

Hostage and Barricade Incidents

407.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Best Practice

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for situations where officers have legal cause to contact, detain or arrest a person, and the person refuses to submit to the lawful requests of the officers by remaining in a structure or vehicle and/or by taking a hostage.

The scope of this policy is not intended to address all variables that officers encounter during their initial response or when a hostage or barricade situation has developed. This policy does not require or recommend specific strategies or tactics for resolution as each incident is a dynamic and rapidly evolving event.

407.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Best Practice

Definitions related to this policy include:

Barricade situation - An incident where a person maintains a position of cover or concealment and ignores or resists law enforcement personnel, and it is reasonable to believe the subject is armed with a dangerous or deadly weapon.

Hostage situation - An incident where it is reasonable to believe a person is:

- Unlawfully held by a hostage-taker as security so that specified terms or conditions will be met.
- Unlawfully held against his/her will under threat or actual use of force.

407.2 POLICY

Best Practice

It is the policy of the Syracuse Police Department to address hostage and barricade situations with due regard for the preservation of life and balancing the risk of injury, while obtaining the safe release of hostages, apprehending offenders and securing available evidence.

407.3 COMMUNICATION

Best Practice

When circumstances permit, initial responding officers should try to establish and maintain lines of communication with a barricaded person or hostage-taker. Officers should attempt to identify any additional subjects, inquire about victims and injuries, seek the release of hostages, gather intelligence information, identify time-sensitive demands or conditions and obtain the suspect's surrender.

When available, department-authorized negotiators should respond to the scene as soon as practicable and assume communication responsibilities. Negotiators are permitted to exercise flexibility in each situation based upon their training, the circumstances presented, suspect actions or demands, and the available resources.

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407.3.1 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

State

The following law and regulation apply to emergency interception and disconnection of phone services:

- (a) An application for an eavesdropping or video surveillance warrant can be applied for via phone or other electronic means during an emergency (CPL § 700.21). The provisions of CPL § 700.05 through CPL § 700.21 must be followed.
- (b) A phone company can disconnect phone service to a residence when there is an emergency that is endangering a person or surrounding area (16 NYCRR § 609.14).

407.4 FIRST RESPONDER CONSIDERATIONS

Best Practice

First responding officers should promptly and carefully evaluate all available information to determine whether an incident involves, or may later develop into, a hostage or barricade situation.

The first responding officer should immediately request a supervisor's response as soon as it is determined that a hostage or barricade situation exists. The first responding officer shall assume the duties of the supervisor until relieved by a supervisor or a more qualified responder. The officer shall continually evaluate the situation, including the level of risk to officers, to the persons involved and to bystanders, and the resources currently available.

The handling officer should brief the arriving supervisor of the incident, including information about suspects and victims, the extent of any injuries, additional resources or equipment that may be needed, and current perimeters and evacuation areas.

407.4.1 BARRICADE SITUATION

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

Unless circumstances require otherwise, officers handling a barricade situation should attempt to avoid a forceful confrontation in favor of stabilizing the incident by establishing and maintaining lines of communication while awaiting the arrival of specialized personnel and trained negotiators. In the interim, the following options, while not all-inclusive or in any particular order, should be considered:

- (a) Ensure injured persons are evacuated from the immediate threat area if it is reasonably safe to do so. Request medical assistance.
- (b) Assign personnel to an immediate action team to control the subject should he/she attempt to exit the building, structure or vehicle, and attack, use deadly force, attempt to escape or surrender prior to additional resources arriving.
- (c) Request additional personnel, resources and equipment as needed (e.g., ERT, canine team, air support).
- (d) Provide responding emergency personnel with a safe arrival route to the location.
- (e) Evacuate uninjured persons in the immediate threat area if it is reasonably safe to do so.

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- (f) Attempt to obtain a line of communication and gather as much information on the subject as possible, including weapons, other involved parties, additional hazards or injuries.
- (g) Establish an inner and outer perimeter as circumstances require and resources permit to prevent unauthorized access.
- (h) Evacuate bystanders, residents and businesses within the inner and then outer perimeter as appropriate. Check for injuries, the presence of other involved subjects, witnesses, evidence or additional information.
- (i) Determine the need for and notify the appropriate persons within and outside the Department, such as command officers and the PIO.
- (j) If necessary and available, establish a tactical or exclusive radio frequency for the incident.
- (k) Establish a command post.

[See procedure for RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIRST OFFICER AT THE SCENE](#)

407.4.2 HOSTAGE SITUATION

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

Officers presented with a hostage situation should attempt to avoid a forceful confrontation in favor of controlling the incident in anticipation of the arrival of specialized personnel and trained hostage negotiators. However, it is understood that hostage situations are dynamic and can require that officers react quickly to developing or changing threats. The following options, while not all-inclusive or in any particular order, should be considered:

- (a) Ensure injured persons are evacuated from the immediate threat area if it is reasonably safe to do so. Request medical assistance.
- (b) Assign personnel to an immediate action team to control the subject should he/she attempt to exit the building, structure or vehicle, and attack, use deadly force, attempt to escape or surrender prior to additional resources arriving.
- (c) Establish a rapid response team in the event it becomes necessary to rapidly enter a building, structure or vehicle, such as when the suspect is using deadly force against any hostages (see the Rapid Response and Deployment Policy).
- (d) Assist hostages or potential hostages to escape if it is reasonably safe to do so. Hostages should be kept separated, if practicable, pending further interview.
- (e) Request additional personnel, resources and equipment as needed (e.g., ERT, canine team, air support).
- (f) Provide responding emergency personnel with a safe arrival route to the location.
- (g) Evacuate uninjured persons in the immediate threat area if it is reasonably safe to do so.
- (h) Coordinate pursuit or surveillance vehicles and control of travel routes.

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- (i) Gather as much information about the suspect as possible, including any weapons, victims and their injuries, additional hazards, other involved parties and any other relevant intelligence information.
- (j) Establish an inner and outer perimeter as resources and circumstances permit to prevent unauthorized access.
- (k) Evacuate bystanders, residents and businesses within the inner and then outer perimeter as appropriate. Check for injuries, the presence of other involved subjects, witnesses, evidence or additional information.
- (l) Determine the need for and notify the appropriate persons within and outside the Department, such as command officers and the PIO.
- (m) If necessary and available, establish a tactical or exclusive radio frequency for the incident.

407.5 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice **MODIFIED** **NYSLEAP-8.7 - 40.2**

Upon being notified that a hostage or barricade situation exists, the supervisor should immediately respond to the scene, assess the risk level of the situation, establish a proper chain of command and assume the role of Incident Commander until properly relieved. This includes requesting Emergency Response Team (ERT) response if appropriate and apprising the ERT Commander of the circumstances. In addition, the following options, listed here in no particular order, should be considered:

- (a) Ensure injured persons are evacuated and treated by medical personnel.
- (b) Ensure the completion of necessary first responder responsibilities or assignments.
- (c) Request crisis negotiators, specialized assignment members, additional department members, resources or equipment as appropriate.
- (d) Establish a command post location as resources and circumstances permit.
- (e) Designate assistants who can help with intelligence information and documentation of the incident.
- (f) If it is practicable to do so, arrange for video documentation of the operation.
- (g) Consider contacting utility and communication providers when restricting such services (e.g., electric power, gas, telephone service). Any such decision shall be discussed with the ERT Unit Commander(s).
- (h) Ensure adequate law enforcement coverage for the remainder of the City during the incident. The supervisor should direct nonessential personnel away from the scene unless they have been summoned by the supervisor or Onondaga County 911 Center.
- (i) Identify a media staging area outside the outer perimeter and have the department PIO or a designated temporary media representative provide media access in accordance with the Media Relations Policy.
- (j) Identify the need for mutual aid and the transition or relief of personnel for incidents of extended duration.

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(k) Debrief personnel and review documentation as appropriate.

[See procedure for DUTIES OF FIRST SUPERVISOR AT THE SCENE](#)

[See procedure for DUTIES OF THE INCIDENT COMMANDER](#)

407.6 ERT RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

It will be the ERT Commander's decision, with input from the Incident Commander, whether to deploy the ERT during a hostage or barricade situation. Once the ERT Commander authorizes deployment, the ERT Commander or their authorized designee will be responsible for the tactical response and negotiations. The Incident Commander shall continue to supervise the command post operation, outer perimeter security, evacuation and media access, and will support the ERT. The Incident Commander and the ERT Commander or their authorized designees shall maintain direct communications at all times.

The Emergency Response Team's unit Commanders shall conduct, or cause to be conducted, an assessment of the Department's procedures for responding to hostage or barricaded suspect incidents, after every such incident. Recommendations for modification of the Department's procedures shall be directed to the Chief of Police.

[See procedure for EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM PROCEDURES](#)

[See procedure for HOSTAGE /SUSPECT NEGOTIATIONS](#)

407.7 NEWS MEDIA/PUBLIC INFORMATION

Agency Content

Release of information to the news media shall be conducted in accordance with the department's policy governing "Public Information."

News media personnel shall be maintained at the designated press area selected by the Incident Commander. The designated area will not be the Command Post or Staging Area. The press area shall be located in an area that does not permit the media to observe and report the movements of Emergency Response Team members.

The Incident Commander, or his designated Public Information Officer, shall have sole responsibility for communicating with the media. Members shall make no comments to the media without prior authorization from the Incident Commander.

407.8 REPORTING

Best Practice

Unless otherwise relieved by a supervisor or Incident Commander, the handling officer at the scene is responsible for completion and/or coordination of incident reports.