



# TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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## TACTICAL DISENGAGEMENT

The purpose of this Bulletin is to explain the concept of tactical disengagement and provide officers with information to aid in the appropriate use of this tactic.

The Los Angeles 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 the situation. Tactical disengagement is one of the 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, especially in situations involving a barricaded suspect, a suicidal subject or a person believed to be experiencing a mental health crisis.

## PROCEDURES

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 person in crisis, the public and/or Department members.

Disengagement can be proposed by the primary unit, but requires consultation with the field supervisor at scene, the Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) Watch Commander (if the subject is experiencing a mental health crisis) and with Area watch commander approval.

The incident commander (IC) shall, when feasible, contact Metropolitan Division's Watch Commander 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

The IC shall also contact MEU, Detective Support and Vice Division, 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.

### **Tactical Considerations**

Tactical situations vary and there is no single solution to resolving every incident. Disengagement is only one of many tactics that should be considered, if feasible, to potentially reduce the intensity of the encounter if believed it would de-escalate the situation and no crime or a minor crime has occurred.

**Note:** Minor crimes include, but are not limited to infractions or crimes that can be followed up with an Investigative Report.

Officers should continually assess the situation as circumstances change and new information is received. 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.

### **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.

### **Legal Considerations**

The actions of first responders will be weighed against the information known and reasonably believed, governmental interest, subject's actions, and efforts to de-escalate the situation. First responders may choose to strategically 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) Form 03.01.00. 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 incident shall be reported and documented in the MEU incident tracking system and a referral for follow-up by the Case Assessment Management Program (CAMP) initiated to address the subject's suspected mental health crisis.

- 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).
- The CAMP will be responsible for coordination with the appropriate investigative entity, regarding the scope and type of the follow-up to be conducted in an effort to address the subject's suspected mental health crisis.

## **CONCLUSION**

While some situations require immediate police action, other circumstances may allow officers the opportunity to tactically disengage. Under the appropriate circumstances, tactical disengagement may improve officer safety, mitigate threats, reduce injuries, build public trust, and preserve life.

Field Training Services Unit  
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