Greer Police Department

General Order 570.2
Active Shooter

This order consists of the following sections:

I. Policy
II. Definitions
III. Procedure

July 12, 2018
I. **Policy:** The Greer Police Department, in order to save lives, recognizes the need for officers to act swiftly and decisively during active shooter events. Responding officers, singularly or in teams, are authorized to take immediate action to contain and, if necessary, neutralize active shooters.

The Greer Police Department will create and maintain a Critical Incident Response Team (the Team) to ensure adherence to this policy. The Team will operate under the jurisdiction of the Captain and will consist of representatives from vested divisions within the department including, but not limited to, Patrol, ERT, Traffic, Dispatch, and Emergency Management.

The function of the Team will be to plan and coordinate safety measures and responses to critical incidents that may arise from planned events or other incidents such as school shootings or other similar incidents.

The Team will coordinate planning and training to respond to such incidents as well as providing insight for proper equipment.

II. **Definitions:**

A. **Active Shooter**- An active shooter is an armed person who has used deadly physical force on other persons and continues to do so while having potential access to additional victims in what is commonly referred to as target-rich environments.

B. **Immediate Action Rapid Deployment**- The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement personnel and resources to on-going, life threatening situations where delayed deployment of personnel could otherwise result in death or great bodily injury to innocent persons. Immediate action rapid deployment tactics are not a substitute, nor the same as conventional response tactics to a barricaded gunman.
C. **Soft Targets** - Examples of soft targets may be an automobile, house, or assembly of people. Hardening a soft target can be achieved by employment of active security elements such as the presence of armed security or law enforcement officers; of passive elements such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED), physical barriers, and locking mechanisms. Soft targets selected by active shooters most often include public schools, colleges and universities, malls and major retail, or other locations. Soft targets are not limited to these locations specifically. They may also include churches, festivals, and other events where the unsuspecting public is gathered.

D. **Suicide by Cop** - Represents a suicide method in which a criminal actor deliberately acts in a threatening manner or destructive way towards a law enforcement officer or others with the intent of provoking a lethal response. Similar phrases include death by cop, suicide by police, and officer assisted suicide.

E. **540 Degrees of Awareness** - A tactical deployment concept where officers are aware of the necessity to observe their surroundings 360 degrees horizontally and 180 degrees overhead. Such awareness involves observation capabilities to the front, sides, rear, and overhead as the officer moves.

IV. **Discussion:** It is not unusual for tactical teams to arrive at a scene of a barricaded incident and find that patrol personnel have contained the suspect within a secure perimeter. There is generally time for a tactical team to deploy their personnel without serious concern of the suspect(s) escaping. Once the incident has been isolated, time enables patrol and/or tactical personnel to formulate a structured and deliberate plan.

There are scenarios, however, that require immediate action and rapid deployment of personnel prior to the arrival of the tactical
team. In these cases, delayed deployment could have catastrophic consequences. These scenarios often involve an ongoing shots fired or officer/civilian rescue. It may also necessitate the immediate and rapid deployment of armed personnel to contain or prevent the escape of an armed and dangerous person(s).

Over the past several years the world has experienced a growing trend of mass homicide violence committed by individuals. These episodes have come to be termed active shooter incidents and are unique in that the behavior of the suspect(s) is very different from that typically associated with other type violent behaviors. Suspects generally begin to shoot at numbers of people without warning while selecting soft targets as a part of planning their attack. The motives for these behaviors include political or religious agendas, rage, vengeance for perceived wrongs, and mental dysfunction.

The incidents experienced across the country suggest that the typical law enforcement response involving containment, isolation, and negotiation is not adequate. Unlike most criminals, active shooters are likely to continue to use deadly physical force until intervention occurs or until the shooter decides to stop.

Unlike most law enforcement calls for service, an active shooter call requires quick evaluation of the situation, formulation of a plan, and a quick and tactical response to contain the shooter. Initial officers arriving at the scene will most often move to locate and contain the shooter and rely on other arriving officers to rescue, move, and treat victims. The goal of intervention in active shooter incidents is to:

1. Neutralize the treat by neutralizing the shooter
2. Limiting access to potential victims
3. Rescuing injured persons or potential victims

These goals can be achieved by various means up to and including the timely and effective use of deadly physical force.

The active shooter response concept represents a shift in patrol response tactics, equipment needs, and command protocol. These situations require the initial officer or officers arriving at the scene to have the authority and the capability to take aggressive action without waiting for command staff or for the arrival of specialty units such as ERT or Crisis Negotiators.

V. Characteristics of an Active Shooter:

A. The following is a list of characteristics commonly associated with active shooter suspects. This list was compiled from descriptions of past active shooters and not meant to be a comprehensive list describing all active shooters. Each active shooter situation is unique and it is helpful to know that an active shooter:

- Prepared for the event
- May be prepared for a sustained confrontation with law enforcement
- Chose soft targets where there is a perception that people are disarmed and cannot effectively respond
- Chose locations where potential victims are close at hand such as schools, colleges, shopping malls, churches, theaters, concerts, and festivals
- Is intent on killing a number of people as quickly as possible
- Presents a first indication of their presence when they begin to assault victims
- May act in the manner of a sniper by assaulting victims from a distance
May engage multiple targets while remaining constantly mobile
Are not deterred or susceptible to containment or negotiation tactics
Typically continue their attack despite the arrival of law enforcement
May be better armed than law enforcement
Are not limited to the use of firearms in accomplishing their attacks on victims
May use bladed weapons, vehicles, explosives, booby traps, body armor, or any tool that, in the circumstance in which it is used, constitutes deadly physical force
Historically may not have attempted to hide their identity or conceal their attacks
May employ some type of diversion
May be indiscriminate in their violence or may seek specific victims
Usually have some degree of familiarity with the building or location they choose to occupy
Almost always attack fellow or former classmates in the case of school and college shootings
Active shooter events are dynamic and may go in and out of active status. A static incident may turn into an active shooter event or an active shooter may go inactive by going to a barricaded status without access to victims
Escape is usually not a priority of the active shooter
Active shooters may be suicidal, deciding to die in the course of their actions either by suicide or the hand of others, i.e., suicide by cop

VI. Tactics: The following tactical principles set general response guidelines for an active shooter incident. Again, these incidents are sufficiently unique such that their effective handling cannot
be totally reduced to step-by-step procedures. This tactical discussion is not meant to limit conventional tactics which might be appropriate to a crisis situation. The significant factors regarding these are that they represent a means of intervention available to officers when there is an elevated risk to bystanders and officers. The risk is acceptable in light of the potential these tactics have for saving lives.

**A. Goals**- The overall purpose of these tactics is to save lives and limit serious injuries. Law enforcement goals in an active shooter incident are to neutralize the attacker, deny access to additional victims, and rescue injured victims and potential victims.

**B. Assume Tactical Responsibility**- The first officer arriving on-scene of an active shooter incident must take charge of the situation. If more than one officer arrives simultaneously, or as the scene develops, tactical responsibility may be based on rank, expertise, or seniority. However, it must be immediately clear to both dispatchers and other officers who is in charge of the incident. An officer of superior rank who is on scene and fully briefed may ultimately assume incident command. Any change in incident command will be made known to dispatch and others immediately.

**C. Situational Analysis**- The officer taking charge must, based on what information is available, make a rapid situational analysis. The analysis will be continuous, taking in new information as it is received. The first decision is whether the situation is an active shooter event, whether an opportunity exists for immediate intervention leading to the accomplishment of one of the goals listed above, and how responding officers should be employed at the scene. The very nature of an evolving and potentially chaotic event will dictate that these decisions will need to be made within a few seconds or minutes with incomplete data and often confusing
and unreliable facts. Officers placed in such a situation are simply expected to do the best they can with what is placed before them.

D. Incident Command- The first officer arriving on scene will initiate incident command. This officer will employ situational analysis and determine initial deployment of responding resources. This may involve deployment of resources as they arrive by radio. Situational analysis may also dictate the need for the first arriving officer to relinquish command based upon the need of that officer to proceed directly to the threat to stop the killing. Command personnel en-route to the incident will monitor radio traffic to gain information but will not obstruct the on-going intervention. Any command personnel must be on scene and fully briefed before assuming responsibility of incident command.

E. First Responder Tactical Intervention- When responding to active shooter incidents, the concept of first responder tactical intervention applies. It is critical that all officers, supervisors, and command personnel are familiar with the definition of an active shooter as well as the tactics deemed appropriate for active shooter response and intervention. The traditional uniform responses of contain, isolate, evacuate, and wait for ERT and CNT is not adequate in an active shooter incident.

F. Containment- First responder intervention is based on opportunity. Tactical intervention is the primary component of an active shooter response. In instances where officers are arriving at intervals, individual deployment and coordination via radio is the only practical option.

G. Rescue/Contact Team- Rescue teams are usually in the form of officers with an identified element leader. Team movement will be disciplined and tactical in nature and will fall under the control and direction of the element leader.
This team will partner and work in coordination with EMS personnel for the purpose of securing and rescuing victims.

**H. Active Shooter Site Security**- No location associated with an active shooter will be considered secure until the incident commander declares it is so. Officers assigned to security functions will maintain positions until properly relieved.

**I. Emergency Response Team (ERT)**- When ERT units are prepared to deploy, the initial responding officers may be relieved or redeployed by ERT.

**VII. Deployment Considerations- Active Shooter vs. Hostage/Barricade Event:** Attempt to distinguish the difference between an active shooter and a hostage/barricade situation. At first glance, a hostage/barricade and an active shooter call may look and feel very similar, but there are distinct differences for responding officers. The main difference is that victims are currently being killed or attacked during an active shooter event, while a hostage/barricade event is more static. Please refer to Greer Police General Order 570.1 Special Operations for response protocol for identified hostage/barricade events.

**A. Active Shooter Patrol Response:**

The concepts and principles of patrol response to an active shooter (homicides in progress), are based around the concept of inserting an officer or officers into a hostile environment with limited to no intelligence, and getting the officer(s) to the exact location of the shooter as soon as practical. The officer(s) must thereby insert himself and move past un-cleared areas while maintaining awareness for the possibility of counter strikes. When team movement is allowable, the guiding principles during these operations are based upon the following team movement axioms:

- Stay together as much as possible
- 540 degree of coverage around the team
• Communication
• Work the angles
• Threshold evaluations
• Move only as fast as you can engage the threat and process information

The rapid response of patrol officers to an active shooting has several advantages. By overwhelming the suspect(s) with effective tactics, the officer(s) can:

• Isolate the suspect(s) from additional victims
• Distract the suspects attention away from innocent victims while placing the suspect under duress
• Neutralize the suspect(s) as a threat

The first responding officers to an active shooter scene must realize that it is not a realistic objective to save everyone trapped inside. The number one goal must be to mitigate the damage and save as many lives as possible.

Officer safety may suggest the initial response of two or three officers to the scene to form a single Contact Team to enter the structure. The initial responding officer or officers, however, are empowered and encouraged to make decisions to enter the structure based on situational analysis regardless of immediate, available manpower. The first officer to arrive on scene, for example, may hear shooting thus requiring the need to take decisive action by entering the structure to stop the killing and neutralize the threat.

The maximum number of officers on a Contact Team should normally not exceed five. If there are more than five officers on scene, then there should be an additional Contact Team or Rescue Team formed to assist EMS with casualties. All
teams should consist of forward and rear security to support the 540 degree coverage concept.

**B. Team Movement:** Speed of movement dictates the formation used.

a. **Stealth/Deliberate**- There are two scenarios in which this speed is useful:
   - Officers do not know the location of the suspect(s) and are conducting a deliberate search.
   - Officers begin closing on the area where the suspect(s) may be located but the exact location is still unknown.

b. **Dynamic/Direct to Threat**- This speed of movement is used when the team has information as to the location of the suspect(s). Officers will move as rapidly as possible in order to fire and engage the suspect(s) accurately. The goal is to get to the suspect(s) as quickly as possible in order to neutralize the threat and end the killing.

**C. Summarization:**

a. Gather available resources for rapid deployment to stop the killing.

b. Move to isolate and contain if neutralization of the threat is possible.

c. Control the scene and gather information.

d. Communicate your actions and information gathered to all parties involved.

e. Direct responding officers to aid and rescue the wounded victims and hostages.