Managing Demonstrations: New Strategies for Protecting Protesters and the Police

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Key Findings from After-Action Reports

1. **Civil unrest and violence** on this scale were unexpected and often beyond an agency’s resources.

2. Over the past year it has been challenging for police to always identify and engage with **protest leaders**.

3. The violent nature of the protests took a tremendous **toll on officers**, both physically and emotionally.

4. Police did not always provide clear **dispersal orders** and give demonstrators time to follow them.

5. **CS gas** was sometimes used on non-violent protesters, which escalated tensions.
Key Findings from After-Action Reports

6. **Less-lethal munitions** were not always deployed carefully, leading to injuries among some demonstrators.

7. **Violent individuals often used peaceful demonstrators as cover**, leaving police with difficult choices – to use gas, less-lethal munitions, go hands-on with batons, or do nothing.

8. Individuals **engaged in looting and arson** (often away from the protest site) taxed the resources of agencies and complicated the overall response.

9. **Officer training** on demonstrations, civil disturbance and mass arrests was not always current.

10. **Mutual aid agreements** did not always establish clear guidelines on use of force and other policies.
Rethinking How We Manage Demonstrations: 10 Recommendations

1. **Give the community a significant role in planning and managing major events.**
   a. Involve community members early on – allow them to observe training, tabletop exercises and other decision-making activities.
   b. Educate the community about the challenges that officers face and the options they have.
   c. Allow trusted community members to have a seat in the command center on the day of the event.
   d. Identify, train and empower community leaders to serve as mediators on the street.
   e. Create teams of police and community members who work together to defuse incidents that arise.
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10 Recommendations

2. **Train officers to de-escalate situations** and manage their emotions under stressful circumstances.

3. **Train commanders and supervisors** to use their authority to defuse critical incidents.

4. **Update operational plans and mutual aid agreements**, to ensure they meet the challenges of today’s protest environment.

5. **Equip officers** with the gear they need to operate safely in dynamic and dangerous circumstances.
Rethinking How We Manage Demonstrations: 10 Recommendations

6. When violence occurs, carefully consider options that are proportionate and don’t increase the risk of injury to demonstrators or police.

7. Provide multiple warnings before deploying gas or munitions, giving people adequate time to disperse.

8. Pay close attention to officer health and wellness, particularly during events that go on for long periods of time.

9. To promote accountability, develop teams of police and community to jointly document and report on actions of both demonstrators and police.

10. “Monday morning quarterback” after a major event, as way to learn from experience and improve performance the next time.