

# **COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

**Subject: HOSTAGE / BARRICADED INCIDENTS**

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## **I. Purpose**

To establish guidelines for the handling of incidents involving hostage situations and barricaded subjects.

## **II. Statement of Policy**

When confronted with hostage/barricaded incidents, it shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to consider the lives of the hostages, civilians and officers involved to be of the utmost importance. A successful outcome depends upon the use of a team approach, good communication, and the effective and efficient coordination of all personnel. The primary objective is to preserve human life; those of the hostage(s), citizens and police personnel. A secondary objective is to apprehend the suspect(s) and to recover property.

## **III. General Guidelines**

Hostage/barricaded incidents present a most difficult problem. The successful resolution of such incidents requires great moral courage, sound judgment, discipline and determination on the part of all personnel involved. Experience has shown that the successful termination of these incidents is usually predicated upon adherence to the following guidelines:

- A. Contain the suspect(s) unless forced by circumstances to take other action.
- B. Control assisting personnel's movements, strategic placement, and use of weapons.
- C. Communicate with superiors, subordinates, perpetrators, and others as appropriate.

## **IV. Procedures**

- A. First Officer(s) on the Scene
  - 1. Notify the Covington-Newton County 911 Center of the incident and circumstances. Request assistance.

2. Evaluate the situation, avoiding confrontation, controlling the affected area, and maintaining firearms discipline. Officers confronted with such incidents should not initiate tactical actions other than those necessary to protect the lives and safety of themselves or others consistent with the department's use of force policy (P040). [P040- Police Response to Aggression.doc](#)
3. If the officer feels he/she is in direct danger or his presence would endanger civilian personnel, he/she should retire to a safe position(s) which permits viewing of any possible areas of escape and yet provides for the confinement of the suspects(s).
4. The officer should ascertain the situation and discourage the incident from becoming mobile by blocking off all escape routes.
5. Establish an inner containment perimeter to provide a reasonable degree of safety while maintaining contact with the incident scene.
6. As time and resources permit, establish an outer containment perimeter to control pedestrian and vehicular traffic into the area.
7. When possible, evacuate occupants of residences and businesses within the inner and outer perimeter to a point beyond the outer perimeter.
8. Immediately notify the Watch Commander or supervisor and request that he respond to the scene. Brief the Watch Commander of the status of the situation and the position of all officers around the location.
9. Evacuate injured persons, if the situation permits, and arrange for medical treatment or transportation to Piedmont Newton Hospital.

B. Watch Commander/Supervisor at the Scene

1. Establish a temporary Command Post and notify the 911 Center of the location and telephone number.
2. Authorize the 911 Center to mobilize the Emergency Services Unit and hostage negotiators.
3. Direct all responding officers to report to him for assignments and briefing. He should ensure that members are aware that the safety of the hostage(s) is of primary concern and of the necessity for firearms discipline.
4. Designate a staging area to which additional units should respond and transmit this information and access route to the 911 Center, which will include in every broadcast to responding units any areas or streets that may be unsafe for responding units to enter.
5. Designate responding units to block off all possible vehicular escape routes.
6. Designate someone to be a note taker, maintaining detailed notes regarding the occurrence of events, decisions made, authorization of decisions, time and date, etc.

7. Ensure that all unauthorized persons and vehicles are prohibited from entering the area.
8. Request emergency medical units, fire department and rescue as the situation warrants.
9. Ensure that a control point for the news media is established and ensure that the staging area is not close enough to allow the viewing of the incident scene. The Public Information Officer will be responsible for news dissemination and keeping the media updated on the progress of the incident and any other pertinent information available for release. Until the arrival of the PIO, the Watch commander will assign an officer to liaison with media representatives so that those covering the event may be kept "officially" informed of any progress or changes.
  - a. Information given to the media may be broadcast over radio and television to which the suspect(s) may have access. It is for this reason that tactical plans may only be discussed in broad terms with the media and contemplated tactical action will not be discussed at all.
  - b. Although it is desirable to cooperate with the news media, reporters cannot be allowed to interfere with police operations and should be restricted to designated locations and kept out of the Command Post and other areas where police operations are being conducted.

C. Covington-Newton County 911 Center

1. Upon being advised of a hostage/barricaded incident, the 911 Center shall:
  - a. Immediately invoke a 10-3 (Stop Transmitting)
  - b. Dispatch an ambulance and Covington Fire to the staging area on standby.
  - c. Relay to other responding units the following information as it is received from the field:
    - i. The location of any areas or streets that may be unsafe.
    - ii. The location of the staging area as designated by the Watch Commander.
    - iii. The location of the Command Post.
    - iv. The designated emergency response route and any connecting routes.
2. Upon receipt of a request from the Watch Commander, the 911 Center shall notify:
  - a. Emergency Services Unit
  - b. Hostage Negotiators

- c. Chief of Police
- d. Assistant Chief of Police
- e. Other law enforcement agencies as needed (Newton County Sheriff's Office, Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, etc.).
- f. Federal Bureau of Investigation if the incident involves a bank or political hostage.
- g. Other units that are not involved in the incident to switch their radios to a designated channel.

D. Emergency Services Unit (ESU) Responsibilities

1. Upon arrival of the ESU Commander or his designee, he will establish a tactical command post, relieve the initial officers at the scene, and deploy ESU personnel to the inner perimeter.
2. The ESU Commander has responsibility for and control over police actions and responses within the inner perimeter. The Team Commander must be given the latitude to make tactical decisions, based on his experience and training, as the situation dictates.
3. The Team Commander or his designee will ensure that patrol personnel who established the initial containment are debriefed and accounted for.
4. Formulate and place a plan of action into operation in coordination with the Hostage Negotiation Team.
5. Specific tactical plans will be the decision of the Team Commander after consultation with the Chief of Police and the Negotiation Team. Once implementation of the plan begins, the Team Commander has complete authority to carry out the plan as he determines.
6. Upon the arrest or neutralization of a barricaded suspect(s), ESU shall hold their positions and protect the immediate crime scene (barricaded structure) from entry by unauthorized police personnel or civilians. All other police personnel shall remain at their assigned positions until reassigned to other duties or released by the Watch Commander with authorization from the ESU Commander.
7. Upon completion of the ESU operation, the Team Commander will ensure that a detailed after action report is completed and forwarded to the Chief of Police. In addition, ESU will conduct a debriefing session to critique their handling of the incident.

E. Negotiation Team Responsibilities

1. Upon arrival of the Negotiation Team, a location should be designated near the incident but directly out of the range of any danger to establish communications between the negotiator and the subject(s). This location will be determined by the Negotiation Team in consultation with the ESU Commander.

2. The Negotiation Team will coordinate all communications between subjects, negotiators, ESU and command personnel.
3. The Negotiation Team shall be briefed by the first officers on the scene who made verbal contact with the subject(s).

F. Use of Deadly Force

1. In addition to the Department's policy on the Use of Deadly Force, the application of deadly force in a hostage/barricaded incident must be considered when all reasonable negotiating alternatives have been presented and the immediate threat to human life has not diminished or when a human life has been taken by the subject(s). In such instances, the subject(s) have perilously limited consideration of other options.
2. Once the Chief of Police, who is ultimately responsible for the incident, announces his decision to neutralize the subject(s) by deadly force, ESU personnel will be utilized. The selected marksmen shall be fully briefed and instructed as to their mission. Thereafter, and until advised otherwise, they shall have the sole authority to utilize approved tactics and procedures to accomplish their mission.

G. Authority of Hostage

All personnel shall be aware of the fact that no one, regardless of rank or position within the department, retains his authority when taken hostage.

H. Surrendering of Weapons

No officer shall be expected to surrender his/her weapon(s) upon demand of a captor.

I. Hostage Exchanges

No officer shall be expected to, not should feel compelled to exchange himself/herself for one or more hostages.

J. Injury and Casualty Information

All injury and casualty information shall be relayed to the Public Information Officer for media briefings. Information shall include, but not limited to, number of injuries, number treated and released, number of casualties, names and ages of victims, and names of casualties once the next of kin has been notified.

K. Conclusion of the Incident

The Watch Commander shall debrief his officers and instruct each to prepare a short, but detailed summary report about their duties and observations and forward the report to the ESU Commander or his designee.

The ESU Commander shall review the officers' summary reports with the Watch Commander and evaluate the totality of the incident. The Team Commander will incorporate the summaries into his final report of the incident.

***This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.***

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

*Stacey L. Cotton*

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Chief of Police