

Hostage and Barricaded Suspect

8.02.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish protocols for conducting hostage and barricaded suspect operations, and to establish guidelines for the duties of officers, supervisors and superior officers. The San Francisco Police Department's highest priority remains safeguarding the life, dignity and liberty of all persons. The Department is committed to accomplishing this mission by using communication and de-escalation principles, whenever feasible, before resorting to force. (See definition of *De-Escalation*, DGO 5.01(I)(C).)

8.02.02 DEFINITIONS

Hostage Incident: A hostage incident is a situation where a suspect holds another person against his/her will and where the suspect would generally be in violation of 236 PC (False Imprisonment).

Barricaded Suspect Incident: A barricaded suspect incident is a situation where a person who is suspected of committing a criminal offense, intent upon evading arrest, takes up a defensive position in a physical location, most often a structure or a vehicle, that does not allow immediate police access – whether fortified or not – and is refusing or ignoring police orders to exit, and who may be armed with a gun, explosive, or a weapon capable of harming others and presents a deadly hazard to arresting officers.

Critical Incident: Any incident with a life-threatening situation, a defined terrain objective and requiring a coordinated tactical response should be declared as a critical incident. Procedures and guidelines for requesting the Tactical Unit/SWAT Team and Hostage/Crisis Negotiations Team should be followed.

De-Escalation: Officers shall, when feasible, employ de-escalation techniques to decrease the likelihood of the need to use force during an incident and to increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance and decrease the intensity of the situation.

8.02.03 POLICY

Hostage Incidents: In hostage situations, the SFPD considers the lives of all parties involved to be of the utmost importance and, whenever possible, the SFPD strives to peacefully resolve hostage incidents through communication. If communications fail, the SFPD is prepared and trained to use alternative methods to resolve the incident and the safe release of the hostage(s).

Barricaded Suspect Incidents: In barricaded suspect incidents, it shall be the policy of the SFPD to consider the lives of all parties involved to be of the utmost importance. The SFPD, whenever possible, strives to peacefully resolve barricaded suspect incidents through communication. If communications fail, the SFPD is prepared and trained to use alternative methods to resolve the incident.

The Incident Commander will have command authority and responsibility for all Hostage and Barricaded Suspect Incidents until the incident is resolved or a transition of command has occurred.

Negotiation Policy: The Hostage/Crisis Negotiations Team will evaluate available information about all parties and the situation, and will advise the Incident and Tactical Commanders. Hostage/Crisis negotiators may engage in negotiations with the suspect, but deliveries or exchanges are subject to the approval of the Incident Commander. Hostage/Crisis negotiators will not independently make any concessions. The SFPD, whenever possible, should attempt to peacefully resolve the incident through negotiations.

8.02.04 PROCEDURES

A. **SERGEANT / OFFICERS DUTIES:** When confronted with a hostage or barricaded suspect incident, follow these procedures:

1. **Communications.** If possible, attempt to communicate with the suspect to establish that the suspect is still inside and make all attempts to seek a peaceful resolution.
2. **Evaluation.** Request that your Lieutenant immediately respond to the scene. If the Lieutenant is not available, request that the District Captain or Night Captain respond.
3. **Command Post.** Establish an Incident Command Post and notify DEM of its location and safe avenue of approach.
4. **Perimeter.** Begin to establish an inner perimeter of the location, which shall be treated as a crime scene.
5. **Notification.** Notify the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and Department Operations Center (DOC) via police radio or telephone of the situation.
6. **Additional Resources.** Assess need for additional resources such as Mental Health Clinicians, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), Tactical Unit, Specialists, HNT, and interpreter / bilingual officer if subject is LEP.
7. **Supervisors.** Create a plan to best achieve the mission and present to Incident Commander for approval. Assign specific roles to officers and, when personnel allows, assign only singular responsibilities to officers to avoid splitting of attention or duties.

B. DISTRICT CAPTAIN OR LIEUTENANT DUTIES:

1. **Evaluate.** After arriving at the scene, evaluate the situation, confirm that a hostage or barricaded suspect situation exists, and make proper notifications (see DGO 8.01, Critical Incident Notification). If the criteria for a critical incident is met, advise DEM that the situation has been declared a critical incident.
2. **Command.** Assume overall command and responsibility of incident until the incident is resolved or a transition of command has occurred.
3. **Incident Commander.** Provide a mission, assign specific duties to Supervisors, approve plans, and communicate needs to best achieve the mission.
4. **Specialized Units.** Contact DOC and request Specialist Team, Hostage/Crisis Negotiations Team, Investigator(s), Tactical Unit, and any other applicable additional resources.
5. **Notification.** Personally contact the Commander of the Field Operations Bureau or, if applicable, the Night Captain. Ensure that DOC has been notified.
6. **Perimeter.** Ensure that an inner perimeter of the location was established by patrol officers, until relieved by the Specialist Team. After inner perimeter has been contained, an outer perimeter should be established.

C. COMMAND POST:

The Incident Command Post is the location on scene from which all incident planning is directed. There may also be other satellite support areas such as a Tactical Staging Area and Negotiations Operations Center (HCNT). The Incident and Tactical Commanders will determine the best locations for the command post and support areas and a system of communication between all areas shall be established.

D. MEDIA:

Media access decisions are the responsibility of the Incident Commander. Under most circumstances, the crime scene and accompanying command post will be closed to the media. The Incident Commander should always assume that a barricaded subject or hostage taker has access to live reporting, and the media should be staged accordingly. Assign a Public Information Officer or police supervisor at the scene to provide timely and updated information to the media.

References:

DGO 8.01 Major and Critical Incident Evaluation and Notification
DGO 5.01 Use of Force Policy and Proper Control of a Person