

De-Escalation

104.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

De-Escalation tactics and techniques include nearly every action undertaken by a deputy(s) to reduce the chances of and control physical confrontations. How and when the tools of de-escalation are applied is of great importance to the Community and the Sheriff. The Sheriff's Office recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice.

104.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this Office that when all of the reasonably known circumstances indicate it is safe, prudent, and feasible to do so, a deputy(s) should attempt to slow down, reduce the intensity of, and stabilize potential violent encounters.

104.2.1 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

When time and circumstances reasonably permit, a deputy(s) should consider whether a subject's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or is the result of an inability to comply based on factors including, but not limited to:

- Medical Conditions
- Mental Impairment
- Developmental Disability
- Physical Limitation
- Language Barrier
- Drug Interaction
- Behavioral Crisis

A deputies awareness of these possible limitations should be balanced against the facts of the incident and which tactical options are the most appropriate to bring the situation to a safe resolution, when time and circumstances reasonably permit. A deputy is not expected to engage in force de-escalation measures that could jeopardize the safety of Sheriff Office members and/or the community.

Where circumstances and time reasonably permit, a deputy(s) should take reasonable and prudent actions to attempt to mitigate the immediacy of the threat. Thereby giving the deputy(s) the opportunity to call more officers, utilize other tactics, or request specialty assistance, such as deputies trained in Crisis Intervention Techniques. Reducing the overall force used may be promoted by considering the use of other viable alternatives, such as:

- Containing the threat within a controlled area
- Decreasing the exposure to the potential threat by using distance between an uncooperative subject and a deputy

Sonoma County Sheriff's Office

Policies

De-Escalation

- Maximizing the use of cover or concealment to reduce deputy(s) exposure to potential threats by placing the deputy(s) in a safer position
- Communicating from a safe position to gain the subject's compliance through the use of verbal persuasion, advisement, and/or warnings. Generally, communication techniques should engage active listening to calm agitated individuals and promote rational decision-making
- The deputy's physical actions may also de-escalate a potentially volatile/violent situation, ie, exhibiting a relaxed body language

When the circumstances warrant an application of force, deputies are required to be knowledgeable of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office "Use of Force" Policy (#300), and follow the guidance and direction of that policy. The Use of Force policy directs that each deputy shall use only that force which is objectively reasonable, given the facts and circumstances known at the time of the event to effectively bring an incident under control.

This policy does not dictate when and how force should be applied. Instead, it serves to describe how deputies should work to decrease the intensity of a situation or potentially violent encounter. It is well recognized that the reduction of the intensity of an encounter may provide more desirable outcomes to various situations. However, not every situation can or will be resolved through the use of de-escalation techniques. That being understood, it is the Sheriff's Office's intent to resolve stressful encounters in the safest manner possible for the subject, the public, and the deputies involved.