

	<b>Houston Independent School District Police Department Directives</b>	<b>DIRECTIVE: 450-004</b>
		<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: March 27, 2014</b>
	<b>SUBJECT: Active Shooter Threat Response</b>	<b>REVISED DATE: February 2, 2022</b>

## **PURPOSE**

This directive defines the Houston Independent School District (HISD) Police departments' response to an active shooter/threat incident by neutralizing the threat (s), preventing access to potential victims, and rescuing injured victims. This directive is designed to guide the police departments' response to an active shooter/threat incident.

## **POLICY**

It is our policy, based upon training and experience, to empower initial responding police officers with the responsibility and authority to take immediate action to contain and neutralize an active shooter/threat(s) and situations requiring the rapid deployment of initial responding law enforcement personnel before the arrival of the Emergency Response Team (ERT).

This directive describes rapid deployment tactics developed by the HISD Police department to prepare officers with effective methods to minimize the risk of personal injury when responding to an active shooter/threat in progress. Further, this agency's policy is to respond, contain, neutralize threats, and administer aid to the victims, if necessary, while coordinating and working with outside law enforcement agencies in the response and investigative phase of the active shooter event.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Active Shooter:** An active shooter is a person(s) who appears to be actively engaging in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area. In most cases, active shooters use firearms, and there is no apparent pattern or method to their selection of victims.

**Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERTT):** A nationally recognized program that trains police officers in tactical deployment in response to active shooters.

**Barricaded Shooter:** An armed person who threatens deadly force, either with or without hostages, and is barricaded in a specific area.

**Command Post:** The first officer on the scene that is not part of a contact or rescue team will take the responsibility of the Incident Commander, set up a command post, and initiate the incident command system.

**Cold Zone:** Area where there is little or no threat from the suspect.

**Contact Team:** An officer or group of officers whose primary mission is to stop the assailants' deadly behavior and prevent escape.

**Hot Zones:** An unsecured area where the active shooter may be present.

**Incident Command System:** A standardized on-scene emergency management concept specifically designed to allow its user(s) to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. Use of the ICS is not required for minor incidents handled solely by the HISD Police Department. (Directive 450-027 INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM)

**Immediate Action Rapid Deployment:** The swift and immediate deployment of police personnel and resources to an ongoing life-threatening situation where the delayed deployment of personnel could otherwise result in death or serious bodily injury to others. Immediate action rapid deployment is not a substitute for conventional response tactics to a barricaded shooter.

**Inner Perimeter:** A zone of "containment" used to control a situation by preventing anyone from leaving or entering the zone. Normally this includes officers positioned to observe and control all possible entrances and exits to the contained area.

In most cases, at least two officers are required to be stationed in positions of cover to observe any possible exits from the locations. Officers should attempt to establish an inner perimeter that fulfills the following criteria:

- a) Prevent suspects from leaving without challenge.
- b) Prevent additional suspects or bystanders from entering the scene or the "danger area" surrounding the scene.
- c) Provide cover for the perimeter officers and avenues of safe exit from and approach the scene if possible.
- d) Place officers in positions where they can aid in gathering information regarding the situation.
- e) For a bomb threat or explosive device situation, the inner perimeter positions should be outside the 300-foot distance outdoors or 100-foot distance indoors required for the use of radio transmitters. (Refer to the section of this chapter about Bomb Threats and Explosive Devices for more information.)

**Outer Perimeter:** The second zone of containment used to prevent persons from entering or leaving an inner perimeter by using officers positioned to observe and control all possible approaches to the officers maintaining the inner perimeter. This zone is used so that the officers' focus on the inner perimeter may be directed primarily toward the contained area. The objectives in establishing an outer perimeter include:

- a) Prevent suspects or other persons from leaving the area between the inner and outer perimeters without challenge.
- b) Prevent additional suspects or bystanders from entering the area between the inner and outer perimeters surrounding the scene.

- c) Provide "cover" for the inner-perimeter officers and avenues of safe exit from and approach to the scene if possible.
- d) Place officers in positions where they can aid in gathering information regarding the situation.

Note: Certain situations, like an active shooter, may require immediate action before a perimeter can be established.

**Rapid Deployment:** The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to ongoing life-threatening situations where delayed deployment could otherwise result in death or serious bodily injury to innocent persons.

**Rescue Team:** A group of officers assigned to locate, recover and facilitate the evacuation process of victims to safe areas or medical personnel for treatment.

**Safety Corridor:** A path which law enforcement personnel may escort firefighters, paramedics, and perhaps victims from the Warm Area, through the Cold Area to the Safety Zone, and back again.

**Safety Zone:** Zone within the Warm Area secured by law enforcement personnel to triage and treat victims.

**Terrorist threat:** (Homeland Security Act of 2002) An activity that involves an act dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources and is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State or other subdivisions of the United States in which it occurs and is intended to intimidate or coerce the civilian population or influence a government or affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

**Warm Zone:** An unsecured area that a Contact Team has cleared.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSAILANT**

The following is a list of characteristics commonly associated with suspected active shooters. The list is compiled from descriptions of past active shooters and is not a comprehensive list of all active shooter characteristics. Each situation is unique.

- a) Active shooters usually focus on assaulting persons they come into contact with. Their intention is usually a physical expression of hatred or rage.
- b) An active shooter is likely to engage more than one target. An active shooter's intent may be to inflict serious bodily injury or deadly force on many people as quickly as possible.
- c) Generally, the first indication of the presence of an active shooter is when they begin to assault victims.
- d) Active shooters often go to locations where potential victims are assembled, such as classrooms, libraries, student gatherings, or educational facilities. Active shooters may act

in the manner of a sniper, assaulting victims from a distance. Active shooters may also engage multiple targets while remaining mobile.

- e) Tactics such as containment and negotiation normally associated with standoff incidents may not be an adequate response. Active shooters typically continue their attack despite the arrival of emergency first responders.
- f) Active shooters are often better armed than the police with weapons/equipment, including explosives, improvised explosive devices, and body armor. Active shooters do not restrict their capabilities to firearms, for they may use bladed weapons, vehicles, or any tool that, in the fashion which it is used, constitutes a deadly weapon.
- g) Active shooters may have pre-planned the attack and are prepared for a sustained confrontation with the police. Historically, active shooters have not attempted to hide their identity or conceal their attacks. Retreat and escape are not operational priorities.
- h) Active shooters may use diversion as an element of their attacks, such as fire alarms, smoke devices, sound devices, and timed explosions.
- i) Active shooters may be suicidal.
- j) Active shooters usually have some degree of familiarity with the building or location they choose to assault.
- k) Active threat/shooter events are dynamic and may transition from "active" to "inactive" status several times.

## **NOTIFICATIONS**

The ranking supervisor or officer will notify the chain of command to include the Chief of Police or their designee of any active threat/shooter event. Fire and EMS should also be notified and requested to stand by in accordance with their protocols.

## **MUTUAL AID**

Upon arriving at the scene of an active threat/shooter event and assessing the crime scene, the agency should implement their mutual aid agreements with other police agencies and fire and rescue agencies. Additionally, it may be necessary to collaborate with recovery agencies to assist with the scene and any victims after the incident.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT OBJECTIVES**

In order of priority, police officers should adhere to the following protocols:

Note: A SOLO officer response is expected if other officers are not immediately available.

- a) Neutralize the Threat (s) as soon as possible by:
  1. Searching for the shooter/threat (s);

2. Finding the shooter/threat (s);
  3. Confronting the shooter/threat (s);
  4. Stopping the shooter/threat (s).
- b) Rescue the victims and;
1. Triage
  2. Stabilize
  3. Evacuate
- c) Provide medical assistance to victims within the capabilities of on-scene personnel according to their ability to move.
- d) Preserve the integrity of the crime scene.

## **ACTIVE SHOOTER/THREAT RESPONSE**

### **Concepts and Principles:**

- a) Safe, effective responses to active threat/shooter(s) are designed around concepts and principles. The first responding officers should (if time permits):
1. Form a Contact Team(s).
  2. Stay together as much as possible and enter the involved structure quickly.
  3. All personnel are to restrict their radio use for emergency traffic only.
  4. Maximize threat coverage by addressing all angles.
  5. Visually search involved areas using 540 degrees of coverage around and above the team.
  6. Evaluate rooms from the threshold (commonly referred to as slicing the pie) when the location of the shooter is unknown.
  7. Differentiate between deliberate and direct-to-threat speeds and use the appropriate speed for the circumstances.
  8. Use cover-contact principles when taking suspects into custody.

- b) Additional arriving officers shall:
1. Form a Rescue Team, enter and approach the location to locate victims who have been injured or barricaded. Additional contact teams may be needed to search for, coordinate immediately, and locate the active threat/shooter(s);
  2. Rescue Teams are to locate, recover, and facilitate the evacuation process of victims to safe areas or medical personnel for treatment;
  3. Establish a command post, a perimeter, zones of diminishing threats, and staging areas;
  4. Coordinate with the Houston Fire Department to provide for triage and treatment of victims; and
  5. Organize additional resources.
- c) Rescue Teams should be directed to victim locations if there is no active threat. Guidelines for follow-on responders include:
1. Establish and maintain security in the area that Rescue Teams occupy; consider the rooms not cleared as unsearched.
  2. Do not enter a hallway unannounced that other officers occupy.
  3. Contact/rescue teams will make all notifications face to face when possible.
  5. Direct victims to safety by utilizing shelter-in-place, evacuations, or designated unification stations.
  6. Establish a safety zone for injured persons. The safety zone should be a room or open area (if outside of the structure) capable of holding all victims with injuries that require medical treatment. A series of rooms next to each other can be considered if casualties exceed available space.
  7. Communicate with all involved responders to ensure the area remains secure while facilitating victim treatment.
  8. Responses to an active threat/shooter event must include the incident's aftermath. Officers should apply the SIM model (Security/Immediate Action Plan/Medical).

Security should take priority. Responding officers must ensure the immediate environment they are working in remains secure because the active threat/shooter event remains a continued threat. After officers address known threats, they should formulate an immediate action plan as quickly as possible.

Responding officers should address medical issues as soon as they establish security and have an immediate action plan in place.

## **OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTING INVESTIGATIONS**

Should there be an exchange of gunfire, the agency will implement its officer-involved shooting policy and respond accordingly.

## **MEDIA INQUIRY**

All requests for information should be funneled through HISD Media Relations or the Incident Commander (IC) for vetting and coordination. Consideration should be given to establishing a media staging location that is not within the immediate vicinity of the active threat/shooter event.

## **Post-Incident Review**

After an incident and within a reasonable period of time, the Chief of Police shall conduct a staff review of the incident. Professional counseling shall be made available to Police Department employees involved in an active shooter/threat incident.

## **TRAINING**

Active Shooter Training will be required for all sworn personnel no less than once per calendar year.

Approved By

  
Pedro Lopez Jr., Chief of Police