WEST NORRITON TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

Subject: De-Escalation of Use of Force Incidents		Policy # 1.3.12
Accreditation 1.3.11		
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By Authority Of: Chief Michael A. Kelly	Signature: Michael A. Kelly	

1.3.11 DE-ESCALATION OF USE OF FORCE INCIDENTS

A. De-escalation in Law Enforcement - the concept of de-escalation tactics is in the central part of the framework that officers used to assess and manage risk through justifiable and reasonable intervention. The officer selects an appropriate option for control, based on the situation.

1. De-escalation includes acting or communicating either verbally or nonverbally during a potential use of force encounter to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat(s) involved with the encounter.

2. Officers shall apply the use of de-escalation techniques and other alternatives to force consistent with his or her training whenever feasible and appropriate before resorting to force applications to reduce the need for force or the level of force applied.

3. Officers will whenever possible and when such a delay is without bad outcomes (will not compromise the safety of the officer or another person and will not result in the destruction of evidence, enhance or allow for the risk of escape or promote further criminal commission or crimes), the officer should attempt to allow the individual who force is to be directed the time and opportunity to submit to verbal commands prior to the time force is applied.

B. Successful uses of De-escalation - This process forms a small but critical portion of what is known as the officer's risk assessment and plan. The process where an officer clearly, concisely, and effectively analyzes and later explains the events that occurred before, during and after a use of force incident is called "legal articulation." Officers will not necessarily be judged by what they believe. Their intervention will be measured against what a reasonable, trained, prudent police officer would do faced a similar set of circumstances. Police officers are also trained to continually monitor risk during an interaction with the public as things can change very quickly. Police officers must always be ready to shift tactics.

C. De-escalation Techniques - De-escalation techniques may include one or more of the following techniques:

1. Advisements and identification.

2. Warnings.

3. Command presence.

4. Tactical repositioning.

5. Verbal persuasion.

6. Containment.

D. Potential for De-escalation - The list below is a partial list of events where de-escalation techniques may be applied when situationally appropriate:

1. Mental health crisis.

2. Personal crisis.

3. Developmental disabilities.

4. Victims and witnesses.

5. Arrestees.

E. Factors in Decision to De-escalate –

1. Medical conditions.

2. Physical limitations.

3. Language or communications barrier.

4. Drug interaction or influence of substances.

5. Mental impairment.

6. Developmental disability.

7. Behavioral crisis.

8. Environmental.

9. Time.

F. Essential Understandings by Officers in the De-escalation Process:

1. Tactical repositioning does not equate to total retreat by the police from the “hot zone” or require surrender of any tactical advantage. Instead this is a technique where officers create a “buffer” allowing more distance between the subject and the responding officers. This enlarged area has many benefits including increased time for decision-making and increase time for compliance with commands.

2. De-escalation tactics and techniques are actions used by officers, when safe and without compromising law enforcement priorities, that seek to minimize the likelihood of the need to use force during an incident and increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance.

3. When safe and feasible under the totality of the circumstances, officers shall attempt to slow down or stabilize the situation so that more time, options, and resources are available for incident resolution.

4. De-escalation may take the form of scene management, team tactics, and/or individual engagement. Even when individual engagement is not feasible, de-escalation techniques including some scene management and team tactics such as time, distance and shielding should still be used unless doing so would create undue risk of harm to any person due to the exigency/threat of the situation.

5. The overall goal of de-escalation is to promote thoughtful resolutions to situations and to reduce the likelihood of harm to all persons involved. De-escalation is reviewed and evaluated under the totality of the circumstances present at the time of the incident.