

Officer-Involved Shooting Incident

Facilitator:

You are working as a supervisor on the afternoon shift (1600hrs-0000hrs). It is approximately 9:30 p.m. when you hear on the radio, "Shots fired, shots fired!" The rest of the transmission is garbled, but you recognize the voice as an officer assigned to your squad and working in your area this evening. The officer is part of a two-officer car. A moment later you hear another garbled transmission "...running!" The radio immediately goes silent. You do not know where the officers are located.

FLS Response:

First actions:

1. *Get on Channel 1 (main channel) and ask for their location.*
 - a. *Issues:*
 - i. *The transmission will use up valuable air-time on the radio.*
 - ii. *The involved officers may be attempting to transmit at the same time.*
 - iii. *The officers may believe dispatch or other officers in the area are receiving their radio transmissions, but in reality, you may have talked over them.*
2. *While monitoring Channel 1, switch to another radio channel and ask the other dispatcher to locate the officers' cruiser using GPS. (This is the preferred action but talking through the options is the point of the exercise.)*
 - a. *Issues:*
 - i. *You may miss important radio traffic if you fail to monitor Channel 1 properly while on another channel.*
3. *Call dispatch on the phone. This may also be the preferred action for agencies with only one (1) radio frequency.*
 - a. *Issues:*
 - i. *You may miss important radio traffic if you fail to monitor Channel 1 properly while on the phone.*

Responses for agencies without GPS or multiple radio frequencies:

1. *Dispatch officer(s) in the direction of their last known location.*
2. *Initiate a grid search if not located at last known location.*
3. *Keep all radio transmissions on Channel 1 to an absolute minimum.*

Facilitator:

While discussing the different options presented by the FLSs, you will provide them with the following scenario update:

While attempting to locate the officers, you hear another transmission from them stating, "Shots fired! Shots fired! One running. Car still occupied. We are on...." The remainder of the transmission is garbled. The radio goes silent again. The two officers making these radio transmissions sound stressed and anxious, and you believe they are releasing the talk button on the radio prematurely before all the information can be relayed.

FLS Response:

Actions:

1. *Wait for them to update again.*
2. *Get on the air and tell them you need their location so you can send help. (Preferred action. Speak slowly and calmly to help them do the same. Use their name if acceptable in your agency.)*
3. *Other actions?*

Facilitator:

You hear another radio broadcast from the involved officers. They are finally able to provide an updated location on Scott Street. You know from your patrol experience that Scott Street is a residential side street, approximately ½ mile long, which runs perpendicular between two other residential streets. The officers provide an address on Scott Street where they last observed the fleeing suspect. They also inform you that the involved vehicle is still on-scene and occupied by three subjects, and they have a fourth subject "proned out" (lying face down on their stomach with arms and legs out wide) in the middle of the street.

What are your general concerns as you respond?

(Sample scenario edit: Agency trainers may replace the above street layout with a more familiar one in their jurisdiction. Trainers should note this type of change would also require further editing later in the scenario to keep consistency.)

FLS Response:

Sergeant needs to identify priorities:

1. *The well-being and safety of the involved officers.*
2. *The safety of the subjects still on scene and determining their involvement in this situation.*

3. *The identity and description of the fleeing subject, whether or not this person is wanted for a crime, are they considered armed and dangerous, and the likelihood they may return to the scene.*

Best response: *Respond to the scene with additional officers and secure the subjects. Establish a perimeter to watch for the outstanding suspect and provide scene security. Determine the involvement of the fleeing suspect and the other individuals on scene.*

Facilitator:

You inform the involved officers that you are responding to their location and inquire about the best approach to the scene. They provide the following information: “Enter Scott Street from the south and proceed northbound to our location. Our cruiser is facing southbound and we are using it for cover. The suspect vehicle containing the three occupants is in front of our cruiser facing north. There is one person ‘proned out’ in the middle of the street between our cruiser and the suspect vehicle.”

You arrive at the south entrance to Scott Street and proceed northbound towards the location of the officers. You are the fifth unit to arrive on Scott Street. As you reach the scene, you find yourself positioned behind the suspect vehicle and two other police cruisers that arrived before you. Like you, these two cruisers proceeded north on Scott Street to the scene. However, two other cruisers responded to the north entrance of Scott Street and approached the scene southbound, pulling up behind the involved officers’ cruiser. The arriving cruisers are all facing each other and now surround the suspect vehicle and the involved officers’ cruiser.

All of the officers are out of their vehicles, pointing their guns at the occupants of the vehicle and the subject on the ground. These subjects have all complied with the officers’ orders and have not moved. The two officers who initiated the stop have taken a position on the west side of Scott Street, using their cruiser as cover. **What now?**

FLS Response:

Ideal Sergeant Response:

1. *How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.*
 - a. *Take charge, announce your presence, and ascertain what resources are currently on-scene.*
 - b. *Identify immediate threats to officer safety.*
 - i. *Identify the location of all the officers and adjust them if necessary to avoid cross-fire.*
 - ii. *Identify the location of all known subjects.*
 - iii. *Gather information from the officers concerning any known immediate threats posed by the occupants of the vehicle, the subject laying in the roadway, and the subject who fled the scene.*

- c. *Determine if more resources are needed at your location.*
 - i. *Do you have enough resources to safely secure all four subjects at this scene?*
 - ii. *Should you now direct other responding resources to search for the subject that fled?*
- d. *Make a brief radio transmission notifying other responding officers as to where the fleeing suspect was last observed and the direction of travel.*
- e. *Organize the following tasks:*
 - i. *Secure the subject in the street and take him/her into custody.*
 - ii. *Secure the occupants of the vehicle and take them into custody.*
 - iii. *Establish a perimeter or multiple perimeters (inner/outer) for the crime scene/search area.*

Facilitator:

You and your officers successfully take the three occupants of the suspect vehicle into custody. They are all unarmed. The subject lying in the street is also placed into custody. A fully loaded, .45 caliber semi-automatic handgun is discovered in the front waistband of the subject's pants. The fleeing suspect remains at large. After securing all four subjects still on scene, and securing the seized weapon, you now have an opportunity to speak directly with the involved officers. **What do you ask them? What should you not ask them?**

FLS Response:

Ask:

1. *Are you ok?*
2. *Is anyone injured? Does anyone need immediate medical attention?*
 - a. *This includes officers, suspects, involved individuals, innocent bystanders.*
 - b. *Is the scene safe enough for medical to respond directly to that location or should they stage nearby?*
3. *Public safety questions*
 - a. *Who fired their weapons? (Facilitator Note: the weapon seized on-scene is still fully loaded and was not fired.)*
 - b. *How many rounds were fired?*
 - c. *In what direction were the rounds fired?*

- d. *Are there any other outstanding suspects?*
- e. *Is the fleeing suspect believed to be armed and dangerous? If so, what type of weapon do they possess? Did they use it? Are they a threat to anyone else?*

Do not ask:

1. *Why did you shoot? (This is a question for investigators)*

(Sample scenario variable: Ask the FLS about how they would secure the seized firearm – i.e. best practices/agency policy related to securing firearms on the street.)

Facilitator:

The involved officers inform you the remaining suspect, who fled the scene on foot, had pointed a firearm at them and fired several rounds. One of the officers returned fire. The fleeing subject is believed to still be armed with that weapon. The suspect was last observed running into the driveway of 58 Scott Street, a nearby residential home. The driveway is approximately 150 feet long and travels past the left side of the house to the backyard. The driveway and backyard are in complete darkness.

Should you check that area for the suspect? What is your short-term search radius? (Where else might you look?)

FLS Response:

1. *You should check the driveway and the yard for the suspect. He may need medical aid and/or he may be waiting to ambush officers/investigators.*
2. *While checking the area, you should also do a cursory inspection for evidence so that you can alert arriving investigators of anything located.*

Facilitator:

You have decided to organize a group of officers to check the long driveway and the backyard of the residence. You have five officers available to you. How should you organize them? What are their roles and responsibilities?

FLS Response:

1. *Lethal – rifle*
2. *Lethal – handgun, secondary hands-on*
3. *Less lethal – Taser, secondary hands-on*
4. *Other less lethal – 12 gauge bean bag/40mm.*
5. *Communications/team leader*

Do you need more officers or resources? If so, why? Discuss other options and available resources that might assist you.

(Facilitator note: consider asking FLSs to identify, from memory, what resources their agencies possess, the appropriateness of each resource, and the availability of those resources on any given shift. They should be considering resources like bicycle and motor officers, K-9, Air Support, lethal and less-lethal options, and specialized units such as SWAT if applicable to their agency.)

Facilitator:

You and your team enter the driveway and make your way towards the backyard. An officer notices a blood trail on the driveway. When you enter the yard, the team observes discarded articles of clothing with blood on them just behind the corner of the house. You check all around the residence, including other possible hiding locations such as sheds, etc. You then decide to conduct a protective sweep of the residence at 58 Scott Street to make sure the suspect was not inside. (Under these circumstances, you have probable cause to search the residence.) After searching the premises, you determine the suspect was not inside.

(Sample scenario extension: The facilitator may choose to extend this scenario by having the FLSs articulate the justifications for searching the residence and, using the available resources, how that search will be conducted.)

What are the next actions you should take?

FLS Response: *(not in any particular order)*

1. *Expand the perimeter.*
2. *Secure the involved officers.*
3. *Delegate responsibilities to other supervisors/lead officers:*
 - a. *Crime scene*
 - b. *Care of the involved officers*
 - c. *Decide on organizing a larger search team -- Do you have enough resources?*
4. *Ensure the security of the crime scene.*
5. *Establish a command post.*
6. *Contact the public information office – request support if the news media begins to arrive.*
7. *Be prepared to brief investigators.*