

Santa Monica Police Department

Policy Manual

FORCE DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation tactics and techniques are those actions undertaken by an officer(s) to avoid physical confrontations, unless immediately necessary to protect someone or to stop dangerous behavior, while minimizing the need to use force during an incident when the totality of the circumstances and time permit. **De-Escalation tactics and techniques are employed to increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance and cooperation.**

It is the policy of this Department that when all of the reasonably known circumstances indicate it is safe, prudent, and feasible to do so, an officer(s) shall attempt to slow down, reduce the intensity, or stabilize the situation so that more time, options and/or resources may become available for incident resolution.

When time and circumstances reasonably permit, an officer(s) shall consider whether a subject's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or is the result of an inability to comply based on factors including, but not limited to:

- Medical conditions
- Mental impairment
- Developmental disability
- Physical limitation
- Language barrier
- Drug interaction
- Behavioral crisis

An officer's awareness of these possibilities, when time and circumstances reasonably permit, shall then be balanced against the facts of the incident and which tactical options are the most appropriate to bring the situation to a safe resolution. An officer is not expected to engage in force de-escalation measures that could jeopardize the safety of the community or of any employee.

Where circumstances and time reasonably permit, an officer(s) shall take those reasonable and prudent actions which operate to mitigate the immediacy of the threat thereby giving the officer(s) time to call more officers, utilize other tactics, or request specialty assistance, such as Crisis Negotiators. The number of officers on scene may increase the available force options, a circumstance which has the potential to increase the ability of the officer(s) to reduce the overall force used by promoting consideration of other viable alternatives such as:

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- Decreasing the exposure to the potential threat by using distance or physical barriers between an uncooperative subject and an officer.
- Containing the threat.
- Maximizing the use of cover or concealment to reduce officer(s) exposure to potential threats by placing the officer(s) in a safer position.
- Communicating from a safe position to gain the subject's compliance through the use of verbal persuasion, advisements, and/or warnings. Generally, communication techniques should engage active listening to calm agitated individuals and promote rational decision-making.
- The officer's physical actions may also de-escalate a potentially volatile/violent situation; i.e., exhibiting a relaxed body language.

When the circumstances warrant an application of force, the level of force applied must reflect the totality of the reasonably known circumstances surrounding the immediate situation. The officer need only select a level of force that is within the range of "objectively reasonable" options. Officers must rely on training, experience and an assessment of the situation to decide an appropriate level of force to be applied. Reasonable and sound judgment will dictate the force option to be employed.

Officers may either escalate or de-escalate the use of force as the situation progresses or as circumstances change. When a suspect is under control, either through the application of physical restraint or the suspect's compliance, the degree of force shall be de-escalated accordingly. An officer has the duty to intercede when observing unreasonable or unnecessary force being applied to a given situation.