

COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

		SUBJECT: Crisis Negotiations	
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POLICY: It is the purpose of this policy to provide general guidelines for handling crisis/barricaded subject/hostage situations in order to enhance the prospects of peacefully resolving such incidents through communication with the suspect and to develop alternative approaches to resolve the incident should negotiations fail. In crisis/hostage and barricaded subject situations the safety of all persons involved shall be of the utmost importance.

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I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **BARRICADED PERSON** – any person who presents a threat to the safety of him/herself or others, or to the property of others or after the commission of a crime attempts to avoid apprehension by taking refuge in a fortified location. This shall include suicidal subject(s) who pose a credible threat to themselves (i.e. person in crisis).
- B. **HOSTAGE/VICTIM** – A person(s) held against their will by force or threat of force; or a person held as security for the fulfillment of substantive demands on a third party.
- C. **INNER PERIMETER** – The distance at which police actively involved in the incident will remain away from the situation. This is the shortest possible distance necessary for the safety of officers and security of the scene. No one shall be permitted to cross the inner perimeter except under the direction of the Incident Commander or his/her designee.
- D. **OUTER PERIMETER** – The distance at which other police personnel not actively involved in the incident shall remain away from the situation. Media personnel and the public are prohibited from crossing the outer perimeter, unless specific permission has been granted by the Incident Commander and then only if accompanied by a police officer. A staging area shall be

designated on the outer perimeter where personnel and additional resources will report for assignments.

- E. **CRISIS** – Any situation perceived by an individual as an emergency for which there is no perceived adequate solution.
- F. **NEGOTIATOR** – A department member who has successfully completed formalized training in crisis/hostage negotiation through a recognized Law Enforcement Agency or other appropriate source. The duties may include the following functions:
 1. Conduct primary negotiations with the subject(s) involved in an incident. This is generally referred to as the lead negotiator.
 2. Assist and/or coach the lead negotiator during an incident through the utilization of active listening skills.
 3. Gather intelligence from witnesses, victims, bystanders and others who have information regarding an ongoing incident which is relevant to successful negotiations.
 4. Scribe details of positive and negative interaction during the negotiation process.
 5. Act as liaison between the negotiation unit and the incident command unit.

II. PROCEDURES

- A. Immediately upon recognizing a crisis/hostage or barricaded subject situation, the responding officer(s) shall notify the Officer In Charge (OIC).
- B. Unless immediate action is necessary to protect life, less than lethal methods shall be used to resolve hostage or barricade situations. Responding officers shall attempt to avoid confrontation and control the situation until trained crisis/hostage negotiators and/or tactical personnel arrive.
 1. The first officer(s) on the scene shall consider the safety of themselves, victims, witnesses, and bystanders as paramount.
 2. The first officer(s) on the scene should attempt to limit escape routes and identify vehicles that may be accessible to the subject.
 3. Identification and containment of witnesses is important.
- C. The OIC shall respond to the scene and designate personnel to establish the inner and outer perimeters. If necessary, the OIC shall invoke the Mutual Assistance Agreement to garner adequate personnel for these purposes.
- D. In all incidents requiring the need for negotiations, the OIC shall request Communications to notify a crisis/hostage negotiator of the event. If there are no trained negotiators on duty, two trained crisis/hostage negotiators (chosen from the on-call list) will be called in. **Once crisis negotiators are on scene, only trained personnel shall negotiate with suspect(s) unless the lead negotiator determines that another person is more effective in this role.**

A list of trained crisis/hostage negotiators shall be maintained in the Communication Center.

- E. The OIC shall serve as Incident Commander until relieved of this responsibility according to National Incident Management System (NIMS) protocol.
- F. The Incident Commander shall determine the necessity of summoning additional resources, such as K-9 assistance, Rescue, or Fire personnel or the Vermont State Police Tactical Support Unit (TSU).
 - 1. If TSU responds, they shall work under the direction of the Colchester Police Incident Commander, or in a unified command manner.
 - 2. If TSU or officers from other agencies are on scene, all communications should be on a common frequency.
- G. The Incident Commander shall direct the following, as appropriate:
 - 1. Evacuation of injured persons - all reasonable attempts shall be made to evacuate injured persons from the area;
 - 2. Evacuation of bystanders or persons in adjacent structures;
 - 3. Establish a Command Post;
 - 4. Control media access and authorize information release. Media access shall be restricted to the outer perimeter and all information disseminated through a spokesperson designated by the Incident Commander;
 - 5. Authorization for use of force or chemical agents;
 - 6. Notification of the Chief of Police or his/her designee;
 - 7. The Incident Commander shall be responsible for continually re-evaluating the circumstances and making operational changes as warranted. This shall include the option of scaling up or down the agency's response or standing down.
- H. **Use of Negotiators** - a minimum of two crisis/hostage negotiators shall be summoned to any situation in which immediate resolution is not foreseen. Additional crisis/hostage negotiators shall be requested, as appropriate, for relief during protracted negotiations or if the magnitude of the incident calls for it. The crisis/hostage negotiators shall provide information to the Incident Commander and/or tactical personnel regarding the status of the negotiations.
 - 1. Crisis/hostage negotiators shall attempt to maintain communication with the suspect(s). It is desirable for the negotiator to resolve the situation peacefully. In the event a non-peaceful resolution becomes necessary, **negotiators shall not be responsible for deciding the course of action required for resolving the incident.**
 - 2. Decisions relative to non-peaceful resolution shall be made by the Incident Commander, after consulting with negotiators and tactical personnel (if on scene).
 - 3. Responding crisis/hostage negotiators shall only be utilized for negotiation related issues, unless exigent circumstances arise that

require their services elsewhere as deemed appropriate by the Incident Commander.

4. Once communication has been established between the suspect and the crisis/hostage negotiator, no other member of the department will attempt to become involved in the communication with the suspect unless directed by a member of the negotiation team or the Incident Commander.
5. The crisis/hostage negotiator has no authority to agree to any demands or enter into any agreements or promises without the permission of the Incident Commander.

- I. If the situation becomes mobile, the Incident Commander will direct available resources so that the suspect is under continual surveillance. The Department shall attempt to control travel to a route that is advantageous to the police and conducive to a successful resolution of the incident. If a pursuit ensues, Department policy shall be adhered to.
- J. Negotiations by police negotiators from other agencies assisting the Colchester Police with a crisis/hostage incident shall be at the direction of the Colchester Police Incident Commander.

III. POST-INCIDENT PROCEDURES

- A. After action reports shall be required of all personnel who participated in the incident, except those whose only responsibility was maintenance of the **outer** perimeter. All reports shall be submitted to the Incident Commander.
- B. Post incident debriefing shall be conducted by the Incident Commander to evaluate the response and solicit feedback from involved parties.
- C. Officers involved in traumatic incidents will be provided professional support and/or counseling at the officer's request.
- D. Appropriate notifications and information regarding the incident will be made to neighbors and nearby residents in an effort to provide accurate data concerning the resolution of the matter and to offer support resources within the community.

IV. SELECTION & TRAINING OF NEGOTIATORS

- A. When negotiator training becomes available and if the department determines a need to add to the pool of current negotiators, interested officers shall submit a training request to the Administrative Sergeant.

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- B. Selection of negotiators will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police and in consideration of the following attributes: good listening skills, excellent interpersonal communication skills, emotional stability, ability to remain calm under stress and patience.
- C. The Department will provide periodic refresher training to negotiators. This training may be scenario based, literature review, online training or other delivery method.

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