

JULY ROLL CALL TRAINING

High Risk Critical Task / Off Duty Actions

The purpose of this order is to adopt safety directives and guidelines for carrying firearms and responding to criminal activity while in an off-duty status.

A member of this agency who becomes aware of an incident that poses a threat of serious bodily harm or death to an officer or others shall take "action" to minimize the risk of serious bodily harm or death. "Action" under this provision is fulfilled by reporting the incident and shall not require the officer to place themselves in a position of peril. An officer who is faced with such a circumstance should act in accordance with the guidelines as spelled out in agency policy.

Several circumstances may impact your decision to get involved in any situation. You may be alone, with family members, or other non-law enforcement personnel. It is also unlikely that you will have all the necessary law enforcement service equipment while off-duty, for example pepper spray, baton, handcuffs or radio. It must be recognized that the available force options, as well as threat assessment, may change due to this lack of equipment. You may be faced with multiple suspects or unaware of hidden suspects. There may also be environmental factors working against you such as lack of cover, crowds of civilians, darkness, etc. Furthermore, your intervention may trigger an escalation of violence.

“Blue on blue” or friendly fire is another danger officers must consider when taking off-duty action. To minimize this risk, off-duty officers should have their badge visible when on-duty officers arrive. The off-duty officers should immediately shout, “POLICE. DON’T SHOOT. OFF-DUTY OFFICER!” and follow all commands from on-duty officers. You may get treated like a suspect; regardless, comply with all commands. NEVER turn toward the on-duty officers with your gun in your hand.

Scenario #1: An off-duty officer wearing civilian clothes is leaving the grocery store. In the parking lot, he observes a person pointing a knife at another person. The off-duty officer draws his handgun to intervene. Before he can intervene, the suspect with the knife enters a vehicle, removes a rifle, and enters the victim’s vehicle. The victim quickly exits his vehicle and the suspect drives away in the victim’s vehicle.

Question: What was the off-duty officer required to do in this scenario?

Answer: Policy requires that during an incident involving the threat of serious bodily harm or death, an off-duty officer shall take “action.” However, “action” includes reporting the incident and being a good witness. There is no requirement for the officer to intervene in this scenario or place himself in peril since he is not equipped to properly intervene in such an incident when off-duty.

Scenario #2: An off-duty officer in civilian clothes observes a man beating another man with a lug wrench. The officer draws his handgun, identifies himself as police, then orders the man to drop the weapon and lay face down on the ground. The suspect complies. The officer tells bystanders to call 911, report the situation, and tell the 911 operator that an armed off-duty police officer has the suspect at gunpoint.

Question: When on-duty patrol officers arrive what should the off-duty officer do to ensure his safety?

Answer:

1. Have his badge visible.
2. Immediately shout: "POLICE. DON'T SHOOT. OFF-DUTY OFFICER!"
3. Follow all commands from on-duty officers, even if treated like a suspect.
4. NEVER turn toward the on-duty officers with a gun in his hand.

Name _____ Date _____