designating a "Casualty Collection Point Manager" to ensure continuity of patient care and rapid casualty evacuation
- I. The number of casualties will ultimately determine the number of RTFs needed.

Law Enforcement Rescue Model

For agencies that do not have on-duty Fire and EMS resources (volunteers, for example), the Law Enforcement Rescue Model can be used to ensure rapid casualty evacuation. The Rescue Model is also an option when time is critical and waiting for triage, treatment and transport is not in the best interest of the casualty. Instead of relying on RTFs, law enforcement can utilize onsite resources and vehicles to "load and go" to nearby hospitals. If tactical medicine is applied in these situations, such as tourniquets or chest seals, then it is best that it be applied while the casualty is in transit. Time is critical and may be the difference in survivability, so rapid casualty evacuation and resource availability should determine what actions law enforcement take.

Officer Involved Shooting - Investigations

Should there be an exchange of gunfire, the agency will implement its officer-involved shooting policy and proceed accordingly.