



Critical Incidents and Crisis Negotiations

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6) What is the importance of debriefings once critical incident/crisis negotiations are concluded?

**Objective 1**

How does an initial responding officer prepare for and respond to a critical incident?

In a lot of jurisdictions, there are minimal numbers of law enforcement personnel to respond to law enforcement related critical incidents. The only way to effectively respond to critical incidents is continuous preparation. The law enforcement field is ever evolving, and the once unusual incidents are becoming more prevalent in our day-to-day duties.

While on duty patrol, officers should be continuously playing scenarios through their head on how they would respond to different incidents if encountered. Do you pass residences while on patrol and say this is what I would do if I had a critical incident there? Training for high-risk incidents within your agency should not just be the duty of special operations-oriented divisions but also the normal patrol on corrections settings. This prepares you for the unknowns should they occur during your duty shift.

Don't rely on superiors to constantly provide training ideas. If you have ideas provide them and reinforce the importance of the training.

Case studies and new headlines about other officer's heroics or misfortunes are a great resource to prepare yourself for any critical incident you may be involved in. Although these studies are often something we do not wish to think about, it is something we need to accept and prepare for

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- 1) Criminal history checks on the subjects involved
- 2) Past history at the residence
- 3) Number of subjects known to be residing at the residence

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- 4) Is the subject known to be armed / are there any weapons in the residence;
- 5) Known vehicles (in case the subjects attempts to flee prior to your arrival)

Objective 2

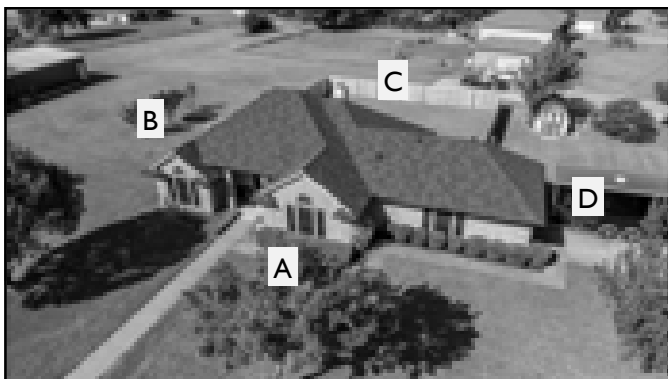
Law Enforcement personnel should understand the four C's of a response to a critical incident;

Knowing and utilizing the 4 C's method in regard to a critical incident can ensure a law enforcement officer has some basis on what they can and should do in their response to a critical incident;



The 1st C Contain

Containment on a building or vehicle can allow an officer to slow down and evaluate the situation for further action. Ensure your agency has a system for identifying the sides of a structure. Some use a numeric system others utilize an alphabetical approach. The front door entry of the residence should always be 1 in numerical order or A in alphabetical and use a clockwise motion for simplicity.



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Foot pursuits

Where can we set up a command post location?

There are a lot of responsibilities for the initial responding officers to consider when in the containment phase:

You organization should have a set order of protocols when it comes to a response to a critical incident:

By having containment on an incident, law enforcement can ensure the subject, with whom they are dealing with are with 100% certainty inside the structure:



The 2nd C Control

We take this opportunity to control the perimeter bystanders (any uninvolved parties), officers on the scene, and most importantly control ourselves (emotions mainly) to remain calm, cool and collective as not to excite and amp up others on the scene:

Law Enforcement Officer by nature are mostly a Type A personality and do not like to lose. They need to put pride aside, calm down and approach the incident in a productive manner. This behavior needs to resonate to all of those involved. Focus is nearly impossible when one is excited or emotional upset about actions the suspect may or may not have taken:

LEO's by nature are curious individuals, especially on critical incident scenes. A creep-up often occurs when the curiosity overtakes those involved and they want to see what is happening. We need to ensure we maintain our assigned positions as to not endanger ourselves and others on the scene.

The 3rd C
Communicate



Communication can be the most difficult of the 4 C's to overcome. Radio contact with each other, dispatch and other agencies is often times very difficult. The information flow is critical when responding to critical incidents.

Crisis negotiators need complete and through
information regarding

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+The nature of the call

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+The nature of the call

+The suspect

Crisis negotiators need complete and through information regarding

→The nature of the call

→The suspect

→Potential hostages

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→The nature of the call

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→Who is incident commander

Crisis negotiators need complete and through information regarding

→Officer positions relative to the structure

Crisis negotiators need complete and thorough information regarding

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•Any other information deemed pertinent to the investigation

All this information needs to be distributed to personnel once they arrive on the scene. It's important to have all details set into place and ready when the call to a suspect is made by a negotiator

The 4th C Call SWAT



Set EGO aside! Don't get too deep into an incident before deciding it's time to contact the SWAT Team. A simple notification to a Team Commander at the beginning of a critical incident can pay dividends in the end. It allows for the mental preparations on the team's end so that they are not walking into an incident blind!

In short, if the incident is above the capabilities of patrol, then specialized units should be contacted to deal with it accordingly. Calling SWAT consisting of Negotiators, Sniper Observers, and the Entry Team is just utilizing the correct resources for a safe resolution to the incident.

If we have specialized units, **USE THEM!** SWAT has the tools, training, tactics, teammates, and teamwork to bring the most difficult situations to a successful conclusion.

Objective 1

The importance of mutual aid assistance when it comes to critical incidents:

Within some law enforcement agencies, Sheriff's Office's in particular, manpower is minimal. A lot of agencies lack the manpower and resources for an effective SWAT Team.

Here are some questions you need to ask yourself!

Do all your officers have an understanding of all mutual aid assistance available to them?

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Do you have direct contact numbers to team leaders who can assist in a quick response to critical incident scenes?

As with any critical incident it is of utmost importance to have **AS MUCH** pertinent information regarding the incident as possible when contacting Specialized Units:

Once these specialized units are contacted, the continuous flow of information from incident command is necessary so that incoming assistance is aware and can adjust logistics and manpower needs:

Objective 4

What is the primary goal of crisis negotiations in a critical incident?

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• Suicidal subjects

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- Threatening violence (including workplace and domestic violence)
- Suicidal subjects
- Barricaded criminals (some of which resort to hostage taking)

There needs to be a realization that in the perfect world all negotiations result in the surrender of a suspect. This is not always the case and, in some instances, a tactical response needs to be implemented with assistance of the crisis negotiators.

The ultimate goal of crisis negotiations is:
Preservation of life and the reduction of liability for the officers and the law enforcement agency involved.

Objective 5

What are the principal goals and objectives of crisis negotiations, and why have crisis negotiators become a mainstay in day-to-day operations within the law enforcement community?

The call is made to contact SWAT to assist with a critical incident and crisis negotiations personnel show up on the scene. It is important to know and understand what crisis negotiations are:

Crisis negotiation - A Law Enforcement technique used to communicate with people who are threatening violence:

The most common examples of events crisis negotiators become involved are:

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Warrant service

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Criminal behavior

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Domestic violence/child custody situations

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Psychological crises (suicidal subjects, etc.)

Crisis negotiators use negotiation strategies and techniques to gain a voluntary surrender of the suspect involved. A goal of the crisis negotiation process is to save lives and resolve critical incidents while striving to avoid unnecessary risk to law enforcement personnel, citizens and victims.

The primary and highest objective of crisis negotiators is the preservation of life for all involved including the suspect.

Crisis negotiations are ever advancing in the law enforcement community. More and more law enforcement agencies are seeing the benefits of crisis negotiators within the ranks of the patrol and tactical teams as a way to reduce departmental liability.

By utilizing a crisis negotiator, you are not forcing the hand of the suspect in committing a violent act against others to include law enforcement. Why utilize a SWAT entry team element on an incident when the incident can be brought to a peaceful conclusion with the assistance of a trained crisis negotiator?

Often, a potentially violent critical incident can be brought to a successful resolution by a trained crisis negotiator who takes on the responsibility of utilizing active listening skills and taking the time and necessary steps to bring an incident to a closure.

Objective 4

The importance of debriefings once critical incident/crisis negotiations are concluded!

Debriefings at the conclusion of a critical incident are one of the most important steps of the incident itself! They should be held in a timely fashion and at most a week within the occurrence of the incident;

Tactical/Negotiations Debrief

What worked and why! What mistakes were made to prevent them from occurring on future call outs! It is important to include both teams on these debriefs. By having both teams together conducting the debrief it gives the SWAT element an insight on the negotiations process. This process also gives the teams time to put together a strategy packet on the subject ensuring if another incident is encountered with the same person(s) involved there is knowledge of what worked and what didn't.

Critical Incident Debrief

This debrief is not based on any tactical maneuvers or negotiations strategies. Negotiations don't always end with a successful surrender. Standoffs ending in suicide, hostages killed, etc. after an hours long incident are demoralizing and can be emotional for all who are involved. It is important to involve PEER support teams and Mental Health Liaisons to assist with the critical incident debriefs:

Law enforcement needs to move away from the "bury it inside and deal with it" mentality. The law enforcement world is stressful and full of unknowns as are the outcomes of any critical incident. Law enforcement leaders need to ensure critical incident debrief is an integrated part of any post incident process:

Conclusion

Through departmental training regarding coordinated responses to critical incidents and the incorporation of crisis negotiators into not only SWAT operations but day to day law enforcement duties, law enforcement personnel will find they will be prepared to handle most incidents.

The ultimate goal in successfully negotiating critical incidents is:

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- 1) Reducing departmental and officer liability and
- 2) Giving a subject every opportunity to surrender on their own with the most minimal amount of force used.

By looking at these two goals, law enforcement agencies can project a positive light on the public of how they operate with the highest level of ethics and professionalism.

References:

- Officer.Com (2007). • Critical Incident Stress
- Police1 (May 3, 2019) David Pearson-Shift Pearson Series "Using the Four C's" a critical incident response model for patrol
- Wikipedia definition of "crisis negotiation" (March 21, 2021)
