



# TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

Michel R. Moore, Chief of Police

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## TACTICAL HAND AND ARM SIGNALS

Officers are often faced with tactical situations where verbal communication is difficult or, at times, impossible due to the need for officers to remain undetected, or in situations where ambient noise caused by environmental conditions, such as industrial or transportation sources, affect officers' ability to verbally communicate effectively. To ensure the safety of involved officers, non-verbal communication techniques may be employed to communicate and resolve situations where verbal communication is no longer an option.

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide responders with an overview of commonly utilized tactical hand and arm signals to manage an incident where verbal communication may no longer be an option or feasible.

### Definition

Tactical hand and arm signals are used in tactical situations when communication amongst officers is essential and verbal communication is not advisable; or in situations where ambient noises impact effective communication between officers. These signals allow officers to convey information and directions to one another, while maintaining stealth and assist in preventing suspects from being alerted to the officers' location.

Tactical hand and arm signals can also be coupled with verbalization in overwhelmingly noisy and/or chaotic environments such as active shooter incidents or crowd control situations.

**Note: Any hand, arm or non-verbal signals utilized in conjunction with a reportable use of force incident shall be documented in all related reports.**

### Considerations

Tactical hand and arm signals should be:

- Simple and efficient
- Performed with the support hand/non-gun hand

- Delivered in a somewhat exaggerated manner
- Learned and practiced prior to utilization

Officers using tactical hand and arm signals must:

- Place themselves in position to be seen by other officers
- Limit their exposure to potential danger areas

### Tactical Hand and Arm Signals

The following are tactical hand and arm signals that may be used by officers:

**Cover Me:** Raise your arm and place your open hand, palm down, over your head, then point to your chest.



**Cover an Area:** Raise your arm and place your open hand, palm down, over your head and then point to the area you want to be covered.



**Halt:** Raise your arm and hold your clenched fist just above shoulder level.



**Move Forward:** With an open hand, move your arm back over your shoulder and then, with a sweeping motion, move your arm forward at your shoulder level. This motion mimics throwing a ball.



**Suspect(s):** Open your hand with fingers spread wide, pointing toward the suspect(s).



**Clear:** Extend your arm forward with your thumb up.



**Listen:** Cup your hand adjacent to your ear and if applicable, point to the area that you want officers to listen.



**Look:** Point your index and middle fingers toward your eyes, and then point to the area you want to be observed.



**Attention:** Make a low-volume snap to gain the attention of officers in close proximity. This action is used in conjunction with other signals such as “suspect,” or “look,” and “listen.”

## Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Hand and Arm Signal

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), subway system is a unique and potentially dangerous environment with many hazards. Officers must address tactical concerns prior to entering the subway system. The Metro B and D Line track bed contains many dangers, such as high voltage electrical equipment, fire suppression system pipelines, electrified rails, and the possibility of being struck by an oncoming train.

The tactics used by officers who may venture within the Metro subway system are of paramount importance and should not be taken for granted.

Officers must be constantly aware of the following factors when operating within the Metro subway system:

- Approaching/departing trains
- Location of electrified contact rail
- Location of stairs at each end of the station platform that lead to the track bed
- Track switches operate from a power source different than the contact rail power source

Hand and arm signals are used as warning and communication between trains and Metro employees. These signals shall not be used except as defined. Anything waved urgently at a train shall be considered a STOP indication. The tactical hand and arm signal that may be used by officers in a tactical or emergency situations is the STOP signal. Officers should also broadcast to Communications Division their request, identifying the train line they wish to have stop, the direction of travel, and the nearest station or platform.

**Stop:** Facing oncoming traffic using your support arm extended outward in lateral swinging motion moving from side to side. This will signal to the train operator to initiate stopping procedures.



**Note: Officers shall expect train movement at any time, on any track, and in any direction. Under NO circumstance shall officer's position themselves on the track right-of-way to signal a train to stop. Officers should position themselves in line of sight of the train operator from a safe position.**

## **CONCLUSION**

Efficient and effective tactical movements in situations requiring stealth or in chaotic and noisy environments takes coordination, discipline, and practice. Tactical hand and arm signals provide a method for effective communication, which establishes coordination, and maintains discipline in situations where officers must work together to ensure officer safety and minimize risk to the community.

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