



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

TACTICAL CONCEPTS

Tactics Training Overview

Tactical Concept No. 3

November 2022

TACTICAL MIRROR

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Tactical Concepts – Tactics Training Overview is to educate officers about the Tactical Mirror as a critical tool for assessing potentially dangerous situations such as building searches and other tactical operations. Using the Tactical Mirror provides officers with the advantage of seeing an area of concern while simultaneously using available cover to minimize exposure during the search. For purposes of this Tactical Concepts – Tactics Training Overview, the “Searching Officer” is the officer using the Tactical Mirror.

History

Police officers are commonly tasked with conducting building searches for potential suspects who may be armed, lying in wait for an ambush, or simply hiding to evade arrest. In addition to building searches, officers are tasked to search dangerous areas for other threats, such as potential explosive devices. Consequently, the historical and effective use of the Tactical Mirror has aided in locating dangerous suspects or items without injury or death to the searching officers.

Tactical Mirror

The Tactical Mirror is defined as a search tool used to visually assess an area via an angled view in the reflection of a mirror.

Design

Tactical Mirrors come in several designs. Some are small pocket mirrors affixed to the end of a small rotating arm. Others are larger, movable mirrors affixed to the end of a lightweight, extendable pole. Generally, the Tactical Mirror reflective surface is made from flat acrylic material, which provides the truest reflection of the area viewed. Though the flat mirror is preferred, a convex mirror can be used as long as it is understood that areas viewed in the convex mirror reflection will appear distorted.



PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES

The Tactical Mirror is designed to safely assist officers in viewing an area, such as a room, before exposing the officer's body during the search. Whenever practical, officers should use a Tactical Mirror to visually clear an area before exposing themselves to that area.

The Tactical Mirror is designed to visually clear areas of concern such as:

- Over and around walls
- Under and around vehicles
- Attics
- Inside rooms, closets, open areas, and hallways
- Over, around and under areas of concern such as furniture, cabinets, and other obstacles
- Stairs and landings
- Basements
- Windows
- Elevated platforms
- Potential hiding areas
- Around corners

Tactics and Techniques

When the design of the Tactical Mirror permits, the Searching Officer should fully extend the mirror pole to minimize exposure to potential threats from the search area. If the Tactical Mirror has a fixed pole or handle, the Searching Officer should fully extend their arm to gain as much distance as possible without exposing the arm to the potential threat. The Designated Cover Officer (DCO) is assigned to provide cover for the Searching Officer, who is equipped with a Tactical Mirror. Officers assisting the Searching Officer should



avoid crowding the search area and provide cover for areas not yet cleared. When using the Tactical Mirror, search effectively by clearing as much space as possible, from outside, from behind cover, and before making entry into the area.

Scenario: *Officers responded to a radio call for an audible burglary alarm. Upon arrival, officers observed an open door and developed a plan to enter the location to determine if a crime had occurred. The planning included specific responsibilities for the search team, including the Designated Cover Officer (DCO), Searching Officer, and other Cover Officers. The DCO will provide close-proximity cover for the Searching Officer, equipped with a Tactical Mirror. Other officers will provide cover in areas not yet cleared.*

The following search tactics and techniques are recommended while using the Tactical Mirror.

Prior to Deploying the Mirror

Prior to deploying the mirror, officers should safely position the Designated Cover Officer first, to protect the Searching Officer and other officers before conducting any search. The Searching Officer should work around the Designated Cover Officer, rather than vice versa. Next, “Look and Listen” for activity inside the impacted area. Last, if the environment permits, fully extend the mirror before approaching the area to be searched.

Deploying the Mirror

Extend the mirror out and from behind cover and reflect (see) directly into the room, ideally providing a view as though the officer(s) were actually standing in front of the open door. Next extend the mirror into the room to search each side of the door frame before drawing closer to the doorway. Use the mirror to view hard corners for possible suspect(s) and/or evidence of suspect hiding, i.e., top of the head, an elbow peeking out from cover, etc. If necessary, safely place a high-intensity light on the doorway's threshold to illuminate the area.



Next, establish a visual reference point with the Tactical Mirror, such as the strike plate of a door frame. Then, visually search the room in stages, starting at mid-level, then lower level and ending at the upper level. Each of the three stages can be searched either right to left or left to right while slowly sweeping the room.

When searching with the mirror, officers should look for the following:

- Areas of concern, including potential hiding areas,
- Furniture that has possibly been moved,
- Foot marks on the wall leading to an attic crawl space or elevated area,
- Items that appear to be out of place,
- Evidence of someone hiding or ready to conduct an ambush, i.e., a partially opened door leading to another room, and
- Potential hazards or booby traps.

After Deploying the Mirror

Remove the mirror and light from the entry point or area searched before entry or physically searching the area. The Searching Officer should quietly communicate to their Designated Cover Officer and other officers on the search team what they see inside the room/area and any concerns before making entry and/or entering that space. After searching the room from the outside with the Tactical Mirror, officers are encouraged to “slice the pie,” one officer at a time, from either side at the threshold, no more than 90 degrees, and then return to the threshold for cover. Officers also may

conduct a “quick peek” technique, if needed, after performing a “slice the pie” clearing technique. Officers may mirror an area again if they need to confirm if an area appears to be clear or needs additional assessment. The above search sequences can be repeated, as necessary, for additional rooms and areas of the building or area of concern.

Performance Points

The Tactical Mirror does not replace officers physically entering and searching an area or room. When ready, officers should generally conduct a physical search after the Tactical Mirror and other search techniques have been used. Officers should recognize that the Tactical Mirror offers a reflection (in reverse) of the area being searched.

The Designated Cover Officer is strongly discouraged from looking into the Tactical Mirror while the search is being conducted. The Designated Cover Officer’s primary responsibility is to protect the Searching Officer and other officers. The Designated Cover Officer must remain focused on their assignment and listen for information and instructions from the Searching Officer or Team Leader.

When safe, stack on both sides of the doorway if the door is closed and opens inward. This allows officers better coverage and better ability to clear as much of the room as possible, from the outside, with the Tactical Mirror after the door is opened.

CONCLUSION

The Tactical Mirror is an essential assessment tool that can assist officers in avoiding a physical confrontation by using distance and cover to locate a suspect or subject. Officers can then issue verbal commands from cover to encourage the suspect to surrender. The Tactical Mirror offers a simple way to safely search a room while staying behind cover.

Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department’s Use of Force Policy.