

Cobb County Police Department

Policy 4.08

CIVIL DISORDERS

Effective Date: November 1, 2017	Issued By: Chief M.J. Register
Rescinds: Policy 4.08 (June 11, 2017)	Page 1 of 4
The words “he, his, him,” which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

It is the purpose of this policy to establish guidelines to effectively deal with crowds engaged in, or posing a significant threat of engaging in violence, property damage, or breaches of the peace.

I. POLICY

Officers confronting civil disorders, and those called upon to assist in these incidents, shall follow the procedures of containment, evacuation, communication, use of force, and command and control as enumerated in this policy.

II. DEFINITION

Civil Disorder: An unlawful assembly that constitutes a breach of the peace, or any assembly of persons where there is imminent danger of collective violence, destruction of property, or other unlawful acts.

III. PROCEDURES

A. The first officer to arrive on the scene of a civil disorder should do the following:

1. Observe the situation from a safe distance to determine if the gathering is currently or potentially violent.
2. Notify the Communications Center and supervisor of the nature and seriousness of the disturbance, particularly the availability of weapons. Request the assistance of backup as necessary.
3. If approaching the crowd would not present unnecessary risk, instruct the gathering to disperse.
4. Attempt to identify crowd leaders and any individuals personally engaged in criminal acts.

B. The ranking officer at the scene shall be the On-Scene Commander. The On-Scene Commander, or other higher ranking officer assuming command at the scene, should take the following steps:

1. Assess the immediate situation for seriousness and its potential for escalation.
2. Establish the number of personnel and equipment necessary to contain and disperse the disturbance and relay this information to the Communications Center. If the disturbance is minor in nature, and adequate resources are available, efforts should be made to disperse the crowd.
3. Where necessary, ensure that appropriate notification is made to outside agencies which may include, but is not limited to, the fire department, rescue squads, state and local law enforcement agencies, Department officials, Public Information Officer, the agency's legal advisor, and the local detention center.
4. Establish a temporary command post based on proximity to the scene, availability of communications, available space, and security from crowd participants.
5. Establish a perimeter sufficient to contain the disturbance and prohibit entrance into the affected area.
6. If possible, ensure that uninvolved persons are able to evacuate the immediate area of the disturbance.
7. Ensure that surveillance points are established to identify agitators, leaders, and individuals committing crimes, and to document and report on events as they happen. Photographic and videotape evidence of criminal acts and perpetrators should be generated whenever possible.
8. Ensure establishment and sufficient staffing of a press area.

C. Command Options

When adequate personnel and resources are in place, the On-Scene Commander should be prepared to implement one of the following options:

1. Containment and Dialogue

The On-Scene Commander should ensure that a perimeter has been established, and attempt to initiate communications with participants (especially apparent leaders) of the disturbance to discuss actions necessary to disperse the crowd.

2. Physical Arrest

When appropriate, the On-Scene Commander will order the arrest of crowd leaders, agitators, or others engaged in unlawful conduct and will:

- a. Ensure the appropriate use of tactical formations, the availability of protective formations, and the availability of protective equipment for officers engaged in arrest procedures.
- b. Ensure the availability of transportation for arrests.
- c. Ensure that a backup team of officers is readily available; should assistance be required.

3. Less-lethal Force

When physical arrest of identified leaders and agitators fails to disperse the crowd, the On-Scene Commander may use non-lethal force to accomplish these ends. In so doing, the On-Scene Commander shall ensure that:

- a. A clear path of escape is available for those who wish to flee the area.
- b. The use of tear gas, smoke, or other non-lethal devices is coordinated and controlled.

4. Use of Lethal Force

The use of deadly force in the control and dispersion of civil disorders, as in other circumstances, is governed by this Department's "Use of Force" policy. Particular caution should be taken when using firearms during civil disorders. The arbitrary use of return fire in crowds is prohibited.

D. Mass Arrests

During the course of civil disorders, it may be necessary to make arrests of numerous individuals over a relatively short period of time. In order for this process to be handled efficiently, safely, and legally, the On-Scene Commander should ensure that:

1. An adequate secure area is designated in the field for holding prisoners after initial booking and while awaiting transportation.
2. An arrest team is designated to secure the temporary detention area and process all prisoners for purpose of transportation.
3. An adequate number of vehicles is made available to move the prisoners to the detention center as soon as possible (this will ensure that prisoners have access to food, water, sanitation, and other needs). Transportation requirements that exceed the capacity of the Cobb County Police Department will be addressed to the Cobb County Sheriff's Office or other agency for prisoner transport buses or other vehicles that may be helpful.

4. All arrested individuals are searched, photographed, and properly identified prior to transportation to the detention center for formal booking.
5. All injured prisoners are provided medical attention prior to being booked.
6. All arrested juveniles are handled in accordance with this Department's procedures for the arrest, transportation, and detention of juveniles.
7. All evidence and weapons taken from arrests are processed in accordance with this Department's policy on preservation and custody of evidence.
8. No visitation will be allowed with arrested persons. Should an arrested person request a defense counsel visit, he will be instructed to contact the detention officers at the jail.

E. Deactivation

When the disturbance has been brought under control, the On-Scene Commander shall ensure that the following measures are taken:

1. All law enforcement officers engaged in the incident shall be accounted for and an assessment made of personal injuries.
2. All necessary personnel shall be debriefed as required.
3. Witnesses, suspects, and others shall be interviewed or interrogated.
4. All written reports shall be completed as soon as possible following the incident to include a comprehensive documentation of the basis for and the Department's response to the incident.