

THE RALEIGH POLICE DEPARTMENT

1108-07

DE-ESCALATION

PURPOSE

To define the process of de-escalation and provide guidelines for the exercise of de-escalation techniques and tactics to increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance and/or decrease the amount of force that may be needed.

VALUES REFLECTED

This directive reflects our values of *Service, Courage, Fairness, Integrity, and Compassion*. By acting in concert with these instructions, we will demonstrate that we are accountable for our actions and that we have the highest possible regard for safeguarding life; including the lives of those persons we come into contact with, of innocent people, and of ourselves.

UNITS AFFECTED

All Divisions/All Personnel

REFERENCES/FORMS

N.C. General Statute 15A-401(d) "Use of Force in Arrest."
DOI 1108-01 "Use of Force and Weapons"
DOI 1108-03 "Prisoners and Restraints"
DOI 1105-03 "Officer Involved Shootings and In-Custody Deaths"
DOI 1109-12 "Interacting with Vulnerable Populations"

May be Released to the Public

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Prepared By: Estella D. Patterson
Chief of Police

Supersedes: N/A
Approved By: M. Adams-David
City Manager

GENERAL POLICIES

The Raleigh Police Department seeks to preserve and improve the quality of life in carrying out our duties to serve the community. We affirm the sanctity of life and respect human dignity.

The employment of de-escalation techniques is significant to maintain the safety of all persons involved in an incident, especially during encounters with children, youth, and persons experiencing a behavioral, health, or situational crisis.

Employees of the Raleigh Police Department are often faced with challenging and rapidly evolving situations. Employees require training and equipment to manage dynamic circumstances, maximizing time, distance, and space to create the tactical flexibility necessary to facilitate safe resolutions, maintain public trust, and reflect organizational values effectively and strategically. Employees are empowered to utilize all available resources as these situations often result from extraordinary challenges faced by those involved.

The de-escalation process may minimize the likelihood that an officer uses physical force, beyond touch, during an incident. It may also increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance and/or decrease the amount of force that may be needed. During a force encounter, officers must constantly evaluate the threat posed by the individual and the officer's level of force. This may mean decreasing or increasing the level of force during an encounter as necessary, depending on the totality of circumstances facing the officers.

DEFINITION

De-escalation is defined as taking action(s) or communicating verbally or non-verbally before or during a potential force encounter. De-escalation techniques are utilized in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in the force necessary. De-escalation is a process that may include but is not limited to the use of such techniques as presence, tactical repositioning, establishing a channel of communication, improving an unsafe environment, stress reduction, and persuasion using verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

DE-ESCALATION & USE OF FORCE

De-Escalation Techniques

When a person is non-compliant to an officer's lawful command, the officer will assess the level of non-compliance and determine whether there is an immediate need to act. If there is no immediate need to act, the officer should attempt de-escalation techniques. These attempts should continue until voluntary compliance is achieved, the officer transfers ongoing de-escalation attempts to another officer, or a need to act arises. Examples of a need to act include but are not limited to: the imminent threat of safety to the officer or others, escape of a suspect, destruction of evidence, medical emergency, or the ongoing commission of a crime.

Attempts to gain voluntary compliance are more likely to be successful after an individual's stress level has been reduced and a communication channel has been established. The repetition of commands by itself is not considered to be an effective de-escalation technique. An officer should

not antagonize or bait a subject to act in a manner that will reasonably result in an unwarranted escalation.

Totality of the Circumstances

When time and circumstances reasonably permit, an officer(s) should 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 all factors that may influence a lack of compliance should be balanced against the facts of the incident and which techniques are the most appropriate to bring the situation to a safe resolution.

SUPERVISOR ROLES

The supervisor's role during difficult, dynamic, challenging, and evolving situations is critical to ensure the safety of all parties involved, compliance with applicable policies, and accountability. When present, supervisors shall assess ongoing de-escalation attempts and determine if the officer should be allowed to continue, have another officer take over, disengage, or respond to a need to act. Supervisors shall also ensure the appropriate number of personnel are engaged in an incident and should continually assess the incident and adjust personnel and equipment accordingly.

At an appropriate time and when it is feasible to do so, supervisors should:

- provide timely and constructive feedback directly to the employee
- during a use of force review, assess whether the employee successfully utilized de-escalation techniques; and
- refer the employee to remedial training after consultation with the training staff if deficiencies are noted

Training

Initial training on the concepts and techniques of effective de-escalation will be provided. All employees will receive training on this policy and its interpretation annually. All supervisors and select employees will be provided additional training on assessing de-escalation techniques as outlined in this policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually.