



# LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT USE OF FORCE-TACTICS DIRECTIVE

Directive No. 16

October 2016

## TACTICAL DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

### PURPOSE

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is guided by the principle of Reverence for Human Life in all investigative, enforcement, and other contacts between officers and members of the public. When officers are called upon to detain or arrest a suspect who is uncooperative, actively resisting, may attempt to flee, poses a danger to others, or poses a danger to him or herself, they should consider tactics and techniques that may persuade the suspect to voluntarily comply or may mitigate the need to use a higher level of force to resolve the situation safely.

The purpose of this Directive is to define tactical de-escalation techniques and does not address all techniques that may be used to reduce the intensity of an incident.

### Tactical De-Escalation defined:

Tactical de-escalation involves the use of techniques to reduce the intensity of an encounter with a suspect and enable an officer to have additional options to gain voluntary compliance or mitigate the need to use a higher level of force while maintaining control of the situation.

**Note:** Tactical de-escalation does not require that an officer compromise his or her safety or increase the risk of physical harm to the public. De-escalation techniques should only be used when it is safe and prudent to do so.

### PROTOCOL

While enforcing the law and protecting the public, officers are often forced to make split-second decisions in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, rapidly changing, and dangerous. In rapidly developing circumstances, especially when a suspect poses an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury, officers may not have sufficient time or reasonable options available to resolve the situation without the need to use objectively reasonable force. In other circumstances, however, de-escalation techniques may enable officers to gain additional time and tactical options to potentially reduce the necessity of using force to take a suspect into custody, prevent escape or address a threat while also maintaining control of the situation.

## TACTICAL DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

**Planning.** Officers should attempt to arrive at scene with a coordinated approach based upon initial information and any pre-existing knowledge of the suspect(s) or the involved parties. The dynamic nature of most incidents will require tactical plans to be flexible, and officers need to adapt their plan(s) as additional information or factors become known to the officer(s).

### Tactical De-Escalation Techniques

- Planning
- Assessment
- Time
- Redeployment and/or Containment
- Other Resources
- Lines of Communication

**Assessment.** Officers should continually assess the situation as circumstances change and new information is received. If a suspect is failing to comply with orders, officers should attempt to determine whether a suspect's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or escape, or an inability to comprehend the situation due to environmental, physical, cognitive, or other conditions. If the suspect is unable to comprehend the situation, other tactical options may be more effective in resolving the situation safely.

**Time.** *Distance+Cover=Time.* Time is an essential element of de-escalation as it allows officers the opportunity to communicate with the suspect, refine tactical plans, and, if necessary, call for additional resources. If a suspect is contained and does not pose an imminent threat to officers, the public, or himself/herself, time can provide an opportunity for the suspect to reconsider his/her actions and decisions.

**Redeployment and/or Containment.** Redeployment and/or containment can afford officers the added benefit of time and distance while continuing to maintain control of the situation. The addition of time and distance may give officers an opportunity to re-assess, communicate, request additional resources, or deploy other tactics to reduce the likelihood of injury to both the public and officers while also mitigating any potential ongoing threats. Redeployment, however, should not enable a subject to gain a tactical advantage, arm himself/herself, or flee and pose a greater danger to the public or officers.

**Other Resources.** In the case of a tense or potentially dangerous encounter, requesting additional resources can provide officers with specialized expertise, personnel and tools to help control and contain an incident.

**Lines of Communication.** Maintaining open lines of communication between officers and communicating effectively with a suspect are critically important when managing a tense or potentially dangerous encounter. Communication between officers can improve decision-making under tense circumstances and increase the effectiveness of coordinated actions. In addition, when a suspect observes that officers are prepared,

well organized, professional, and working as a team, he or she may be deterred from attempting to flee, fight, or actively resist.

Because every situation is fluid and unique, ongoing communication and coordination between officers is critically important to respond effectively in a tense and uncertain encounter. Communicating with a suspect may slow down the incident, creating time to plan. All or some of the following tactics may be used in the same incident as time or circumstances allow:

- Verbal warnings
- Persuasion
- Defusing
- Empathy
- Redirecting
- Advisements
- Building rapport
- Asking open ended questions
- Giving clear and direct orders

## CONCLUSION

The overall objective of any tactical encounter is to gain control and safely resolve the situation. Tactical situations vary and there is no single solution to resolving every incident. In addition, some situations require an immediate response and de-escalation techniques are neither viable nor effective options. Nevertheless, employing tactical de-escalation techniques under the appropriate circumstances can improve officer safety, mitigate threats, reduce injuries, build public trust, and preserve life.

### Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force policy.



CHARLIE BECK  
Chief of Police

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