The Allegheny County Chiefs of Police Association

ACTIVE SHOOTER

MODEL POLICY

An Allegheny County Criminal Justice Advisory Board Project

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In Partnership With

The Allegheny County District Attorney's Office

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This model should serve only as a "Starting Point" for those departments who may wish to update their Rules & Regulations Manual in this area. To best serve your department, it should be reviewed and revised by you and your Municipality and Insurance Carrier.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide police officers with guidelines for assessing the threat and giving them the authority and responsibility to perform rapid intervention tactics to limit serious injury or death during active shooter situations (PA Crimes Code Title 18 Section 508 Use of Force in LE, MPOETC 18-003-Active Assaults, 21-001, 22-301, 23-201 Legal Updates, 22-301, 23- CLE01714-Use of Force, Tenn. v. Garner,-1985, Graham v. Connor-1989, 25-003 Tactical Response).

While the term "active shooter" is used throughout this policy, it applies to all active **assailant** situations where there is an active, ongoing deadly threat, to include those from firearms, knives, explosives, vehicles, and other means. Changes in law, procedure, as well as updated training protocols will give rise to modifications and updates.

POLICY

In situations where ongoing deadly force is being employed by a suspect and delay in taking police action could result in injury or death, the rapid intervention of officers at the scene is authorized to prevent further injuries or loss of life.

Whenever possible, the first two (2) to five (5) responding officers should form a single contact team and enter the affected area or structure immediately. The first officers entering the area or structure should recognize that their primary objective is to engage and stop the threat.

If a single officer has arrived on scene and the officer reasonably believes active violence is occurring at that time and no immediate assistance is available, that individual officer will move immediately to engage and stop the threat.

DEFINITIONS

Active Shooter—An armed person(s) who has used deadly force on other persons and continues to do so while having unrestricted access to additional victims.

Contact Team—A team of officers who make immediate entry into a location to locate and neutralize the threat posed by the active shooter.

Incident Command System (ICS)—A standardized on-scene emergency management system that provides for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. ICS can be used for small or large complex incidents/emergencies. In each emergency or incident, regardless of its size, the principles of ICS apply. The first on-scene officer has management responsibility (See below definition for Unified Command and Critical Incident Response Policy).

Incident Commander (IC)—The individual, on scene (officer or supervisor) 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. The first on-scene officer will be the IC unless and until IC responsibilities are assumed by a supervisor or other qualified officer, depending on the size, scope, and complexity of the incident or event.

Rapid Response or Rapid Intervention—An assessment decision made by the on-scene incident commander that the situation presented is a dynamic, active shooter incident rather than a hostage situation and requires immediate intervention by law enforcement officers to stop the threat.

Rescue Task Force —A team of officers who make entry after the contact team to provide first aid and evacuate wounded individuals or officers from a hostile environment.

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.

OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Initial responding officer(s) shall make a situational assessment based on available information from dispatched responders or officers already at the incident scene **to verify** that an active shooter situation exists through information provided by dispatch, from persons confined within or exiting the target location, witnesses, reports of/or sounds of—gunfire, or related means (Be aware that Hoax "swatting" calls to schools, businesses and homes are increasing).
2. Where available and as time permits, witnesses, or others on scene 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. In those incidents where it has been determined/established the active shooter is on the scene in a fixed location, the officer(s) on the scene shall focus their response on the active shooter and determine if:
(a) Violence is currently taking place,
(b) The suspect(s) is shooting his/her weapon, or
(c) The shooter(s) has access to additional potential victims.
4. Upon completion of the initial, on-scene assessment, the IC shall:
(a) Advise Communications and request resources as necessary, and
(b) Determine whether to take immediate action alone, with another officer, or wait until additional resources are available.

FOR RADIO COMMUNICATION
SEE ALLEGHENY COUNTY 911 COMMUNITIONS CENTER
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCY CHANNEL OPERATIONS

5. The initial, on-scene assessment by the Incident Commander and the subsequent determination of rapid intervention does not require approval of a supervisor not already on scene. The IC will be responsible for following Departmental guidelines and reporting requirements.

RATIONALE FOR RAPID INTERVENTION

6. The responding officers shall determine whether rapid intervention is justified and reasonable. This decision may be based on such considerations as whether:
(a) Deadly weapons are available to or have been used by the suspect.
(b) Victims are under the suspect's control, are readily accessible, or both; and
(c) The suspect poses an ongoing threat of deadly force.
7. The officer's assessment of his/her capability to effectively intervene should be based on such factors as whether:
(a) The officer is armed and in possession of appropriate equipment.
(b) It is reasonable to believe that persons will be killed or injured if immediate response to the threat is not taken.
(c) The size, configuration, and related physical aspects of the incident site allow for movement, stealth, cover, and related tactical needs.
(d) The suspect is accessible; and
(e) The incident site offers opportunities for cover and concealment to assist tactical options, adequate routes for evacuation, or secure locations in which to hide.

CONTACT OFFICER OR TEAM RESPONSE

8. The presence of plainclothes officers on the scene of an active shooter incident presents a very high risk of "friendly fire" "blue on blue" casualties. Every effort will be made to minimize the use, risk, and exposure of plainclothes officers on an active shooter scene not equipped with items (e.g., police raid vest, jacket, shirt, ball cap) that help ensure recognition as **"POLICE"** to the public and other officers. Such plainclothes officers should be replaced on an active shooter scene as soon as possible.
9. **The primary 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. **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 Rescue Teams 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.

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. When the primary mission is completed the contact officer or team will switch its focus to rendering appropriate medical aid within the limits of their training until EMS arrives.

RESCUE TASK FORCE

18. Once the contact officer or team is deployed, and as officers and resources arrive at the incident scene, the IC should ensure that rescue teams are formed to provide first aid and to help evacuate victims. Rescue teams generally consist of four to six officers but may be expanded to include medical personnel or other officers as the situation dictates.
19. Rescue teams should be organized under a team leader, deploy in tactical formations consistent with training, and be prepared to respond to hostile action as rapidly changing circumstances may place them in contact with suspects. In such instances, the team shall be prepared and equipped to serve as the contact team.
20. Rescue teams should be deployed only after the contact team has made entry, provided a status report, notified Communications of the location of victims, and determined that rescue efforts may begin.
21. Wounded and injured persons will be quickly searched, if reasonable, for weapons and removed to the designated emergency first aid area with cover and movement of such persons provided by team members. If EMS is not yet in place, rendering appropriate medical aid within the limits of their training will be the responsibility of rescue team members until they are relieved by medical personnel.
22. Medical personnel may be permitted to accompany or respond to rescue team members if wounded persons are incapable of being moved.
23. Rescue team members will search uninjured persons in the hostile environment before moving them to a designated safe area in the hostile environment or the evacuation site.
24. Rescue and recovery operations will continue until the IC has declared the scene clear and safe.
25. Officers assigned to the evacuation site will 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.

Incident Command

26. Unified incident command shall be established as soon as possible.
27. The IC shall ensure that the following actions are accomplished:
    a. **Establish Communication and Control**. Clear frequency of other traffic.
    b. **Identify ACTIVE ZONE (RED/HOT) .** Communicate the "RED/HOTL ZONE" to all responding agencies.
    c**. Establish an Inner Perimeter YELLOW/WARM Zone**. Only uniformed personnel should be at the inner perimeter. If plainclothes officers were initially deployed, replace with uniform personnel ASAP.
    d. **Establish Outer Perimeter GREEN/COLD Zone**. Crowd and traffic control to prevent gridlock.
    e**. Establish Command Post.** Between the inner and outer perimeter.
    f**. Establish a Staging Area.** Between the inner and outer perimeter.
    g**. Identify and Request Additional Resources.** Select a recorder.

Evacuation Center / Reunification Area

28. An Evacuation Center should be established to maintain care and control of all persons who are either evacuated or rescued and to 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.

Community Notification

29. The PIO or designated individual with the approval of the Chief of Police will be responsible for ensuring appropriate information is distributed in a timely manner to the community. This may include:
a. shelter in place warnings for nearby locations during active shooter situations.
b. alerts to avoid the area due to heavy law enforcement activity and potential road closures.
c. specific directions for individuals who elect to visit the scene.

REPORTING AND DEBRIEFING

30. The initial responding officer will be responsible for preparing the original incident report unless assigned to another officer by the officer's supervisor.
31. As soon as reasonably possible after the incident, a debriefing of essential personnel involved in the incident will be conducted.
32. The debriefing shall identify both positive and negative aspects of the deployment with the intent of addressing areas in need of improvement and to determine whether changes in operational protocols, policy, or training may be warranted as a result.

TRAINING

33. The Department should provide active shooter training to all members. Whenever possible, simulation training exercises should be utilized in real-life facilities such as schools, churches, and public venues.