



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
TACTICAL CONCEPTS
Tactics Training Overview

Tactical Concept No. 15

October 2025

TACTICAL DISENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Tactical Concept is to explain 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 to persuade voluntary compliance or reduce 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 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 subject in crisis, the public, and/or Department personnel.

The primary unit can propose disengagement; however, it requires consultation with the field supervisor at scene, consultation with the Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) watch commander (if the subject is reasonably believed to be experiencing a mental health crisis), and Area watch commander approval.

The on-scene field supervisor or incident commander (IC) shall, when appropriate, contact Metropolitan Division's Desk to request advice from the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) on-call supervisor, 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.

Additionally, the on-scene field supervisor or IC shall contact the Metropolitan Division Desk if they reasonably believe, when considering the totality of the circumstances, a consultation with SWAT is necessary for a situation that does not rise to the level of a barricaded suspect. Some issues to consider:

- The subject/suspect could potentially be violent if contacted by police, which can include current threats of violence, a prior history of violence, and/or being armed;
- It is reasonably necessary for officers to make entry into a structure or other closed location to contact the subject/suspect;
- The subject is reasonably believed to be suffering from a mental health crisis; or,
- Probable cause exists to believe that the suspect has been involved in a criminal act.

The on-scene field supervisor or IC shall also contact MEU, Detective Support and Vice Division, for advice if the incident involves an individual believed to be experiencing a mental health crisis.

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

There are times when Disengagement is not an option, including but not limited to when:

- A felony crime has been reported and the suspect is inside the location;
- There is an immediate threat to the public or officers; and/or,
- Other people are inside the location and potentially in danger by a subject qualifying for a mental health evaluation or a private person's arrest.

Note: Attempts to get the other people to exit should be made prior to entry unless an exigency to protect life is present.

Tactical Considerations

Tactical situations vary and there is no single solution to resolve every incident. Disengagement is only one 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 and either 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 calls for service with suicidal subjects 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 die by suicide. Officers are reminded that in the State of California it is not a criminal act to express suicidal ideations, attempt to end one's own life, or self-mutilate. A peace officer shall not use deadly force against a person based on the danger that person poses to themselves, if an objectively reasonable officer would believe the person does not pose an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or to another person.

Legal Considerations

The actions of first responders will be weighed against the information known and the totality of the circumstances. This can include knowledge of the seriousness and gravity of the situation, the subject's actions, and, when practical, efforts to de-escalate the situation. First responders may choose to tactically disengage to avoid resorting to force when the danger to the subject by self-harm is no longer imminent, and they have not committed a serious or violent crime.

- First responders should avoid making any promises to family members or loved ones. Avoid attempting to establish either the concerned parties' expectations of on-scene law enforcement personnel, or the outcome.
- Officers should recognize that suicide attempts, threats of self-harm, and mental health crises are not criminal acts. 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. It 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.

FOLLOW-UP CONSIDERATIONS

If a crime has occurred (except felonies) 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). The appropriate investigative entity will conduct a follow-up investigation.

Note: Supervisors and watch commanders shall document the disengagement in their respective logs, after contacting the MEU Triage Desk (if mental illness was involved). It shall include a brief synopsis of the circumstances and the notifications made, e.g., who was contacted and/or provided advice.

Mental Illness

When the subject appears to be experiencing a mental health crisis and the decision to disengage has been made, the primary unit shall report the incident to the MEU Triage Desk. When practical, the primary unit will note the MEU report number in the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Summary Report or Daily Field Activities Report (DFAR). Personnel from MEU will refer the report to the Case Assessment Management Program (CAMP) to determine if follow-up is needed. The case assessment team will coordinate with the appropriate investigative entity regarding the scope and type of follow-up to be conducted to address the subject’s suspected mental health crisis.

Resources

All Department-issued cell phones are equipped with a Mental Health Resources Quick Response (QR) Code. Officers are encouraged to share this QR Code with community members who may be seeking mental health support. See attachment for further information and crisis resources.

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.

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.

This Tactical Concepts – Tactics Training Overview replaces Training Bulletin Volume XLVIII, Issue 5, Tactical Disengagement, July 2019.

Field Training Services Unit
Police Training and Education Group

DISTRIBUTION "A"

Attachment: Crisis and Mental Health Resources

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

Crisis and Mental Health Resources

Mental Health Resource Reminder: All Department-issued cell phones are equipped with a Mental Health Resources QR Code. Officers are encouraged to share this QR Code with community members who may be seeking mental health support.



The QR Code provides direct access to the Mental Evaluation Unit webpage, which offers valuable information including crisis hotlines, support groups, and treatment facilities. This resource enables individuals and families to connect with assistance discreetly and independently, without involving law enforcement.

For further details or questions, please reach out to the MEU Training Unit.

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

- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health ACCESS line (800) 854-7771
- 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (988 Lifeline is free. When you call, text, or chat on 988, your conversations are confidential) <https://988lifeline.org/>
- Los Angeles Police Department/Department of Mental Health – Community Mental Health Resource Guide (tri-fold handout) and Mental Evaluation Unit 911 Checklist
- Call 211 – a toll-free service that can link the caller to countywide programs; <https://211la.org>

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CONTACT WITH PERSONS SUFFERING FROM A MENTAL ILLNESS. In police contacts with persons suffering from a mental illness, the goal of the Department is to provide a humane, cooperative, compassionate and effective law enforcement response to persons within our community who have a mental illness. The Department seeks to reduce the potential for violence during police contacts involving people suffering from mental illness while simultaneously assessing the mental health services available to assist. This requires a commitment to problem solving, partnership, and supporting a coordinated effort from law enforcement, mental health services and the greater community of Los Angeles.