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| Response to Violent Incidents | Related Policies: |
| *This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee’s civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.* |
| Applicable KY Statutes:  |
| OSHA: |
| NFPA Standard: Ch. 8.1; 8.10 |
| Date Implemented: | Review Date: |

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure for the response of fire department personnel to emergency scenes where violence may be encountered.
2. **Policy:** It is the policy of this department that emergency operations be conducted in a manner that recognizes hazards and prevents accidents and injuries. Fire department members shall not become involved in any activities at the scene of a shooting, stabbing, assault, domestic dispute, civil unrest, suicide involving firearms or other weapons, or similar situations where there is ongoing violence, without the confirmed presence of law enforcement personnel on scene who have deemed the scene to be secure.
3. **Scope:** This Standard Operating Procedure shall apply to all members of the Department when responding to emergency incidents where violence may be encountered.
4. **Definitions**

**A Violent Incident:** Any incident where there is a reported or actual shooting, stabbing, assault, domestic dispute, civil unrest, suicide with firearms or other weapons reported to be involved, or similar situations where there is ongoing violence. Violent incidents are primarily law enforcement matters, and fire department operations shall be coordinated with the law enforcement incident commander throughout the incident.

**An Unsecured Area:** An area where there is reason to believe that weapons and/or violence may be present.

**A Secured Area**: An area which law enforcement and/or fire personnel have investigated and have found to be safe for fire department operations.

1. Procedure:
2. When responding to a report of a violent incident, the first arriving company shall stage at least two blocks from the incident, and out of the line of fire from possible gunshots.
3. The first arriving company shall announce their arrival at the staging location over the radio and will clearly identify the staging location. Additional responding companies shall report to the staging location. Where appropriate, the first arriving company should provide additional responding companies with directions to the staging area.
4. Fire Department vehicles shall not drive through an unsecured area to reach the staging area.
5. When responding to an incident with law enforcement, units equipped with scanners or law enforcement radios shall monitor the law enforcement frequencies. Pertinent information received over the law enforcement frequencies shall be relayed to other responding units. Examples of such pertinent information would include:
6. Law enforcement personnel report shots fired
7. Law enforcement reports a confirmed shooting
8. Law enforcement reports the scene is secure
9. Law enforcement reports a large scale disturbance
10. Law enforcement personnel are requesting more law enforcement resources
11. Law enforcement reports a foot chase is in progress with an armed suspect
12. Whether or not law enforcement has been dispatched
13. Any other information that will assist responding units in assessing whether or not the incident scene is secure.
14. Staged companies shall not respond to the scene until given confirmation that the scene is secured by the law enforcement. Acceptable confirmations that the scene is secure and safe to respond to are:
15. A radio report from the dispatch office that law enforcement personnel on scene report that the scene is secure;
16. A radio report from the law enforcement personnel on scene (via scanner or law enforcement radio) that the scene is secure;
17. A visual signal from a law enforcement officer at the scene to proceed to the scene
18. Face-to-face communications from a law enforcement officer that the scene is secure
19. If no law enforcement personnel are on the scene, the officer of the first arriving fire company shall establish command and take steps to identify the type of emergency providing such can be done without endangering him/herself or personnel. This may include talking to onlookers and neighbors, and observing conditions around the incident scene for clues. If clues and other available information indicate reasonable safety, the officer shall exercise his/her judgment as to proceed or wait for the law enforcement. Any doubt shall be resolved in favor of awaiting the arrival of law enforcement.
20. Once confirmation of the scene being secured is received, ONLY ONE COMPANY will respond in. Once this company provides an on-site confirmation that the scene is secure, other units shall be called to the scene as needed.
21. If Fire Department companies respond to an incident and find themselves in a violent situation, they will immediately withdraw to a safe location. Emergency Traffic should be used to alert other responding units, and the dispatch office shall be advised of the need for rapid law enforcement response.
22. In some situations, it may be necessary for law enforcement to deliver patients to fire department personnel at the perimeter of the unsecured area.
23. When responding to incidents where dead bodies are found, the area must be secured and the scene preserved. A law enforcement officer should be requested and nothing disturbed until law enforcement personnel arrive and so requests or allows.
24. When responding to incidents where a crime may have been committed (assaults, domestic disputes, stabbings, shootings, etc.) personnel shall make every effort to preserve the scene during the treatment of patients.
25. Members responding on units equipped with body armor are encouraged to wear these items to all violent incidents.
26. Fire department equipment or personnel shall not be used for crowd control or dispersement purposes.
27. FIREFIGHTERS MUST NOT OPERATE WITH TUNNEL VISION EVEN ON THE MOST ROUTINE INCIDENTS.
28. Do not focus solely upon persons down or persons calling for help.
29. Look at the entire situation, including checking upper windows and rooftops for suspicious activity.
30. A 360 degree scene assessment is always recommended before approaching a victim.
31. Be alert for any actions that seem to be keyed to your presence. This may be heads ducking down as apparatus arrives, persons ducking into doorways or around the corners of buildings, persons approaching as you arrive, lights going out as you arrive, etc.
32. Any action that seems to be keyed to your actions should be cause for immediate concern.

**Editor’s Note:** NFPA 1500 requires that fire departments develop a standard communication method to indicate that an incident crew is faced with a life-and-death situation requiring immediate law enforcement intervention. The following is offered as an example of such a standard communications method. The use of code words and the adoption of the procedure must be discussed with and agreed to by the appropriate law enforcement agency. Both organizations’ policies and procedures must incorporate the code words.

1. **Requests for Police**
2. Whenever the response of law enforcement is requested at the scene of an incident, a brief explanation of the nature of the situation shall be provided to the dispatch office. This is necessary so that an appropriate law enforcement response can be dispatched.
3. In a life-threatening situation where rapid law enforcement response is needed, the company requesting assistance shall use the code words “FIREFIGHTER NEEDS ASSISTANCE". The dispatch office shall transmit this message to the law enforcement dispatcher, including the code words.
4. Use of these code words shall result in the highest priority response possible at the time by law enforcement. This is the same priority given to the police code words "officer needs assistance".
5. Because the use of these code words will result in the rapid mobilization of all available law enforcement units, firefighters and dispatch personnel shall limit use of the code words “Firefighter Needs Assistance” only to true life-threatening situations.

**Editor’s Note:** Some jurisdictions use a 10 code, color code, or similar local code expression to accomplish this objective. The use of the expression “Firefighter Needs Assistance” is intended to meet NIMS requirements of using plain English as opposed to jurisdiction specific codes.