



PAWNEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF DARRIN VARNELL

Policy # Active Shooter	Related Policies:
<i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by The Sheriff's Office Sheriff's Office for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i>	
Applicable Oklahoma Statutes	
CALEA Standard:	
Date Implemented: 09/22/2022	Review Date:

I. Policy: This agency in order to save innocent lives recognizes the need for officers to act swiftly and decisively during active shooter events. Responding officers are authorized to take immediate action to contain and if necessary, neutralize active shooters.

II. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Active Shooter** - An active shooter is an armed person who has used deadly physical force on other persons and continues to do so while having potential access to additional victims in what is commonly referred to as a target-rich environment.
- B. Immediate Action Rapid Deployment** - The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement personnel and resources to ongoing, life threatening situation where delayed deployment of personnel could otherwise result in death or great bodily injury to innocent persons. *Immediate action rapid deployment tactics* are not a substitute, nor the same as conventional response tactics to a barricaded gunman.
- C. Soft Targets** - For example, a soft target would be an automobile, a house or assembly of people. Hardening a *soft target* can be achieved by employment of active security elements such as the presence of armed security or law enforcement officers; or passive elements such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design [CPTED], physical barriers, and locking systems. Soft targets selected by active shooters most often include public schools, colleges and universities, malls and major retail.

D. Suicide-by-COP - Is a suicide method in which a criminal actor deliberately acts in a threatening or destructive way towards a law enforcement officer or others, with the intent of provoking a lethal response, such as being shot to death. Similar phrases include *death-by-cop*, *suicide-by-police*, and *officer-assisted-suicide*.

E. 540 Degrees of Awareness - A tactical deployment concept where officers are aware of the necessity to observe their surroundings 360° horizontally, and 180° overhead. Having the effect of observing to their front, sides, rear, and overhead as they move tactically.

IV. DISCUSSION: It is not unusual for tactical teams to arrive at the scene of a barricaded incident and find that patrol personnel have contained the suspect within a secure perimeter. There is generally time for the tactical team to deploy their personnel without serious concern of the suspect(s) escaping. Once the incident has been isolated, time enables patrol and/or tactical personnel to formulate a structured and deliberate plan.

However, there are scenarios that require immediate action and rapid deployment of patrol personnel prior to the arrival of the tactical team. In these cases, delayed deployment could have catastrophic consequences. These scenarios often involve an ongoing . . . *shots fired or downed officer/citizen rescue*. It may also necessitate the immediate and rapid deployment of armed personnel to contain or prevent the escape of an armed and dangerous person(s).

Over the past several years the world has experienced a growing trend of mass homicide violence committed by individuals. These episodes have come to be termed active *shooter incidents* and are unique in that the behavior of the suspects is very different from that typically associated with other violent behaviors. Suspect(s) generally begin to shoot at numbers of people without warning. In planning their attack, the active shooter will select soft targets. The motives for these behaviors include *political and religious agendas, rage, vengeance for perceived wrongs, and mental dysfunction*.

The incidents experienced across the country suggest that the typical law enforcement response involving containment, isolation, and negotiation is not adequate. Unlike most criminals, active shooters are likely to continue to use deadly physical force until intervention occurs or until the shooter decides to stop.

Unlike most law enforcement calls for service, an active shooter calls and response, requires rapid response, quick evaluation of the situation, formulation of a plan, and tactical response to locate and contain the shooter. Initial officers arriving at the scene, will most often move to locate and contain the shooter, and rely on other arriving officers to rescue, move, and treat victims. The goal of intervention in active shooter incidents is to:

- a. Neutralize the threat(s) by neutralizing the shooter;
- b. Limiting access to potential victims; &
- c. Rescuing injured persons or potential victims.

These goals can be achieved by various means, up to and including, the timely and

effective use of deadly physical force.

The active shooter response concept represents a shift in patrol response tactics, equipment needs, and command protocol. These situations require the initial officer responders arriving on the scene to have the authority and the capability to take aggressive action without waiting for command staff or for the arrival of specialty units such as SWAT or Crisis Negotiators.

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER:

A. The following is a list of characteristics commonly associated with active shooter suspects. This list was compiled from descriptions of past active shooters and not meant to be a comprehensive list describing all active shooters. Each active shooter situation is unique, however, it is helpful to know that an *active shooter*:

- a. Prepared for the event.
- b. May be prepared for a sustained confrontation with law enforcement or security officers.
- c. Choose soft targets where there is a perception that people are disarmed and cannot effectively respond.
- d. Choose locations where potential victims are close at hand, such as schools, colleges, shopping malls, churches, theaters, and concerts,
- e. Is intent on killing a number of people as quickly as possible.
- f. Present a first indication of their presence when they begin to assault victims.
- g. May act in the manner of a sniper, assaulting victims from a distance.
- h. May also engage multiple targets while remaining constantly mobile.
- i. Are not deterred or susceptible to containment or negotiation tactics.
- j. Typically continue their attack despite the arrival of emergency responders.
- k. Are often better armed and prepared than security and law enforcement officers.
- l. Are not limited to the use of firearms in accomplishing their attacks on victims. They may use bladed weapons, vehicles, explosives, booby traps, body armor or any tool that, in the circumstance in which it is used, constitutes deadly physical force.
- m. Historically have not attempted to hide their identity or conceal their attacks.
- n. May employ some type of diversion.
- o. May be indiscriminate in their violence or they may seek specific victims.
- p. Usually have some degree of familiarity with the building or location they choose to occupy. In the case of school and college shootings, almost always attack fellow classmates.
- q. Active shooter events are dynamic and may go in and out of an "active" status; a static incident may turn into an active shooter event or an active shooter may go "inactive" by going to a barricaded status without access to victims.
- r. Escape is usually not a priority of the active shooter.
- s. Active shooters may be suicidal, deciding to die in the course of their actions either at the hand of others or by self-inflicted wound. The original plan contemplates . . . suicide-by-COP.

IV. TACTICS:

The following tactical tenets set general tactical response guidelines for an active shooter incident. Again, these incidents are sufficiently unique such that their effective handling cannot be totally reduced to step-by-step procedures. This tactical discussion is not meant to limit conventional tactics which might be appropriate to a crisis situation. The significant factors regarding these that they represent a means of intervention available to officers when there is an elevated risk to bystanders and officers. The risk is acceptable in light of the potential these tactics have for saving lives.

Another significant aspect of the active shooter tactical doctrine is that officers arriving at the scene of an active shooter incident are authorized to intervene immediately, prior to the arrival of command personnel or special units.

a. Goals - The overall purpose of these tactics is to save lives and limit serious injuries. Important goals for law enforcement response to an active shooter event are *neutralization of the attacker*, *denying access to additional victims*, and *rescuing injured victims and potential victims*.

b. Assume Tactical Responsibility – Upon arrival the first officer at the scene must take charge of the incident. If more than one officer arrives simultaneously, or as the scene develops, tactical responsibility may be based on rank, expertise, or seniority. However, it must be made imminently clear to both communications centers and other officers, who are in-charge. An officer of superior rank who is on scene and fully briefed may ultimately assume *incident command*. Any change in *incident command* will be made known to dispatch and others immediately.

c. Situational Analysis - The officer taking charge must, based on what information is available, make a rapid situational analysis. The analysis will be continuous, taking into account new information as it is received. The first decision is *whether the situation is an active shooter event, whether an opportunity exists for immediate intervention leading to accomplishment of one of the goals listed above, and how responding resources should be employed at the scene*. By their very nature, these decisions will need to be made within a few seconds or minutes, with incomplete data, and often unreliable and confusing facts. Officers placed in such a position, are simply expected to do the best they can with what is handed to them.

d. Incident Command - The first officer arriving on scene will initiate incident command. He/she will initiate the situation analysis and determine initial deployment of responding resources. This may involve deployment of resources as they arrive, by radio. Command personnel en route to the incident will monitor the radio to gain information, but shall not obstruct ongoing intervention. Any command personnel must be on scene and fully briefed before assuming responsibility of *incident command*.

e. First Responder Tactical Intervention - When responding to active shooter incidents, the concept of first responder tactical intervention applies. It is critical that all deputies, supervisors, and command personnel are familiar with the definition of an *active shooter* as well as the tactics deemed appropriate for active shooter response and intervention. The traditional uniform responses of *contain, isolate, evacuate, and wait for SWAT and crisis negotiators* is not adequate in an active shooter incident. The first deputy on scene will need to consider the following:

f. Containment - First responder intervention is based on opportunity. Tactical intervention is the primary component of an active shooter response. Individual action is discouraged, as it is usually counterproductive to a coordinated, focused response to an active shooter event. However, in instances where officers are arriving at intervals, individual deployment and coordination via radio is the only practical option.

g. Rescue/Contact Team - Rescue teams are usually in the form of officers with an identified element leader. Team movement will be in a controlled and disciplined tactical action under the control and direction of the element leader.

h. Active Shooter Site Security - No location associated with an active shooter will be considered secure until the incident commander declares it is so. Officers assigned to security functions will maintain positions until properly relieved.

i. Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) - When SWAT units are prepared to deploy, the initial responding officers may be relieved or redeployed by SWAT.

V. DEPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS – ACTIVE SHOOTER VS. HOSTAGE/BARRICADE EVENT:

Attempt to distinguish the difference between an *active shooter* and a *hostage/barricade situation*. At first glance a *hostage/barricade* and an *active shooter* call may look and feel very similar, but there are distinct differences for responding officers.

The main difference is that victims are currently being killed or attacked during an active shooter event, while a hostage/barricade event is more static. Take care, as an active shooter situation can become a hostage/barricade event quickly and without warning and vice-versa. Here are some tactical considerations, if and when the situation changes:

A. Hostage/Barricade Patrol Response:

A practical patrol response to a barricade/hostage situation is defined with the 5-Cs:

- **Contain;**
- **Control;**
- **Communicate;**
- **Call SWAT and negotiators; &**
- **Create an Immediate action plan.**

Time is also a critical factor. When dealing with a barricaded suspect or hostage taker elongating the event can increase the chances of a negotiated settlement.

Once this is accomplished, gather intelligence and prepare for transition to tactical operations. In such operations with good organization, time is generally on your side.

B. Active Shooter Patrol Response:

The concepts and principles of patrol response to an active shooter (homicides in progress), are based around the concept of inserting a team into a hostile environment with

limited to no intelligence, and getting the team to the exact location of the shooter(s) as soon as practical. The team must thereby insert itself and move past un-cleared areas while providing team security from counter strikes. Guiding principles during these operations are based upon the following team movement axioms:

- Stay together as much as possible;
- 540° of coverage around the team;
- Communication;
- Work the angles;
- Threshold evaluations; &
- Move only as fast as you can shoot accurately and think

The rapid response of patrol officers to an active shooting has several advantages. By overwhelming the suspect(s) with effective tactics, the first responder(s) can:

- Isolate the suspect(s) from additional victims;
- Distract the suspect's attention away from innocent victims, & place the suspect under duress; &
- Neutralize the suspect(s) as a threat.

The first responding patrol officers to an active shooter scene realize that it is not a realistic objective to save everyone trapped inside. The number one goal must be to mitigate the damage and save as many lives as possible.

The initial response of 2 or 3 officers to the scene to form a single Contact Team to enter the structure, must understand the inherent risks of doing so. Although this should not be your first typical response, first responders should be empowered to make the decision based upon the information available to them at the time.

The minimum number of officers to form a Contact Team is two (2). The recommendation is to have a back-up, make sure that the 540° of coverage is secured. The maximum number of officers on a Contact Team should not normally exceed five (5). If there are more than 5 officers on scene, then there should be an additional Contact Team or Rescue Team formed.

All Teams consist of forward and rear security at all times, to support the 540° coverage concept.

C. Team Movement:

a. Speed of Movement (Dictates Formation Used)

b. Stealth/Deliberate - There are two scenarios in which this speed is useful:

- First responders do not know the location of the suspect(s) and are conducting a deliberate search.
- First responders start to get close to the area where the suspect(s) may be located but the exact location is still unknown.

Stealth/Deliberate speed is not used when shots can be heard or the team has specific intelligence about the location of the suspect(s).

c. Dynamic/Direct to Threat - This speed of movement is used when the team has information as to the location of the suspect(s). Move as fast as you can shoot accurately and think, as a unit. The team must get to the shooter quickly to stop the killing.

d. Putting It All Together:

- Marshall available resources for rapid deployment to stop the killing;
- If neutralization of the threat is impossible, move to contain and isolate;
- Control the Scene and Gather Information;
- Communicate your actions and information gathered to all parties involved; &
- Direct responding officers to aid in rescue of wounded victims and hostages.