



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Threats of Targeted or Mass Casualty Violence

Eff. Date 04/26/2019

Purpose

To provide a consistent and comprehensive response to threats of targeted or mass casualty violence, including in our schools, businesses and public places. Typically, these threats or warning behaviors require immediate action and investigative steps by first responding officers and investigators.

This procedure establishes the expectations for the initial response to a threat or report of concerning behavior in order to facilitate behavior-based threat assessment in an effort to best prevent incidences of targeted or mass casualty violence. This procedure governs communications received in person, telephonically and electronically to include communications via any social media platform.

Procedure

Each incident reporting threats of targeted or mass casualty violence should be taken seriously and be investigated fully and promptly. Responding officers shall notify a supervisor at the beginning of the investigation and should consider consultation with appropriate MPD resources (Mental Health Unit, Criminal Intelligence Section, etc.) as needed.

Although formal enforcement action is often indicated, investigating officers should consult with MHU if possible prior to taking enforcement action such as an arrest or citation. State charges should strongly be considered in most cases, to include physical arrests (jail, JRC), fingerprint/photo-release of juveniles to parent, or citations appropriate to the circumstances.

Responding officers shall identify the threat or concern with specificity and detail. Officers shall preserve all evidence, both physical and digital. This includes noting social media or other digital account names and passwords if available. Responding officers shall make all reasonable efforts to positively identify the source of the threat.

Officers should also identify the victims or targeted persons. This may be the complainant, another individual or group (such as a school class or work team), or a population affiliated with an institution or organization. All persons mentioned explicitly or reasonably believed to be the subject of a direct threat should be positively identified and contacted by law enforcement. Officers should assist potential victims or targeted persons in the creation of a safety plan where feasible/appropriate.

Once sufficient information has been obtained, investigating personnel will evaluate the imminence of the threat. In high imminence cases, responding officers should then transition their efforts from investigation to locating and apprehending the suspect (interception). In circumstances where information supports a lower imminence evaluation, officers should conduct an initial investigation into the suspect and behavior.

Imminence: Officers should examine the threat itself and ask the complainant and other available sources about the following factors to structure a professional judgment as to the imminence of the threat they are investigating.

In the threat itself, officers should examine if:

- The communication suggests all inhibitors to violence are gone; the person's life is rapidly changing in a manner that compels violence.
- The communication presents a time or violent action imperative.
- The communication suggests the author perceives that outside factors are closing the window of opportunity for an attack.

- A communication indicates that a breach or attack has already begun; claims credit for or rationalizes an attack; or establishes the author's legacy.
- A communication is written in such a way to imply the author is already dead.

Regarding a person of concern's behavior, officers should ask about evidence of the following behaviors:

- Acquisition of equipment or weapons, rehearsal or training.
- Circumventing security measures at a target location, probing security, approaching or stalking the target.
- Exhibiting an increased pace or rate of activities related to a potential target.
- A person exhibiting demonstrating increased distress, diminishing alternatives to violence, or a decompensation in self-care or hygiene.
- A person has taken concrete steps to prepare for the end of their life.
- A person who has recently withdrawn from normal life patterns and/or physically withdrawn to somewhere with increased privacy.
- A person who has suddenly ceased the use of regular medication or substance use.

Generally, the more of these imminence factors present, the more imminent the threat. An imminent threat may present with just one of these factors. An officer who determines a threat is imminent shall immediately notify the responding supervisor.

Interception: If a threat is imminent, all efforts should focus on locating, containing and arresting the suspect. Post-arrest investigative steps should be pursued in accordance with normal department practices.

Investigation: If the responding officer concludes a threat is not imminent, or, after the arrest of a suspect, they shall:

- Complete a thorough investigation to document the threatening behavior, identify the suspect(s) and potential victim(s), collect relevant physical evidence, etc.
- Notify a Mental Health Officer and Journey Mental Health while in contact with the suspect or prior to contacting the suspect (if possible).
- Consult with a supervisor.
- Complete a report documenting the investigation before the end of shift.

A field supervisor should respond to every reported threat of targeted or mass casualty violence. The supervisor will assist the investigating officer in evaluating the threat. If the responding officer and supervisor determine the threat is imminent, the supervisor shall direct resources to intercept the threat and to take the suspect into custody. In this situation, supervisors will direct the investigation with the goal of referring charges for any criminal violations present. The supervisor will also ensure that the OIC and district command staff are notified, and that any needed additional notifications occur (MHU, CIS, MMSD, private employer, etc.).

Follow-up investigators

Threats of targeted or mass casualty violence should generally be assigned for follow up by the appropriate district detective lieutenant. The assigned detective/officer should consult with CIS and MHU to determine appropriate investigative goals/tasks and to assess the ongoing risk posed by the suspect.

Follow up investigators should consider consent or compulsory searches of the suspect's vehicle and room, searching for weapons, plans, or statements and evidence speaking to the suspect's state of mind or veracity of the threat. Investigators should also generally interview the person of concern directly and in person.

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