

JULY ROLL CALL TRAINING

High Risk Critical Task: Off-Duty Actions

Name_____Date_____

The purpose of this bulletin is to review safety 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. A deputy who is faced with such circumstances should act in accordance with 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 deputies must consider when taking off-duty action. To minimize this risk, off-duty deputies should have their badge visible when on-duty law enforcement officers arrive. The off-duty deputy should immediately shout, “OFF-DUTY OFFICER. DON’T SHOOT!” 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: You are off-duty, in civilian clothes, carrying a concealed firearm. You do not have handcuffs or a radio at your disposal, but you do have your 7 year-old child with you. While leaving a local shopping mall, you observe a loud verbal altercation between a husband and wife in the parking lot in the row opposite where your vehicle is parked. After several minutes of the man yelling at the woman, you witness him assault her several times by slapping her in the face, eventually knocking her to the ground, before getting into his vehicle. The woman is kneeling on the ground bleeding from her lip and nose, and the man is attempting to flee the scene.

Question: What should you do in this situation?

- a. Approach the scene, identify yourself as a police officer, and take the man into custody for domestic assault.
- b. Wait for the man to leave and follow him in your personal vehicle.
- c. Give loud verbal instructions telling the man “Sheriff’s Office -Don’t move,” so you can detain him until on-duty uniformed law enforcement officers arrive.
- d. Call 911 from a safe location, provide accurate, detailed information, and request medical aid for the injured woman.

Answer: “d.” Off-duty deputies must balance their law enforcement responsibilities with personal safety and tactical considerations. Exercising sound judgment by acting as a professional witness supports officer safety, Agency liability management, and effective incident resolution. In this situation, the off-duty deputy is armed but is also accompanied by a juvenile child. There is no continued threat to the woman or public safety. In this case, as the man appeared to be known to the woman, he will likely be identified with ease. Additionally, your noting of the vehicle and its registration will likely aid in independent identification.

The content of this Roll Call is derived from the Law Enforcement High-Risk Critical Task Lesson Plans of Legal and Liability Risk Management Institute (LLRMI). It has been edited by NIRMA for Nebraska agencies.