



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Hostage Situation Incidents

Eff. Date 02/03/2025

**Purpose**

Establish standard procedure for the Madison Police Department’s (MPD) response to incidents involving hostage situations.

**Policy**

The objectives of this department in dealing with barricaded person, hostage, and active shooter incidents are:

- 1. Preservation of life.
- 2. Apprehension of perpetrator(s) using a reasonable amount of force.
- 3. Securing available evidence to assist in the appropriate disposition of the perpetrator(s).

**SAFETY PRIORITIES**

Operational and tactical decisions will be based on the following safety priorities:

- 1. Hostages and community members
- 2. Law enforcement personnel
- 3. Suspects and subjects

The department will respond and take necessary steps to free innocent persons who are endangered and being held illegally against their will. Officers may take direct and immediate action—up to and including deadly force—in situations where a hostage is at imminent risk and the officers’ reasonable actions have a high probability of neutralizing the deadly force threat or preventing the situation from escalating.

**Definitions**

**Hostage Situation:** A scenario in which a person is being held against their will by an armed, potentially armed, or otherwise dangerous suspect.

**Triggering Point:** Specific predetermined circumstances that will justify the initiation of direct action to prevent or stop a particular course of suspect behavior (such as physical or sexual assault on the hostage or setting the structure on fire).

**Inner Perimeter:** A close proximity boundary [REDACTED]

**Outer Perimeter:** A boundary outside the inner perimeter maintained by patrol officers and designed to prevent unauthorized persons from entering the area of the critical incident.

**Positive progress:** In a hostage situation, positive progress shall be defined as developments that increase the probability of the safe release of the hostages, as opposed to the mere passage of time. While it is true that the passage of time may increase the opportunity for such developments, it is also true that a viable rescue opportunity presented and ignored may be lost forever.



**Contact Team:** A group of officers designated to respond to the hostage situation [REDACTED]




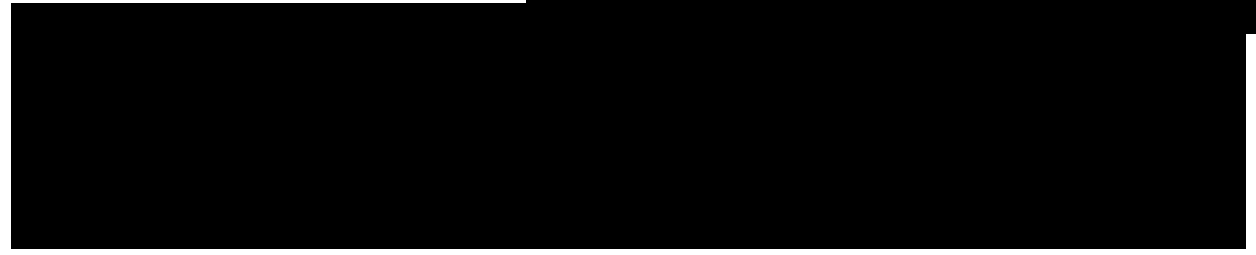
## Response Procedures

### INITIAL RESPONSE

Personnel initially responding to a hostage situation will assess the circumstances and request the appropriate resources. The initial priorities are to:

- Establish an inner perimeter and staging area.
- Isolate communications through use of a dedicated  radio channel and keep dispatch apprised of all relevant actions.
- Ensure that a supervisor is assigned to the incident.
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- Gather intelligence/information on the situation.
- Evacuate any uninvolved community members who might be at risk and otherwise stabilize the scene.
- Ensure that the appropriate specialized resources have been requested (Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT), paramedics, Rescue Vehicle, etc.).

The scene supervisor shall continuously evaluate the situation and determine whether the opportunity and need exists for immediate intervention. 



### SECONDARY RESPONSE

SWAT should be activated for any confirmed hostage situations. Initial requests for SWAT activation should be made to a SWAT tactical team lieutenant. A full-team SWAT activation should generally be approved by the SWAT Commander and designated Assistant Chief. However, SWAT use may be approved by any MPD supervisor if no SWAT commander/supervisor can be contacted, or in case of extraordinary emergency where command approval would be impractical. The SWAT commander will be notified as soon as possible of any SWAT usage that did not have prior authorization.

On-duty SWAT personnel may respond to assist with tactical situations as needed. Where possible, a SWAT supervisor will respond to the scene to oversee the utilization of SWAT personnel. If used for on-duty tactical situations, SWAT personnel will only be used in a manner that is consistent with the SWAT's training, applicable standard operating procedures, and in accordance with the MPD SWAT Manual.

Further, the actions of SWAT will be consistent with MPD's Code of Conduct, standard operating procedures, and with standard professional practices in the area of police tactical response.

The scene supervisor shall ensure that a variety of tasks are addressed while awaiting the arrival of SWAT and negotiations, including but not limited to the following:

1. Establish an outer perimeter and initiate the evacuation and handling process for those inside. Special consideration must be given to the handling of those who refuse to be evacuated.
2. Establish a command post location [REDACTED]
3. Initiate an investigation to determine exactly what has occurred and locate, isolate, and debrief any witnesses. [REDACTED]
5. Select a location for media response and designate a person to interact with them prior to the arrival of the agency public information officer.
6. Select a location for those responding on behalf of the hostage(s) or suspect and designate an officer to interact with them. Make outer-perimeter personnel aware of the presence of those responders and consider that they may attempt to enter the barricade location. [REDACTED]
8. Establish and maintain a log that documents the activities that have occurred and the location and identification of the assigned personnel.
9. Ensure that the appropriate personnel have been notified and briefed (Officer in Charge (OIC), District Command, etc.).
10. Brief the SWAT and negotiations teams upon their arrival (if applicable).
11. Assist the SWAT team as it relieves the officers responsible for inner perimeter containment personnel (if applicable).
12. Ensure that all officers relieved report to the command post for reassignment.

## SWAT RESPONSE

Once SWAT has arrived on scene and assumed responsibility for the incident, SWAT command will fill the role of the overall incident commander. In situations that do not demand immediate intervention, primary focus should be on the following:

1. Ensure that all appropriate steps have been taken prior to SWAT arrival (inner perimeter, intelligence gathering, etc.). [REDACTED]

10. Maintain a log to document incident activity.



13. Initiate negotiations using the most appropriate communication method. The CNT commander will oversee the negotiation function and the gathering of all relevant intelligence. Information will be shared with perimeter units as appropriate, and CNT activity will be documented consistent with the SWAT Manual.
14. Continue negotiations as long as positive progress is being made.
15. Evaluate the viability, necessity, and appropriateness of a tactical resolution—including the long rifle option—in situations where negotiations prove unproductive and a tactical resolution would be reasonable and justified based on the totality of circumstances
16. Use a combination of techniques and tactics, in a manner consistent with approved training, until the situation is brought to a successful conclusion.

Original SOP: 08/18/2014

(Revised: 02/05/2016, 11/02/2016, 01/20/2017, 12/20/2019, 11/30/2020, 12/13/2021, 02/03/2025)

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