

# Managing Demonstrations: New Strategies for Protecting Protesters and the Police

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# Key Findings from After-Action Reports

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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

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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

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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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- 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.**

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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.