



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT  
**TACTICAL CONCEPTS**  
Tactics Training Overview

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Tactical Concept No. 18

December 2025

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## **BARRICADED SUSPECTS/SUBJECTS**

### **PURPOSE**

Incidents involving a barricaded suspect/subject present significant safety concerns to first responders, the barricaded individual, and the community. To ensure the safety of all involved, these volatile situations often require police to utilize not only special equipment and tactical training, but specific expertise in crisis negotiation. The Department's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, with the Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) component, is equipped and trained to resolve incidents that involve a barricaded suspect/subject.

The purpose of this Tactical Concept is to provide officers and the on-scene field supervisor or incident commander (IC) with the information necessary to manage an incident that involves a barricaded suspect/subject.

### **PROTOCOL**

#### **What is a Barricaded Suspect/Subject?**

A barricaded suspect/subject incident prompting a SWAT response may include, but is not limited to the following criteria:

1. The suspect is reasonably believed to be armed; **and**
2. Probable cause exists to believe that the suspect has been involved in a criminal act **or** is a threat to the lives and safety of the community and/or police; **and**
3. Is in a position of advantage, affording cover and/or concealment; **or** is contained in an open area and the presence or approach of police officers could precipitate an adverse reaction by the suspect; **and,**
4. The suspect refuses to submit to a lawful arrest.

**Note:** Not all suspects who refuse to surrender are considered barricaded suspects that necessitate a SWAT response.

In addition to established protocols for a SWAT response, either of the following criteria may also activate a CNT-only response for a barricaded subject depending on the incident's nature and imminent possibility of carrying out a suicidal threat:

- Armed person(s) threatening to end one's own life; or,
- Suicidal person(s) on an elevated platform or other unique location that poses a significant safety risk to first responders or others.

It is important to understand that not all suicidal subjects are considered barricaded or require a SWAT/CNT response or immediate police action. There is a distinction between an armed and barricaded suspect wanted for a crime, and a barricaded subject 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.

### **Requesting SWAT**

Once the on-scene field supervisor or incident commander (IC) reasonably believes the incident meets the criteria for a barricaded suspect, they shall immediately contact the Metropolitan Division Desk to request advice from the SWAT on-call supervisor. The on-scene field supervisor or IC should be prepared to answer questions needed to determine if SWAT's response is warranted: who, what, why, when, where, and how. Information known or reasonably available about the suspect(s) should be gathered and communicated to the IC:

- Number of suspects
- Number of hostages
- Physical descriptors
- Clothing
- Ages
- Drug/Alcohol use
- Criminal history
- Mental state
- Floor plan of location
- Additional pertinent facts
- Prior MEU Contacts

### **Special Weapons and Tactics Team**

Handling barricaded suspects is one of the SWAT team's specified duties. The SWAT team has a dual role at the scene of a barricaded suspect. They gather information to provide tactical recommendations and/or solutions to the IC, who maintains overall responsibility of the incident. The SWAT team will also develop and recommend a tactical plan to capture the barricaded suspect at the IC's request. Once SWAT has been assigned its mission, all tactically deployed personnel or first responders near the crisis site shall be guided by the direction of SWAT supervisors.

## **Crisis Negotiations Team**

The SWAT team includes a Crisis Negotiations Team. The CNT component is comprised of SWAT officers and police psychologists from Behavioral Science Services (BSS) who are specially trained in crisis negotiations. Together, the team integrates tactical, verbal, and psychological knowledge and skills in order to negotiate the safe surrender of the barricaded suspect(s) and any victims who may be held against their will. Generally, the CNT component will be deployed with any SWAT response.

## **Mental Evaluation Unit**

When appropriate and upon scene stabilization, any officer in charge of an attempted suicide and/or barricaded suspect scene shall contact the Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU), Detective Support and Vice Division, for advice. The MEU can assist in determining if any identified subjects have had previous contact with Department personnel. The Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART) may be dispatched and able to assist in debriefing family members, witnesses, or other persons concerning issues related to the mental health of the involved person. Personnel from MEU should not be used for tactical operations or other duties beyond establishing rapport with the subject, family members, or other persons who may provide crucial information that would help in resolving the situation peacefully.

**Note:** Any MEU personnel either responding or at scene may be relieved with IC approval.

After resolution of an incident involving a barricaded suspect/subject that was believed to be experiencing a mental health crisis, the primary unit will note the MEU report number in the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Summary or Daily Field Activities Report (DFAR).

## **Tactical Disengagement**

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 members.

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 actions of first responders will be weighed against the information reasonably known at the time, 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. Officers should continually assess the situation as

circumstances change and new information is received. Tactical Disengagement is one of the tactics that may be considered when continued contact may result in an undue safety risk to the suspect/subject, the public, and/or officers.

### **Elevated Platforms**

When a person has expressed the desire to harm themselves, avoid underestimating the danger or threat posed by the person's location. A person on an elevated platform may still be capable of causing serious injury or death to themselves or others, including first responders. First-responder actions should include evacuating the area, establishing perimeter containment, establishing communication, coordinating the response of an air-bag with the LAFD, and de-escalating the situation as much as possible given the objectively reasonable use of currently available resources.

**Note:** Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) personnel will most likely respond to these types of scenarios; however, it is important to understand that it remains a police-driven incident, and a unified command should be established to declare roles and responsibilities with LAFD personnel as soon as practicable.

### **Role of The Initial Communicator**

Establishing communication with either the suspect/subject is essential. It is recommended that at least two officers be part of this crucial process. One officer establishes communication with the suspect/subject and the second officer relays information to the IC regarding progress of the incident. For optimum command and control of the situation, supervisors should generally avoid becoming involved in the role of negotiator. Consideration should be given to de-escalating the scene without compromising safety. The following points are suggested for the initial communicator:

- Find out who, what, when, where, and why before contacting the suspect/subject to determine their state of mind,
- Do not jeopardize officer safety to approach or converse with the suspect/subject (i.e., give up cover, remove protective equipment, disarm or stand in a precarious position),
- Attempt to provide calm initial communication,
- Attempt to stabilize/de-escalate the situation through dialogue, and,
- Be prepared to remain as the primary communicator until relieved by the CNT.

The initial conversation with the suspect/subject is extremely important. As an initial communicator, it is critical that verbiage is introduced that will temper and calm the situation. The following guidelines will assist the initial communicator in establishing productive dialogue:

- Introduce yourself by first name and as a representative of the Department; avoid use of rank or title.
- Maintain a calm demeanor.

- If the suspect/subject does not give their name or refuses to respond, continue to communicate.
- Allow the suspect/subject to vent.
- Do not interrogate – listen to the suspect/subject.
- Avoid a critical, uncaring tone or negative non-verbal communication (e.g., body language).
- Avoid rushing to problem-solve.
- Build rapport and establish trust by using LEAPS – Listen, Empathize, Ask, Paraphrase, Summarize.

### **General Negotiation Guidelines**

The use of negotiations is another resource to control and manage the crisis situation. It is a process of combining verbal and physical tactics to affect the safe release of hostages or surrender of suspects/subjects. However, there are general guidelines that should be followed during the negotiation process:

- Avoid face-to-face negotiations when possible.
- Avoid third-party negotiators until properly vetted.
- Do not offer transportation or hostage exchange.
- Demands for weapons, drugs or alcohol cannot be met.
- Generally, suspects and hostages should not be allowed to go mobile.
- Communicate in English whenever possible.
- Discourage the use of cell phones by on-scene personnel, family members or friends whenever feasible.
- Do not have the suspect/subject surrender until officers at the scene are prepared to receive them.
- Avoid making promises that may/may not be practical and/or feasible.

Face-to-face negotiations are sometimes unavoidable; such as a “jumper” situation or situations occurring in an open area. However, it is imperative that the communicator stay a safe distance from the suspect/subject during negotiations (Distance + Cover = Time). Grabbing/grappling with a suspect/subject on an elevated platform puts the contact officer at great risk, as well as nearby officers who may react instinctively.

Third-party negotiators are essentially individuals other than law enforcement personnel, typically family members, clergy, or friends. However, they need to be properly vetted before introduction to increase their ability to contribute to a peaceful outcome. Until the CNT relieves the initial communicator, it is recommended that a third-party negotiator not be introduced into the negotiation process unless it is unavoidable.

## CONCLUSION

In incidents involving a barricaded suspect, the primary concerns are the preservation of human life, as well as the safety of the barricaded individual, first responders, and the community. To attempt to maximize the safety for all involved, officers should consider tactics and techniques that may persuade the suspect to voluntarily comply or may mitigate the need to use a higher level of force to resolve the situation safely.

### **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 9, Barricaded Suspects, dated December 2019.**

Field Training Services Unit  
Police Training and Education Group

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