

**PROVIDENCE POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
  
**HEADQUARTERS**  
**COLONEL OSCAR L. PEREZ**  
**CHIEF OF POLICE**

<b>TYPE OF ORDER</b>	<b>NUMBER/SERIES</b>	<b>ISSUE DATE</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b>
General Order	330.07	1/7/2026	1/15/2026
<b>SUSPECT TITLE</b>		<b>PREVIOUSLY ISSUED DATES</b>	
Active Threat/Active Shooter (ATAS) Incidents		8/16/2022; 3/21/2021; 8/5/2019; 10/23/20; 8/5/2019; 6/20/2018; 4/23/2017; 3/31/2016; 5/19/2014 (All Hazard Plan)	
<b>REFERENCE</b>		<b>RE-EVALUATION DATE</b>	
CALEA 46.1.10		8/5/2027	
<b>SUSPECT AREA</b>		<b>DISTRIBUTION</b>	
Law Enforcement Operations		All Sworn Personnel	

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide police officers with guidelines for handling active threat/active shooter (ATAS) incidents.

### **POLICY**

It is the policy of the Providence Police Department to charge initial responding officers with both the responsibility and the authority to take immediate action during an ATAS incident to neutralize active threats.

### **DISCUSSION**

The goal of police intervention in an ATAS incident is to utilize the immediate and rapid deployment of Department resources and personnel as efficiently and effectively as possible so as to:

- Locate and contain/neutralize the threat, up to and including the use of lethal force.
- Prevent suspect access to potential victims.
- Rescue injured persons and potential victims.

ATAS incidents are unique in that the behaviors of the suspects are very different from those typically associated with other violent behaviors. An ATAS suspect's overriding objective is typically that of mass murder. ATAS suspects generally begin to assault multiple people without warning. ATAS suspect psychological profiles suggests that the typical police response involving containment, isolation, and negotiation may not be

adequate. Unlike most criminals, ATAS suspects are likely to continue to use lethal force until neutralized.

For the purpose of this General Order the following definitions shall apply:

*Active Threat*: Any deliberate actions that pose an immediate or imminent danger to others. Although these events often involve the use of firearms by perpetrators, they may also involve the use of other types of weapons or implements with the intent to cause harm.

*ATAS Suspect*: Any person who is actively engaging in shooting, assaulting, and/or threatening victims with lethal force and/or any person who has used lethal force on other persons and continues to do so while having access to additional victims.

*Barricaded Suspect/Hostage Taker*: A suspect who is not currently engaged in the act of using lethal force, but who has access to potential victims and/or has taken hostages. The suspect may have access to firearms, edged weapons, explosive devices, etc., and despite intent, capability, and/or opportunity, is contained and NOT currently an ATAS suspect.

*Immediate Action Rapid Deployment*: The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement personnel and resources to an ongoing, life threatening situation where delayed deployment could otherwise result in death or serious bodily injury. Immediate Action Rapid Deployment tactics are not a substitute for conventional response tactics to a barricaded suspect or suspected hostage taker, unless that suspect begins to actively harm victims or hostages and becomes an ATAS suspect.

*Rescue Task Force (RTF)*: A group consisting of 2 to 4 PPD and 3 to 4 PFD personnel deployed to provide point of wound care to victims where there is an on-going ballistic, active killing or explosive threat. The task force treats, stabilizes, and removes injured patients in a rapid manner.

The RTF can be deployed to the following incident types:

- Active shooter in a school, business, mall, conference, special event, etc.
- Any incident in which there is the possibility of an on-going ballistic, active killing or explosive threat.

*Hot Zone*: An area where there is a known hazard or life threat that is direct and immediate. An example of this would be any area not cleared by law enforcement personnel that may contain an active shooter. RTFs will not be deployed into a Hot Zone.

*Warm Zone*: An area that has been cleared by law enforcement personnel and where there is a minimal or mitigated threat. RTFs may deploy into this zone to locate and treat victims.

*Cold Zone*: An area where there is little or no threat due to geography or having been secured by law enforcement personnel. The triage, treatment, and transport units will be established in the Cold Zone.

Contact Team: A team of law enforcement personnel assigned to advance toward the ATAS to prevent further injury or loss of life. The contact team performs a primary clearing of areas as they advance.

Casualty Collection Point: The location to which patients are evacuated from the Warm Zone to be triaged. This area should be located in the Cold Zone and serves as a marshaling area for standard Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) actions to begin.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **I. COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF ATAS SUSPECTS/INCIDENTS**

- A. The following is a list of characteristics commonly associated with ATAS suspects and incidents. The list is compiled from descriptions of past ATAS suspects and is not meant to be a comprehensive list describing all such suspects, as each ATAS suspect/situation is unique:
1. ATAS suspects usually focus on indiscriminately assaulting persons with whom they come into contact.
  2. ATAS suspects usually act in response to an expression of hatred or rage rather than the commission of a crime.
  3. Generally, the first indication of the presence of an ATAS suspect is when he/she begins to assault victims.
  4. ATAS suspects often go to locations where potential victims are close at hand such as schools, theaters, concerts, or shopping malls. ATAS suspects may act in the manner of a sniper, assaulting victims from a distance. ATAS suspects may also engage multiple targets while remaining constantly mobile.
  5. Tactics such as containment and negotiation, normally associated with standoff incidents, may not be adequate in an ATAS incident.
  6. ATAS suspects typically continue their attack despite the arrival of emergency responders.
  7. ATAS suspects are often better armed than the police, sometimes making use of explosives, booby traps and heavy body armor.
  8. ATAS suspects are not limited to the use of firearms in accomplishing their attacks on victims. They may use bladed weapons, vehicles, suicide vests/explosives, or any tool that, in the context in which it is used, constitutes lethal force.
  9. ATAS suspects may have a pre-planned attack and be prepared for a sustained confrontation with the police.
  10. Historically, ATAS suspects have not attempted to hide their identity or conceal the commission of their attacks.

11. Escape from the police is usually not a priority of ATAS suspects.
12. ATAS suspects may employ some type of diversion.
13. ATAS suspects may be indiscriminate in their violence or they may seek specific types of victims.
14. ATAS suspects may be suicidal, deciding to die in the course of their actions either at the hand of others or by self-inflicted wound.
15. ATAS suspects usually have some degree of familiarity with the building or location they choose to attack/occupy.
16. ATAS incidents are dynamic and may go in and out of “active” status; an ATAS suspect may go “inactive” by entering into a barricaded status without access to victims.

## **II. ATAS INCIDENTS - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- A. ATAS incidents are sufficiently unique such that the steps that should be taken when responding to them oftentimes cannot be reduced to a specific procedure.
  1. The guidelines herein are not meant to limit police tactics or conventional responses that may be deemed appropriate to a particular ATAS incident; but rather, to offer options that may be prudent given the nature of the incident.
- B. The significant factors regarding the use of police tactics are:
  1. They represent a means of intervention available to officers.
  2. There is a potential of elevated risk to bystanders and officers; however, these risks do not exceed those posed by the ATAS suspect.
  3. The elevated risk is acceptable in light of the potential these tactics have for neutralizing the threat and saving lives.
- C. A significant aspect of the ATAS incident tactical doctrine is that officers arriving at the scene of the incident are authorized and encouraged to use appropriate force to intervene in/terminate the incident prior to the arrival of supervisory personnel, special units, or other resources. ‘Time’ is a critical factor in ATAS incidents. Resolving ATAS incidents quickly is of the utmost importance. To wait or delay in commencing an appropriate force response will increase the likelihood of loss of life or serious bodily injury.

D. Assuming Command.

1. One on-scene officer must initially assume command of the ATAS incident. Assumption of command may be based upon rank, expertise, or seniority. However, the identity of the officer assuming command must be made immediately clear to both the Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC) and officers who are either on-scene or en route to the scene.
2. A supervisor who arrives on scene and who is fully briefed may ultimately assume incident command.
3. Any change in incident command will be made known to the PSCC and other officers as soon as practicable.

E. Situational Analysis.

1. The officer initially assuming command of an ATAS incident must continually analyze the situation, taking into consideration all available information and evaluating the dynamic aspects of the ATAS incident.
2. This analysis must lead to a decision as to how to deploy on-scene officers and the tactics that need to be undertaken in order to neutralize the threat.

### III. FIRST RESPONDER TACTICAL INTERVENTION PROTOCOLS

A. The Providence Police Department endorses the concept and use of immediate action rapid deployment tactics during ATAS incidents. It is critical that all officers, supervisors and command personnel are familiar with the definition of an ATAS suspect as well as these tactics when responding to such incidents. The traditional tactical response involving containment, isolation, evacuation, and waiting for the arrival of the Special Response Unit (SRU) or crisis negotiators is oftentimes inadequate or inadvisable during an ATAS incident.

1. The initial on-scene officer will take immediate action to locate, identify and neutralize the threat presented by an ATAS suspect. When feasible, officers can utilize back up officers, team movement concepts, and contact and cover tactics while searching for and/or engaging an ATAS suspect. However, the officer must assess the need for immediate action in lieu of the presence of an additional officer(s). It may be necessary for the initial on-scene officer to engage the ATAS suspect on his/her own, passing over injured victims and persons requiring medical attention, whenever the ATAS suspect is engaged in actions causing potential loss of life or serious injury. Such actions, though contrary to the inclinations of most officers, are necessary to limit further loss of life or injury by the ATAS suspect.

2. Contact/Cover Teams.
  - a. Contact/cover teams will be comprised of between two and four officers with an identified team leader. Team movement will be in a controlled and disciplined tactical action under the control and direction of the team leader.
  - b. Individual action is generally discouraged. While circumstances or situations may require the immediate deployment of a single officer based upon the dynamic aspects of the incident, contact/cover teams maybe utilized when adequate personnel and resources have arrived on scene.
  - c. Security of cleared areas should always be a consideration of secondary contact teams as additional units arrive on scene.
3. Containment.
  - a. Site containment will be left to the discretion of the first supervisor or officer on scene that assumes incident responsibility and initiates the situational assessment. Containment of an ATAS incident may take the form of officers serving in an “observe and report” capacity.

#### IV. INCIDENT COMMAND PROTOCOLS

- A. The first supervisor or officer arriving on scene who is not required by the situation and circumstances to be directly involved in any immediate action to locate and neutralize the threat will assume incident command. He/she will establish a command post; conduct a situational analysis; deploy responding officers and resources; and request additional officers and/or resources as deemed necessary.
  1. At least one officer possessing information regarding the specifics of the incident and the tactical plans in progress will remain at the Command Post to brief arriving personnel.
  2. Command personnel en route to the incident will monitor the police radio in order to stay informed, but normally shall not obstruct tactical operations in progress. Command personnel should also be on scene and fully briefed before assuming incident command.
  3. The Public Safety Communications Complex (PSCC) shall notify City Leaders, City Departments, and surrounding law enforcement agencies whenever an ATAS incident is in progress.
  4. The Public Information Officer, designated by the Chief of Police, shall be responsible for:

1. Interfacing with the public, media, other agencies, and stakeholders to provide incident-related information and updates based on changes in the status of the incident.
  - a. Developing and distributing community information releases as soon as practicable by coordinating with the Providence Emergency Management Agency regarding the implementation of the CodeRED emergency Notification system and by the dissemination of information via traditional newspaper, radio and television media and social media outlets. Said notification(s) may include instructions to either shelter in place or to evacuate an area depending upon the dynamic nature of the event and/or the information available to police.
  - b. Performing key public information-monitoring roles, such as implementing measures for rumor control.
2. Using information from other members of the Command and General Staff to develop accurate, accessible, and complete information and updates pertaining to the incident's cause, size, current situation, the resources committed, and other matters of general interest for both internal and external audiences.

B. See Section VIII *ATAS SCENE SECURITY / RESCUE TASK FORCE (RTF) PROTOCOLS* (below) for a discussion of the role of a Unified Incident Command in ATAS incidents.

## V. **SPECIAL RESPONSE UNIT**

- A. The Officer-In-Charge of the Uniformed Division shall ensure that the Commanding Officer of the Special Response Unit (SRU) is immediately notified of any ATAS incident and is requested to deploy SRU personnel to the incident scene.
- B. IF an ATAS incident:
  1. Is not immediately resolved or is of a prolonged duration;
  2. Is not resolved but has entered a stage where there is no immediate threat to life; or
  3. Does not allow for officers to effectively intervene, such as when complicated barricade situations exist;

THEN the most appropriate response may require allowing the SRU to assume command and control of the ATAS incident and employ specialized weapons and tactics.

- C. Under these circumstances, the first arriving SRU supervisor will establish tactical command, gather information from on-scene officers, and relay that information to the SRU Commander.
- D. When SRU members are prepared to deploy, any other on-scene officers may be relieved or redeployed at the discretion of the SRU Commander.

## **VI. BARRICADED SUSPECT / HOSTAGE TAKER PROTOCOLS**

- A. IF an ATAS incident transforms into one involving a barricaded suspect or hostage taker who:
  - 1. Is either not actively engaged in the taking of life or committing serious bodily injury to others; OR
  - 2. Does not represent an imminent threat involving the loss of life or injury of others;

THEN the appropriate tactical response will be to contain and isolate the barricaded suspect, secure the incident scene, gather intelligence, and notify the SRU commander.

- B. The distinction between an ATAS and barricaded suspect is an essential assessment that must be made during the initial tactical response and as the dynamics of the incident evolve.
- C. Given that a suspect perpetrating an ATAS incident may have already taken lives and inflicted serious bodily injury upon others, the taking of hostages and/or establishing barricades may only serve to supply more potential victims in a rapidly evolving situation.
- D. As each situation and circumstance is unique, there may be instances where officers need to take immediate action despite the presence of obstacles or hostages due to the risk and danger to life. This policy in no way hinders officers from taking such actions in such situations. However, determining when a situation requires a more conventional response is also of value and should not be disregarded.

## **VII. USE OF LETHAL FORCE**

- A. Any use of lethal force by responding officers will be effected pursuant to the procedures established in General Order 300.01 - Use of Force.

## **VIII. ATAS SCENE SECURITY / RESCUE TASK FORCE (RTF) PROTOCOLS**

- A. No location associated with an ATAS incident will be considered secure until declared so by the Incident Commander.

- B. Officers assigned to security functions shall maintain their positions until properly relieved.
- C. Only authorized law enforcement personnel and authorized RTFs shall be allowed to enter the site of an ATAS incident until security is lifted.
  - 1. Incidents that involve an active shooter or any type of on-going ballistic, active killing or explosive threat will require the Providence Fire Department (PFD) to operate in a Unified Command system with the Providence Police Department (PPD). The activation and deployment of RTFs will be at the discretion of the PFD officer of the Unified Incident Command in consultation with PPD personnel.

**IX. TRAINING AND EVALUATION**

- A. All sworn personnel shall receive ATAS incident training annually. This training may be conducted via situational on-site training, lecture, simulator, PowerDMS™, or via any other method deemed appropriate by the Weapons Bureau Commanding Officer and the Training Bureau.
- B. An After Action Review shall be conducted and a written report compiled by the Weapons Bureau Commanding Officer for all ATAS incidents.
- C. A documented annual review of this General Order and Department training needs shall be conducted by the Weapons Bureau Commanding Officer.

**APPROVED:**



COLONEL OSCAR L. PEREZ  
CHIEF OF POLICE