



Training Bulletin

Los Angeles Port Police

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TACTICAL DE-ESCALATION and DISENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Bulletin is to explain the concept of tactical de-escalation and/or disengagement and to provide officers with information to aid in the appropriate use of these tactics.

The Los Angeles Port Police Department is guided by the overarching principle of reverence for human life in all investigative, enforcement, and other contacts between officers and members of the public. When officers are called upon to detain or arrest a subject who is uncooperative, is actively resisting, may attempt to flee, poses a danger to others, or poses a danger to him or herself, they should, if feasible, consider tactics and techniques that may persuade the subject to voluntarily comply or may mitigate the need to use a higher level of force to resolve the situation safely.

Some situations require an immediate response, while others allow officers the opportunity to communicate with the subject, refine tactical plans, and, if necessary, call for additional resources. The actions of first responders will be weighed against the information known, the seriousness and gravity of the situation, the subject's actions and, when feasible, efforts to de-escalate or disengage from the situation. Tactical de-escalation and tactical disengagement are tactics that may be considered when an officer reasonably believes that continued contact may result in an unreasonable risk to the subject, the public, and/or Department members, including situations involving a barricaded suspect, a suicidal subject or a person believed to be experiencing a mental health crisis.

TACTICAL DE-ESCALATION AND DISENGAGEMENT DEFINED:

Tactical De-escalation involves the use of techniques to reduce the intensity of an encounter with a suspect and enable an officer to have additional options to gain voluntary compliance or mitigate the need to use a higher level of force while maintaining control of the situation.

Tactical Disengagement is the tactical decision to leave, delay contact, delay custody or plan to make contact at a different time and under different circumstances. This tactic should be considered when an officer reasonably believes continued contact may result in an unreasonable risk to the involved person, a suicidal subject, the public and/or Department members. It is similar to discontinuation of a pursuit.

Disengaging can be proposed by the primary unit, but requires consultation with the field supervisor at scene, and with the on duty Watch Commander approval.

Note: Tactical de-escalation or disengagement does not require that an officer compromise his or her safety or increase the risk of physical harm to

the public. These techniques should only be used when it is safe and prudent to do so.

PROCEDURES:

While enforcing the law and protecting the public, officers are often forced to make split-second decisions in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, rapidly changing, and dangerous. In rapidly developing circumstances, especially when a suspect poses an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury, officers may not have sufficient time or reasonable options available to resolve the situation without the need to use objectively reasonable force. In other circumstances, however, de-escalation and/or disengagement techniques may enable officers to gain additional time and tactical options to potentially reduce the necessity of using force to take a suspect into custody, prevent escape or address a threat while also maintaining control of the situation.

Tactical Considerations:

Tactical situations vary and there is no single solution to resolving every incident. De-Escalating and/or Disengagement are only two of many tactics that should be considered, if feasible, to potentially reduce the intensity of the encounter if it is believed it would de-escalate the situation. The acronym "PATROL" describes the most common de-escalation techniques.

Planning: Officers should attempt to arrive at scene with a coordinated approach based upon initial information and any pre-existing knowledge of the suspect(s) or the involved parties. The dynamic nature of most incidents will require tactical plans to be flexible, and officers need to adapt their plan(s) as additional information or factors become known to the officer(s).

Tactical De-Escalation Techniques

- Planning
- Assessment
- Time
- Redeployment and/or Containment
- Other Resources
- Lines of Communication

Assessment: Officers should continually assess the situation as circumstances change and new information is received. If a suspect is failing to comply with orders, officers should attempt to determine whether a suspect's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or escape, or an inability to comprehend the situation due to environmental, physical, cognitive, or other conditions. If the suspect is unable to comprehend the situation, other tactical options may be more effective in resolving the situation safely. Officers should additionally evaluate if further contact with the subject may result in an undue safety risk to the person, the public, and/or officers.

Time: *Distance+Cover=Time*. Time is an essential element of de-escalation as it allows officers the opportunity to communicate with the suspect, refine tactical plans, and, if necessary, call for additional resources or disengage. If a suspect is contained and does not pose an imminent threat to officers, the public, or himself/herself, time can provide an opportunity for the suspect to reconsider his/her actions and decisions.

Redeployment and/or Containment: Redeployment and/or containment can afford officers the added benefit of time and distance while continuing to maintain control of the situation. The addition of time and distance may give officers an opportunity to re-assess, communicate, request additional resources, or deploy other tactics to reduce the likelihood of injury to both the public and officers while also mitigating any potential ongoing threats. Redeployment, however, should not enable a subject to gain a tactical advantage, arm himself/herself, or flee and pose a greater danger to the public or officers.

Other Resources: In the case of a tense or potentially dangerous encounter, requesting additional resources can provide officers with specialized expertise, personnel and tools to help control and contain an incident.

Lines of Communication: Maintaining open lines of communication between officers and communicating effectively with a suspect are critically important when managing a tense or potentially dangerous encounter. Communication between officers can improve decision-making under tense circumstances and increase the effectiveness of coordinated actions. In addition, when a suspect observes that officers are prepared, well organized, professional, and working as a team, he or she may be deterred from attempting to flee, fight, or actively resist.

Because every situation is fluid and unique, ongoing communication and coordination between officers is critically important to respond effectively in a tense and uncertain encounter. Communicating with a suspect may slow down the incident, creating time to plan. All or some of the following tactics may be used in the same incident as time or circumstances allow:

- Verbal warnings / Advisements
- Persuasion / Building rapport
- Defusing
- Asking open ended questions
- Empathy
- Redirecting
- Giving clear and direct order

Suicidal Subjects: Not all suicidal subject calls require immediate police action. There is a distinction between a suspect wanted for a crime and an individual who has not committed a crime but has expressed the desire to commit suicide. It is not a criminal act to express the desire or even attempt to commit suicide within one's home and suicidal subjects or persons suffering from a possible mental health crisis are afforded the same constitutional rights as everyone else.

The incident commander (IC) shall, when appropriate, contact The Los Angeles Police Department to request the Special Weapons and Tactics team (SWAT) and/or the Crisis Negotiations Team (CNT) whenever:

- The incident meets the criteria for a barricaded suspect, or

- A suicidal subject is armed, or
- A suicidal subject is on an elevated or unstable surface which could cause a fall that could result in a significant impact injury, or
- The IC shall also contact MEU for advice if the incident involves an individual experiencing a mental health crisis.

Note: Not all suicidal subjects are considered barricaded or require a SWAT/CNT response or immediate police action.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The actions of first responders will be weighed against the information known and reasonably believed, governmental interests, subject's actions, and efforts to de-escalate and/or disengage from the situation. First responders may choose to strategically de-escalate or disengage to avoid resorting to force when the danger to the subject by self-harm is no longer imminent, and he/she has not committed a serious or violent crime.

- First responders should avoid making any promises to family members or loved ones. Avoid attempting to establish the concerned parties' expectations of on-scene law enforcement personnel.
- Officers must be aware that suicide attempts/threats of suicide and experiencing a mental health crisis are not crimes. Absent an immediate threat of injury to officers or the public, it may be more prudent to provide care and assistance to the subject at a later time when they are not in crisis.
- A detention under Welfare and Institutions Code 5150 is permissive but not mandatory and must be based upon "probable cause" to believe the person to be detained is a danger to themselves or others, or gravely disabled, due to a mental illness.
- A subject's mere refusal of treatment for a possible mental health crisis or a refusal to take prescribed medication does not necessarily require immediate police action nor does such refusal constitute a crime.

CRISIS RELATED RESOURCES:

When feasible, officers are encouraged to provide crisis related resources to the subject and/or person reporting. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health ACCESS line (800) 854-7771
- Suicide Prevention and Survivor Hotline (877) 727-4747 and/or (888) 628-9454 (Spanish)
- Los Angeles Police Department – Community Mental Health Resource Guide (tri-fold handout)
- Call 211 (a service that can link the caller to countywide programs)

FOLLOW-UP CONSIDERATIONS:

- If a crime has occurred and a decision to disengage is made, officers shall complete the appropriate criminal Investigative Report (IR). If the incident involved a mental health crisis, this should be documented under the "Additional" heading in the IR and shall include a brief synopsis of the circumstances and the notifications made (who was contacted and/or provided advice). Follow-up will be conducted by the appropriate investigative entity.
- When the subject appears to be experiencing a mental health crisis and the decision to disengage has been made, the Watch Commander shall ensure the LAPD Mental Evaluation Unit is contacted for any follow-up required to address the subject's suspected mental health.
- Officers shall document the disengagement in either the report being filed in conjunction with the incident; if no report is being filed, they shall document the actions in the CAD call-history, to include which Sergeant and WC approved the actions.
- Supervisors and Watch Commanders shall document the disengagement in their respective log. It shall include a brief synopsis of the circumstances and the notifications made (who was contacted and/or provided advice).

CONCLUSION:

The overall objective of any tactical encounter is to gain control and safely resolve the situation. Tactical situations vary and there is no single solution to resolving every incident. In addition, some situations require an immediate response and de-escalation techniques are neither viable nor effective options. Nevertheless, employing tactical de-escalation techniques under the appropriate circumstances can improve officer safety, mitigate threats, reduce injuries, build public trust, and preserve life.

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