

2.9 Arriving on Scene

2.9.1 Purpose

The purpose is to ensure a safe environment for ACS Responders when dispatched to calls for service. The potential for threats and violence is present at any scene so the safety of the ACS Responders is top priority.

2.9.2 Policy

The policy of Albuquerque Community Safety Department (ACS) is to follow the established approaches that are safe and effective methods upon arriving on scene.

2.9.3 Definition

Violent incidents are defined as shootings, stabbings, assaults, unruly crowds, civil disturbances, riots, or any other type of incident in which ACS personnel may be exposed to harm as a result of a violent or threatening act directed at ACS responders, other persons, or property.

Weapons can be guns or knives designed to kill, or makeshift weapons, such as anything that wasn't designated to be a weapon, but can be used as one.

2.9.4 Procedure for arriving on scene

1. ACS will essentially respond to two (2) types of incidents:
 - a. A known or potentially violent scene that has been secured by the Albuquerque Police Department (APD).
 1. The APD dispatch will request from Albuquerque Fire Rescue (AFR) alarm room to dispatch an ACS Responder to the scene after secured by APD.
 2. ACS Responders will respond and proceed with caution.
 - b. An unclassified scene in which there is no reason to believe the scene is violent or has little potential to become violent, or where acts of violence have gone unreported.
 1. ACS Responder units consists of two (2) Responders. One responder may never respond alone to calls for service.
 2. ACS Responders are required to stage in a safe location upon arrival to scene.
 3. ACS Responders must radio into AFR alarm room dispatch upon arrival to scene as well as updating status on the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system i.e. "en route, arrived on scene, etc."
 4. If ACS Responders arrive to an incident and find themselves in a violent situation then they must immediately retreat to a safe location and radio into AFR alarm room dispatch to advise APD dispatch of the need for a rapid police response.
 5. ACS Responders are to follow SOP 2.10 Responding to Violent Scenes when in immediate danger or responding to potentially violent incidents.
2. All ACS Responders must be alert to indications of possible violence and must be aware that any scene is a potentially violent scene. All Responders must use common sense, awareness, and

make good use of information from AFR alarm room dispatch to frequently reassess the scene so the dangers of violent scenes can be avoided.

- a. Use common sense and awareness; pay attention to the information provided by AFR alarm room dispatch and remain on the alarm room Radio channel.
- b. Do not get lulled into a false sense of complacency i.e. responding to the same address multiple times before.
- c. Do not ignore any gut feelings or instinct; if it doesn't feel right then it probably isn't.
- d. Present a confident attitude that takes a commanding presence on scene; Do not be confrontational or abusive with an individual or group.
- e. Do not be an easy target; call for backup early and be prepared to leave the scene if the immediate need arises.

3. All ACS Responders must be aware of red flags for violence or potential violence which indicate immediate dangers or threats to the safe of the ACS Responders.

- a. Shootings, stabbings, fights (domestic or public), man down, attempted suicides, and overdoses all have potential for further violence.
- b. Remember that a significant percentage of public safety personnel that are critically injured or killed, are injured or killed at domestic abuse responses.
- c. Considerations for scene safety include common questions such as:
 - Is APD on scene? What is the nature of the call? How many people are involved?
 - Does the client display an altered level of consciousness, or are drugs and/or alcohol a factor?

4. ACS Responders must maintain awareness of surroundings and potential danger or violence.

- a. Do not ignore the potential for violence on any scene, including travel to and from the call and trips back and forth to the vehicle while on scene.
- b. Be aware of any weapons or makeshift weapons that can be used.
- c. Be aware that uniforms can be threatening to certain people and public perception of ACS is not always positive. Some individuals may fear detection of criminal activity or may not want to receive any assistance and may be antagonistic or uncooperative.

5. Tactics for maintaining safety on all calls for service.

- a. Take specific precautions when arriving on scene of the incident. It is best practice for ACS responders to conduct services outdoors in an open space to ensure Responder's safety.
- b. ACS Responders are not to enter a client's home or any building structures, except in situations where APD dispatch requested AFR alarm room to send ACS Responders to a scene that Officers have secured.
- c. Always introduce yourself as an ACS Responder and ask if any loose dogs can be secured in the home or yard. If the person is in the home or building structure then ask for them to meet you outside.

d. Never stand directly in front of the door; Always stand to either side, particularly the door knob side. This allows protection of the exterior wall and forces the person answering to open the door to fully see you and you to full see them.

e. There are risks involved when looking into windows at calls where callers or other individuals are delayed in answering the door. If they insist, ask why they can't come to the door.

f. Watch for potentially violent temperament of individuals on scene, particularly their hands and look for signs of weapons, including bulges in clothing. Remember to keep the individual at arm's length, allowing you time and space to react if the person turns violent. Pause for safety, this includes:

- Ask for space if needed, be directive.
- Use the bladed stance
- Set boundaries around yourself
- Pause, breathe and stay aware of your emotions
- Pause and observe to find needs, emotional or basic human needs

g. When entering a home or building after APD secured the scene, scan the room for weapons, alcohol, drugs, signs of violence, or makeshift weapons.

- Mind your distance—look in before entering a building, assess before approaching, eye level.
- When in doubt, leave the room.

h. Always keep your partner in sight at all times. Never leave your partner alone.

6. Tactics for response to unclassified scenes require ACS Responders to take specific actions on calls for service where there is very little potential for the scene to become violent or violence has not been reported.

a. The AFR alarm room dispatch follow the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) System.

b. ACS Responders must maintain vigilance when approaching the scene of the incident.

- Proceed with caution, scan the scene prior to departing the vehicle.
- Stage at a minimum of ½ mile from the incident i.e. one or two houses down from address of scene. This allows for an approach to the scene from a safe position or direction as well as for effective tactical retreat, if needed.
- Do not slam the door of the vehicle. Keep the volume low on the Radio.
- Gain updated information from AFR alarm room before approaching the scene.
- Also, look and listen before approaching the scene, if a threat is identified or scene becomes violent or has the potential to become violent, immediate retreat to a safe location and call for APD.

c. If the scene is not safe or potential threat or violence has been identified then ACS Responders must immediate retreat and request APD or AFR, depending on the emerging situation via AFR alarm room dispatch.

7. Tactics for response to a violent scene that has been secured by APD require ACS Responders to take specific actions when spotting the vehicle at the address of the scene.

- a. If flashing lights are used then turn off several blocks away, if possible, prior to arrival on scene. Scan the scene prior, does the scene look secure?
- b. The first-in unit will stage at a minimum of ½ mile from the incident until APD has secured the scene and this is reported by the AFR alarm room dispatch. This allows for an approach to the scene from a safe position or direction as well as for effective tactical retreat, if needed.
- c. Proceed with caution after departing the vehicle
- d. Be aware of the control line either marked by APD or AFR line tape. The emergency personnel will use the line tape to divide large crowds to assist APD in maintaining order.

8. ACS Responders may leave the scene of the incident for the following reasons:

- a. If the scene becomes violent or has the potential to become violent, then the ACS Responders must immediately retreat to a safe location and radio AFR alarm room dispatch for APD response.
- b. If the scene requires immediate medical services that was not initially reported to AFR alarm room dispatch then must radio dispatch to request AFR response.
- c. If the individual refuses assistance from ACS, then the ACS Responders will notify AFR alarm room dispatch of the refusal of service and leave the scene. This must also be noted in the CAD on the MDT before closing call and updating status to available for calls for service.

Referenced AFR SOG 5-1-14 Responding to Violent Scenes