



SAFETY SHORTS

General Safety • Highway Departments • Law Enforcement & Corrections

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ROAD/HIGHWAY DEPARTMENTS

By: KC Pawling, NIRMA Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

The Critical Importance of Training in Disaster Response and Equipment Operations

In any emergency response environment, the quality of a county's training program directly determines the safety, efficiency, and outcomes of its operations. Nowhere is this more evident than in a disaster response and the operation of heavy equipment. From the moment a call comes in to the final shutdown and inspection of equipment, trained and experienced operators form the backbone of safe and successful field work.

Trained and Experienced Operators Improve Disaster Response.

Disaster environments are high stress, fast-moving, unpredictable, and unforgiving. When operators lack training, the risk of injury, equipment damage, or operational failure increases dramatically. Experienced personnel understand behaviors specific to the different natural disasters county operators can encounter, for example: wind shifts, fuel sources, and terrain which includes soil types. Experience and training allows them to anticipate changing conditions and make decisions that protect both life and equipment.

Proper Maintenance Keeps Equipment Mission-Ready.

Even the most skilled operator cannot compensate for poorly maintained equipment. Breakdowns during wildfire response can create safety hazards and compromise operations. Training ensures operators understand proper fueling procedures, contamination prevention, and routine maintenance tasks, including fluid checks, belt inspections, filter changes, and recognizing early signs of mechanical issues.

Walk-Around Inspections and Documentation Protect Operators and Assets.

A thorough walk-around inspection is one of the most effective tools for preventing accidents and detecting mechanical issues before they become major failures. When paired with proper documentation, inspections also support compliance, defense of claims, and equipment lifecycle management. Training standardizes the inspection process and ensures operators know what to look for and why it matters.

In conclusion...

Training is not merely a requirement, it is a critical investment in safety, operational success, and resource protection. Whether responding to disasters, fueling and maintaining equipment, or performing walk-around inspections, the preparedness of trained operators makes the difference between smooth operations and preventable incidents. Counties that prioritize training before an emergency occurs create a culture of safety, accountability, and professionalism that protects people, equipment, and communities.

If you need a training scheduled, or just simply want a objective point of view on your safety and training program, you can contact me via email at kcpawling@nirma.info or phone at 402-310-4417.

LAW ENFORCEMENT/CORRECTIONS

By: Todd Duncan, NIRMA Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Threshold Arrests: Body Snatching or Lawful Seizure?

The Fourth Amendment draws a firm constitutional line at the entrance to a person's home. Understanding where that line exists and what deputies can lawfully do at that boundary is critical when making warrantless arrests.

The "Threshold" Rule

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Santana*, 427 U.S. 38 (1976) is the leading case on doorway arrests. In *Santana*, officers approached a suspect who was standing in her doorway partially exposed to public view. The Court held that the doorway (or threshold) is a public place for Fourth Amendment purposes. Because the suspect was in a public place, officers could lawfully arrest her without a warrant based on probable cause.

When Santana retreated into her home, officers followed and completed the arrest. The Court upheld this entry under the doctrine of hot pursuit, an exigent circumstance.

Key Takeaways

- **A person standing in the doorway/threshold may be arrested without a warrant if probable cause exists.**
- The threshold is a "bright line" demarcation between public and private space.

What Deputies Cannot Do

While *Santana* allows arrests at the threshold, it does **not** authorize deputies to enter a home without a warrant. The Supreme Court has consistently held that the home is the most protected area under the Fourth Amendment.

If a suspect is inside the home, even slightly, deputies may not:

- Reach into the residence to grab or pull the suspect out
- Cross the threshold, even minimally, without legal justification

Courts have emphasized that any physical intrusion into the home, "even a fraction of an inch," is a search and seizure requiring **C**onsent, a **R**ecognized **E**xception to the warrant requirement (i.e. exigent circumstances), or a **W**arrant, easily remembered as "**C.R.E.W.**"

Required Justifications for Entry

Deputies may only enter a home to make an arrest if one of the following applies:

1. **Consent**
 - Voluntary and valid consent from an occupant with authority over the premises

2. Recognized Exception (i.e. exigent circumstances)

- Hot pursuit of a fleeing suspect. Caution- There is no automatic rule authorizing home entry during hot pursuit of a **misdemeanant**. Deputies must be able to articulate additional exigent circumstances. (*Lange v. California*, 141 S. Ct. 2011 (2021))
- Risk of escape
- Threat to safety (deputies or others)
- Imminent destruction of evidence

3. Warrant

- Deputies may enter the home of a suspect named in an arrest warrant in accordance with NRS § 29-411 if there is probable cause to believe the suspect is home at the time of the entry/search.

Practical Guidance for Deputies

- **Position matters:** If the suspect is in the doorway (threshold), a warrantless arrest is generally lawful with probable cause.
- **Inside means protected:** If the suspect steps back inside, stop and reassess, do not reach in.
- **When in doubt, get a warrant:** Courts strongly favor warrants for in-home arrests.
- **Avoid “body snatching”:** Pulling a suspect out of a home without legal justification will likely violate the Fourth Amendment.

Bottom Line

Santana permits warrantless arrests at the doorway because the threshold is treated as a public place. However, the Constitution draws a strict boundary at the home itself. Crossing that line, even slightly, without a warrant, consent, or exigent circumstances will likely render the arrest unconstitutional and expose the county to potential civil rights litigation and potential liability.

Deputies should treat the threshold as a legal line they can approach but not cross without proper authority.

Stay professional. Stay accountable. Protect the badge.

NIRMA Member Officials, Supervisors, and Managers:

Have a human resource question or issue? Contact NIRMA’s Human Resources Helpline at (866) 896-6423.

Have a non-HR legal question or issue? Contact NIRMA’s Legal Link at (402) 742-9240 or by email at legallink@nirma.info

GENERAL SAFETY

By: Chad Engle, Loss Prevention Manager and Safety Specialist

Maintenance & Condition Assessment of Telecommunication Towers

One of NIRMA's roles as a risk management organization is to help our member counties safeguard their critical infrastructure and minimize preventable losses. Communication towers—whether supporting law enforcement, emergency management, dispatch, or public works—represent high-value and high-risk assets. Ensuring they remain structurally sound is important to both operational continuity and the financial stability of our self-insured program.

The **ANSI/TIA-222-I Structural Standard** is the nationally recognized authority governing tower maintenance and structural condition assessment. Section 14 of this standard outlines the requirements that tower owners must follow to ensure continued structural reliability. The following guidance is based directly on the maintenance and condition-assessment provisions summarized by the Telecommunications Industry Foundation.¹

Why TIA-222-I Maintenance Matters for NIRMA Member Counties

Structural reliability is a cornerstone of risk prevention. Maintaining towers in accordance with TIA-222-I helps counties:

- Avoid preventable structural failures
- Reduce emergency replacement costs
- Ensure reliable public safety communications
- Document responsible asset-management practices
- Lower exposure to liability following major weather events

For NIRMA, compliance with TIA-222-I is not just a technical requirement—it is a core component of sound risk management throughout our membership.

Inspection Intervals Required by TIA-222-I

Section 14.4 of the ANSI/TIA-222 maintenance and condition-assessment guidance establishes the minimum intervals for structural assessments:

- **Guyed towers:** must be inspected at least **every 3 years**
- **Self-supporting towers:** must be inspected at least **every 5 years**
- **Essential-communication towers** (e.g., sheriff, 911, emergency management) may require more frequent assessments
- Towers in **corrosive or high-risk environments** (e.g., coastal exposure, vandalism-prone areas) should be inspected more frequently
- **Event-based inspections** are required after:

¹<https://standards.globalspec.com/std/14631370/TIA-222-I>

- Severe wind or ice storms
- Significant seismic activity
- Other conditions that may affect structural performance

These intervals establish the baseline standard of care for protecting member-owned towers.

Scope of TIA-222-I Condition Assessments

Condition assessments must evaluate all structural and loading elements that influence tower reliability. Annex J and Annex K of ANSI/TIA-222 provide formal guidance and checklists for these evaluations.

Structural Components

- Corrosion, deformation, or compromised member integrity
- Bolt condition, missing hardware, connection deterioration

Foundations and Anchors

- Concrete cracking, settlement, spalling, or anchor-rod concerns

Guy Wire Systems (for Guyed Towers)

- Tension, twist, and plumb measurements per **Annex K**
- Strand condition, breaks, or wire degradation

Loading and Appurtenances

- Verification that antennas, mounts, and transmission lines remain within approved structural loading
- Evaluation of any changes since the last inspection

Environmental Factors

- Wind, ice, temperature, and exposure effects influencing tower performance

This framework ensures a complete and structurally focused evaluation aligned with the intent of ANSI/TIA-222-I.

Documentation Requirements for NIRMA Members

To comply with ANSI/TIA-222-I, counties must preserve:

- All inspection and condition-assessment reports
- Maintenance records and corrective-action documentation
- Structural analyses following equipment additions or removals
- Load inventories and site-specific structural documentation

These records also form the basis for determining compliance with the deductible provision described below.

NIRMA Deductible Provision for Communication Tower Losses

To motivate compliance with ANSI/TIA-222-I and align claim outcomes with proper maintenance assessments, NIRMA applies the following deductible provision to communication tower losses:

Deductible Provision

“As respects losses associated with a covered communication tower that has not been inspected and maintained in accordance with the ANSI-TIA standards, and the amount of the loss is affected by the lack of such inspection and maintenance to the ANSI-TIA standards, the deductible shall be the greater of two times the current applicable deductible or 10 percent of the loss.”

This provision supports—and incentivizes—compliance with ANSI/TIA-222-I maintenance and condition-assessment requirements by holding members financially accountable when lack of proper care directly contributes to a loss.

Conclusion

By following the maintenance and condition-assessment provisions in **ANSI/TIA-222-I Section 14**, NIRMA members strengthen the reliability of their communication towers, enhance operational readiness, and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic structural failures. Combined with NIRMA’s deductible provision, this framework encourages consistent, compliant, and proactive asset management—benefiting each county and the entire risk-sharing pool.