



Fire Chiefs' Association of Broward County

Standard Operating Guidelines

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I. Introduction:

Fire Rescue Department responses to hostile and violent situations are becoming more frequent. Such incidents include, but are not limited to, large scale complex incidents such as school shootings, workplace violence, and terrorist activities, as well as smaller scale/less complex incidents such as suicide attempts, single victim shootings and stabbings, domestic violence injuries, and assaults. These scenes require extraordinary efforts on the part of the Fire Rescue and Law Enforcement personnel. Although these attacks usually end within a few minutes from the time they begin, the incident and response actions may play out over an extended period of time.

I. Purpose:

- A. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Incident Commanders and first arriving units that respond to a hostile or violent situation or a situation that may become hostile or violent. The primary goal is to ensure joint command and communications elements from the Fire Rescue Department (FR) and Law Enforcement (LE) minimize the risk and maximize the safety to Fire/EMS/LE personnel and to provide a common framework on which units may build an action plan to rescue the injured in a rapid coordinated fashion.
- B. Ensure coordination between agencies resulting in scene control, victim treatment, and evidence preservation while maintaining the safety of all emergency personnel. These types of incidents require that the Fire Rescue and the Law Enforcement agencies must have common tactics, terminology, unified command and full utilization of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to have seamless, effective operations.
- C. No policy can cover all possible contingencies which Fire Rescue personnel will encounter. With this in mind, the prime consideration must be the SAFETY of all department members by a constant assessment of RISK/BENEFIT factors in all operations undertaken by all personnel.

II. Scope:

- A. These procedures shall be used in the event of an Active Shooter/Hostile/Violent Situations while conducting emergency operations. These procedures are applicable to all FR personnel. While the guidelines are established for a local event, the same operation philosophy would apply to mutual aid events.

Some examples of incidents that have potential are:

- Active shooter
- Suicidal patients
- Domestic violence calls

- Assaults in progress
- Domestic and international terrorist groups
- Human trafficking/kidnapping rings
- Violence related to immigration issues
- Increasing gang violence and networking
- Gang/group members with military backgrounds and combat experience (paramilitary)
- Organized drug trafficking
- Home invasions

III. Responsibility:

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the individual agency to utilize this document as a guideline for the creation of an individual agency policy as well as understand the need for training between LE and FR on the required skills specific to active shooter/violent incidents.

IV. Definitions:

- A. **Active Shooter and Mass Casualty Incidents (AS/MCIs):** This is a general term intended to cover active shooter incidents involving one or more subjects who participate in a random or systematic shooting spree, demonstrating their intent to continuously harm others. AS/MCIs range from extensively planned terror-related events to unplanned, revenge-motivated or random events.
- B. **Hot (Red) Zone** is an operational (geographic) area, consisting of the immediate incident location with a direct and immediate threat to personal safety or health (not a secure area). Only SWAT Tactical Medics are authorized to operate in this area and Law Enforcement Officers will remove victims from this area into a warm (yellow) zone where practical.
- C. **Warm (Yellow) Zone** is an operational (geographic) area with a potential threat to personal safety or health. The warm zone typically exists between the hot zones and the cold zones. This zone is established and secured by Law Enforcement. Rescue Teams may be able to enter and remove victims. A rapid direct medical intervention (i.e. direct pressure on an exsanguinating injury) may be performed at the discretion of the Officer In Charge (OIC) in coordination with the Law Enforcement security detail prior to evacuating the victim if deemed warranted. Personnel shall be escorted by a Law Enforcement security detail at all times while in this area. Only essential units will be given authority and clear direction to operate in the warm (yellow) zone.
- D. **Cold (Green) Zone** is an operational (geographic) area surrounding the warm zone where first responders can operate with minimal threat to personal safety or health. In this zone personnel can provide treatment to victims.
- E. **Contact Team:** A rapidly assembled team of Law Enforcement members responsible for locating and stopping an Active Shooter.
- F. **Rescue Team:** A designated group of Law Enforcement Officers that are not involved with the contact team, they will begin to assist with victim removal and coordinate with Fire Rescue personnel for removal of critical patients.

- G. **Risk vs. Benefit:** A critical decision making formula that states “Risk a lot to save a lot, Risk a little to save a little, risk nothing to save nothing”
- H. **Rescue Task Force:** For the purpose of this policy, an Active Shooter “Rescue Task Force” shall comprise of the minimum number of Law Enforcement and Fire Rescue personnel needed to provide security and treatment to victims in the warm zone when needed.
- I. **Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):** The framework for command and control at AS/MCIs. Coordinates the activities of police, Fire Rescue and other supporting agencies.
- J. **“THREAT”:** An acronym stands for **T**hreat **S**uppression, **H**emorrhage **C**ontrol, **R**apid **E**xtrication to **S**afety, **A**ssessment by **M**edical **P**roviders, **T**ransport to **D**efinitive **C**are.
- K. **Force Protection (FP):** Is preventive measures taken to mitigate hostile actions in specific areas or against a specific population, those protected by FP can include civilians and unarmed responders.
- L. **Incident Command Post (ICP):** This is a single location which encompasses all functions that assist with the unified command structure.
- M. **Unified Command:** Is the integration of command personnel from each responding agency to a multijurisdictional or multi-agency operational event to enhance communication, planning, and logistics for all responding agencies by the utilization of shared resources, knowledge, and expertise.
- N. **Cover:** Cover is a Law Enforcement term that represents an object or location that provide protection from direct gunfire.
- O. **Concealment:** Concealment is a Law Enforcement term that represents an object that only provides protection from observation.
- P. **Strong Hold:** An area of the scene, typically inside a structure that serves a defensible area with relative security. Examples can be a portion of the interior of a structure that has doorways and access covered by armed protection.
- O. **Casualty Collection Point (CCP):** A location in the “Strong Hold” (warm zone) where Fire Rescue can receive and treat victims brought by Law Enforcement. This area should remain the primary treatment area for life threatening injuries until transport is available or the scene is determined to be “cold” and the CCP will transition to the treatment area. Victims may be brought to the CCP by Law Enforcement members or Fire Rescue personnel, usually by being dragged or carried out of the hot zone.
- P. **Improvised Explosive Device (IED):** Is an explosive device constructed and deployed in ways other than in conventional military action. It may be constructed of conventional military explosives, or from commonly found chemical ingredients.

V. Procedures:

These guidelines and procedures are divided into the following areas: **Philosophy, Organization, Communications, Operations, and Recovery.**

A. Philosophy

1. An active shooter/hostile situation presents unique problems not normally encountered in everyday emergency operations. These dangers require situational awareness, common sense and a high degree of concern for the safety of FR personnel.
2. Of paramount and overriding importance is that FR and LE work in a unified command structure. This will allow for a collaborative and cohesive command structure that will yield the highest degree of probability of mission success and agency personnel safety.
3. FR personnel, apparatus and equipment are not to be used for crowd control, the disbursement of people, disturbance control or combative intervention against the perpetrators. FR personnel will avoid any physical contact with persons involved in the disturbance
4. At all times, decisions are to be made in the interest of reasonable degrees of safety for responding personnel and equipment balanced against the department's responsibility to the public for emergency fire, rescue, and EMS response.
5. During a response to or arrival at a hostile/violent incident, the fire rescue department will maintain a safe work environment for its fire rescue personnel and will provide essential emergency and rescue services, in coordination with law enforcement, to the public utilizing a risk/benefit analysis model similar to interior structural firefighting.

B. Organization

1. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) advocates the use of ICS for all emergency and non-emergency management of personnel. All personnel (Fire Rescue & Law Enforcement) shall follow NIMS when responding to and handling these high risk hostile incidents.
2. Due to the highly dynamic nature of these incidents, command will be established by the first arriving unit and expanded as additional resources arrive.
3. Upon arrival the FR Incident Commander (IC) should seek out the LE IC as soon as possible and together establish a Unified Command post.
4. FR personnel need to recognize that LE will be actively sending their personnel into the Hot Zone to directly engage the threat, secure the perimeter to ensure the perpetrator doesn't evade, and to exclude inappropriate entry by additional perpetrators.
5. The FR IC should establish a Staging Officer and staging area(s) as soon as practical in order to control and account for the incoming FR resources.
6. The staging area for FR shall be in a location that is not in view from the affected structure and provides cover for all personnel. The staging distance shall be such that once Law Enforcement has cleared an access point to the structure, there will be a minimum response time.
7. The FR commanding officer shall initiate the MCI procedures and fulfill all required functional positions.
8. As soon as practical, an Incident Safety Officer (ISO) shall be identified to ensure that any issues that may arise are addressed at the earliest opportunity.

9. The Unified Command Post shall establish a Casualty Collection Point (CCP) in the warm zone for the purpose of treating and ultimately evacuating victims to definitive medical care.

C. Communications

1. Immediately upon recognition of an active shooter/hostile situation, the Shift Supervisor/Battalion Chief will notify the Fire Chief/Emergency Manager or designee.
2. Upon confirmation of an active shooter/violent incident, the IC should request a level 2 MCI response if the amount of victims is unknown. Once the victim count is verified then the MCI level can be upgraded or downgraded as needed.
3. When possible or practical, a tactical channel should be assigned and all resources moved to this channel.
4. Depending upon the complexity of the incident and/or the number of victims, the FR Incident Commander may request dispatch to obtain three (3) mutual aid communication channels from the communication center. The radio channels will be assigned for the following functions:
 - a. Operations
 - b. Medical
 - c. Staging
5. Consideration should be given to requesting a Communication Center Supervisor to report to the Command Post if warranted, or the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) if activated, for more direct communications support.
6. The Public Information Officer (PIO) shall be activated on all active shooter incidents.

D. Operations

1. Once an active shooter/hostile situation is identified, a primary objective should be establishing Command. Ideally a Unified Command with Law Enforcement agency having jurisdiction is the first choice however, in the absence of Law Enforcement, Command shall be established by the first arriving unit and transferred as rapidly as practical to the Shift Supervisor/Battalion Chief.
2. The primary responsibility for overall incident safety, security, and stabilization during an active shooter/violent rests with the Law Enforcement agency having jurisdiction. FR plays a supporting role in these types of events and must integrate into either an established Command or as a branch under Operations or a Unified Command structure with Law Enforcement.
3. Because of the likelihood of multiple incidents occurring simultaneously or a rapidly expanding incident, FR must take a proactive approach in activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if warranted. The Incident Commander (IC) must determine the likelihood of disturbance escalation and request to implement this procedure as needed.
4. RESPONSE
 - a. Incident Priorities
 - 1) As with all responses the following incident priorities will be safely achieved:
 - a) Life Safety
 - b) Incident Stabilization
 - c) Property Conservation

- 2) If FR personnel are aware of an active shooter/hostile incident, fire rescue units should consider one of two response modes:
 - a) Stage for Law Enforcement and wait for the scene to be secured.
 - b) Respond directly to the confirmed, secured scene and proceed with caution.
- 3) The primary responding unit shall be responsible for establishing Command. As soon as possible, a Unified Command should be established. For more complex incidents, safety zones should be created. Personnel shall understand that these zones are dynamic and can change as the incident develops.
- 4) The Unified Command Post
 - a) Upon announcement of establishment of Unified Command, all various agency Command personnel shall report to the Command Post (CP).
 - b) The CP shall be established in a safe location, preferably located in the cold zone or at a remote location.
 - c) Expand the Incident Command Structure as needed.
 - i. The size and complexity of the organizational structure, obviously, will be determined by the scope of the emergency.
 - ii. The determination to expand the organization by the IC would be done when a determination is made that the existing ICS structure is becoming insufficient.
- 5) Response into a “Restricted Area or Warm (Yellow) Zone” will only occur with security force protection (Law Enforcement) which must remain with FR units at all times until the mission is completed, then escorted out of the “Restricted Area”. The IC will be advised immediately of any exceptions. **FR WILL NOT** respond into “Denied Areas or Hot (Red) Zones.”
- 6) Units in staging will NOT be deployed into a known or suspected lockdown area until the Unified CP believes that Law Enforcement has the area secure and that they can maintain the security of areas that FR will operate.
- 7) All fire rescue or mutual-aid units assigned to the incidents, or in staging, are to be informed fully of situations, through the IC or designee, as they develop. The safety of mutual-aid units will receive the same priority as the primary FR units.
- 8) The organizational structure utilized to effectively handle the MCI shall be initiated as soon as possible.
 - a) The MCI functions of Triage, Treatment will take place in the CCP unless the scene is determined to be safe “cold zone” then triage maybe preformed where the victims are and the victims moved to a treatment area until transport is available from an established staging area.
 - b) At no time shall the organizing or deployment of MCI functions delay the activation of the “THREAT” principles once an area of the incident has been granted access for an Active Shooter Task Force/Rescue Task Force.
- 9) Once a critical victim of an active shooting/violent incident has been loaded into a transport vehicle from the CCP/treatment area it should not to stop at a secondary location at the scene. Transport to the hospital with immediate lifesaving care enroute is critical in improving the victim’s outcome.
- 10) Consideration should be given to acquiring a sizeable staging area that allows for easy ingress and egress for a large number of apparatus. If securing a parking lot, it will take approximately eight (8) parking spaces

- for each fire apparatus in staging.
- 11) The staging area should be established in an area that LE determines to be safe from a hostile threat.
 - 12) Code 3 - warning lights, sirens, and horns are **NOT** to be used while responding within lockdown areas and responses will be in a non-emergency mode unless directed.
 - 13) FR resources will be committed to an incident in the lockdown area only if there is a threat to life, exposures or the IC determines that the benefits outweigh the risks.
 - 14) Fire Operations should be defensive in nature and conducted in such a fashion that personnel safety is maximized. Consideration should be given by all deployed companies to providing a quick retreat should the conditions become untenable or ill advised.
 - a) Active fires will be allowed to burn until confirmation of a secure scene has occurred.
 - b) Additional fire resources should be pre-staged, with consideration of the worst case scenario.
 - 15) Personnel should operate from a position of cover or remain in vehicles whenever practical.
 - 16) Emergency medical transportation is to be accomplished by ***“load and go”*** procedures in those situations where either the scene stability or victim stability is questionable, or where Law Enforcement reports the prolonged sustainability of a secure scene is questionable.
 - 17) Rapid lifesaving interventions may be performed in the warm (yellow) zone at the discretion of the LE and FR utilizing risk/benefit analysis.
 - 18) After moving the patient to a CCP/treatment area, all appropriate pre-hospital medical operating procedures can be carried out as per protocol. Rapid access, extrication and transport can save lives.
 - 19) Chemical agents used by Law Enforcement for emergency suspect control may contaminate Fire Rescue personnel. In the event that they have not withdrawn, decontamination will be accomplished through coordination with the Hazardous Materials advisors from the regional response team. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) should be made available by Law Enforcement
 - 20) If personnel are physically or verbally attacked or threatened, personnel will immediately take cover and will be withdrawn immediately. If ordered to evacuate, place equipment back on apparatus only if it can be done so without jeopardizing personnel safety.

E. Recovery

1. Records retention is crucial. Document all cases and information, in detail, for possible later investigation and shall be considered Public Safety Sensitive (PSS).
2. Photos by authorized personnel of any damage to our property or apparatus should be taken before repairs are made.
3. Consideration of a Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)/Behavioral Health response for responders.