



# Town of Lexington

## Police Department

<b>Subject:</b> Hostage Negotiations	
Reference: none	
<b>Effective Date:</b> January 1, 2011	<b>Review Date:</b> Annually
<b>By Order of:</b> Mark J. Corr, Chief of Police	

### Policy & Procedure

# 46C

*The Municipal Police Institute, Inc. (MPI) is a private, nonprofit charitable affiliate of the Massachusetts Chief's of Police Association. MPI provides training and model policies and procedures for police agencies. This policy is an edited version of MPI Policy 7.XX, "Hostage Negotiations."*

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The primary overriding objective of police officers responding to any hostage confrontation is the preservation of lives, including those of the hostages, the citizens in the area, police personnel and the hostage-taker. The secondary concerns are the apprehension of the perpetrator and recovery of any property seized.

It is the policy of the Lexington Police Department in any hostage situation that:

1. To give the highest priority to protecting lives during a hostage situation;
2. Arrest and recovery of seized property are secondary to the preservation of lives.

## PROCEDURE

### A. Arrival at Scene

1. The first officers arriving at the scene of a hostage situation should avoid the impulse to take immediate action and confront the hostage-taker(s). Officers should:
  - a. Make an immediate assessment of the situation;

- b. Advise the Commanding Officer and/or the Patrol Supervisor of the circumstances and the need for assistance from tactical and negotiations personnel; and
    - c. Isolate the incident area.
  2. As additional officers arrive, they should contain the incident, isolating the crime scene and evacuating the immediate area using the following criteria:
    - a. Evacuate all injured people.
    - b. Remove all uninvolved people from the area.
    - c. Evacuate buildings involved.
    - d. Prevent pedestrian and vehicular traffic from entering the area
    - e. Seal off escape routes, as the safety of the hostages can best be assured by preventing movement by the hostage-taker.
- B. Officer-in-Charge at Scene
  1. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall be in command of all police operations and make all decisions regarding police action to be taken.
  2. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall initiate the Incident Command System, delegating duties as additional resources arrive. See policy **46A-All Hazards Plan**. The incident command staff shall:
    - a. Establish a command post and inner and outer perimeters;
    - b. Determine the deployment of all officers and vehicles at the scene;
    - c. Call for assistance from other agencies, as necessary;
    - d. Obtain as much information as possible about the hostage-taker;
    - e. Before taking direct police action, make an effort, if possible, to persuade the hostage-taker to surrender;
    - f. Ensure that the hostage-taker knows of the presence of the police, but not their specific deployment or strategy;
    - g. Determine the necessity for any special equipment, including body armor, special weapons or specially-trained police units;

- h. Coordinate actions of tactical personnel and negotiators.
- i. Request the cooperation of the telephone company to obtain and maintain police control of all telephones available to the hostage-taker; anticipate and prevent attempts by the news media to contact the hostage-taker directly;
- j. Deal with the news media in accordance with Department policy **54A-Public Information and the News Media**;
- k. Call for emergency equipment as necessary;
- l. Take every precaution to avoid injury to the hostage(s), to police officers or to any innocent persons in the vicinity;
- m. Take every verbal and tactical means available to secure the apprehension of the hostage-taker without harm to the hostage(s);
- n. Evaluate the use of force, including chemical agents;
- o. Ensure that, properly instructed and well-equipped police officers make the apprehension of the hostage-taker; and
- p. If the hostage-taker kills one or several hostages during negotiations, take immediate action to save the remaining hostage(s) if it appears the hostage-taker is likely to kill more hostages.

C. Commanding Officer Duties (Station)

- 1. Notifications: The Commanding Officer shall notify the Chief of Police or in his absence his designee of any hostage situation. The Town Manager shall, when time permits, be notified of the situation.
- 2. Make the necessary calls so that the highest ranking officer available can respond to the scene.
- 3. The Commanding Officer shall also ensure that additional agencies that may be needed are contacted and placed on standby. (NEMLEC, State Police, FBI, National Park Service, DPW etc.)

D. Mobility

- 1. Every effort should be made to keep the hostage situation from becoming mobile as it could become more difficult to contain and control.

2. If the situation does become mobile, the officer-in-charge at the scene shall assign an unmarked car to follow and maintain constant surveillance.
3. The surveillance car shall follow and maintain contact with the hostage vehicle as long as hostages are being held, and advise the officer-in-charge of their location.
4. The dispatcher shall monitor the progress of the situation and keep the officer-in-charge informed. On the direction of the officer-in-charge, other agencies, including NEMLEC, State Police and F.B.I., shall be asked for assistance. The dispatcher will also notify the appropriate agencies if the situation moves to another jurisdiction.

E. Demands

1. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall make all decisions regarding the demands of a hostage-taker.
2. The following demands **shall not** be complied with under any circumstances:
  - a. No weapons will be supplied to the hostage-taker, as it is always possible that a hostage-taker may be bluffing with an unloaded or imitation firearm.
  - b. No additional hostages will be given, and exchanges of hostages must be made cautiously, if at all.
  - c. A hostage-taker shall not be allowed to remove a hostage to another location

F. Negotiations

1. Generally
  - a. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall utilize the services of a trained hostage negotiator when necessary, if one is available. In as much as each hostage situation is unique, each must be treated on an individual basis.
  - b. Relatives or close friends of the hostage taker generally should not be allowed to act as negotiators. The hostage-taker may harbor deep hostility toward these people, and their safety may be at risk.

2. Negotiations Team Call Out
  - a. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall determine if the services of a negotiator are appropriate for the given incident and initiate a call out.
  - b. The North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) control point shall be contacted and advised of the situation. The point of contact will initiate a negotiations team call out and call out other NEMLEC resources, if necessary. [If NEMLEC is not immediately available, State Police or other trained law enforcement negotiators should be contacted]. The caller must be prepared to provide the point of contact with information about the incident, including:
    - i. Location of the incident;
    - ii. Number and identity of hostages and perpetrators;
    - iii. Weapons, types and quantities;
    - iv. Reason behind hostage taking, if known:
      - Fleeing Criminal;
      - Terrorist or political extremist;
      - Religious fanatic;
      - Mentally disturbed person; or
      - A “wronged” person.
  - c. The caller should provide any other information that would be helpful for the negotiations team in planning their response.
3. Negotiator Responsibilities, if a Lexington Officer is assuming these duties:
  - a. Accumulate as much information about the hostage-taker as possible, and appear compassionate, yet unemotional.
  - b. Attempt to reduce the number of people involved, and talk only to the leader of the hostage takers.
  - c. Do not portray himself/herself as the ultimate decision maker so that [s]he may buy time more easily.
  - d. Attempt to ease the personal animosity, which the hostage-taker may have toward the police or other group, agency, organization or individual.
  - e. Avoid any appearance of weakness or lack of confidence, and never give away anything without getting something in return.

- f. Utilize delicate prodding, such as, "What if . . ." or "How can I sell your request to my bosses?"
- g. Elicit from the hostage-taker how the problem can be resolved.
- h. Check out alternatives to "buy time."
- i. Never criticize an idea of the hostage-taker, or attempt to impose the negotiator's judgments or values.
- j. Negotiate everything (e.g., trade food, water, electricity, heat, or air-conditioning for hostages or extensions on the hostage-taker's deadlines).
- k. Keep the hostage-taker in a decision-making status by requiring him/her to decide even minor issues (e.g., if [s]he wants food, what does [s]he want, hamburgers or hot dogs; what about pizza; what does [s]he want on the food; what do the hostages want; what about drinks - large or small, diet or regular; etc.).
- l. If necessary, provide the hostage-taker with a means of communication (e.g., telephone, radio) for negotiations, with approval of the officer-in-charge. Make certain that the instrument provided is capable of receiving or transmitting only on the channel set aside for negotiation and cannot be made to receive tactical communications. Telephones are preferable to radios because telephones are more private, and radio batteries will go dead during prolonged negotiations.

G. Conclusion of Situation

- 1. When a hostage confrontation is terminated, the hostage-takers shall be taken into custody and removed from the scene as quickly as possible, and the hostages shall be provided with medical attention, if required.
- 2. All hostages shall be identified and interviewed as soon as practical.
- 3. The officer-in-charge of the police operation shall submit a full and complete report of the incident to the Chief of Police.
- 4. Counseling: The officer-in-charge should arrange for stress-debriefing sessions with qualified counselors for all personnel directly involved in the hostage situation. Post-traumatic stress disorder is generally best alleviated when counseling is provided within twenty-four hours of the incident.