

# Emergency Services Team and Hostage Negotiation Team

## 404.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the specialized support of the Emergency Services Team (EST) and Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT) in handling critical field operations where special tactical deployment methods or intense negotiations are beyond the capacity of field deputies.

### 404.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Negotiation team** - Designated deputies, including those in a multijurisdictional team, who are specifically trained and equipped to provide skilled verbal communications to de-escalate, or effect surrender in situations where suspects have taken hostages, barricaded themselves or who are suicidal.

**Tactical team** - Designated deputies, including those in a multijurisdictional team, who are specifically trained and equipped to resolve critical incidents that are so hazardous, complex or unusual that they may exceed the capabilities of first responders or investigators. This includes, but is not limited to, hostage taking, barricaded suspects, snipers, terrorist acts and other high-risk incidents. As a matter of office policy, a tactical team may also be used to serve high-risk warrants, both search and arrest, where public and officer safety issues necessitate such use.

## 404.2 POLICY

It shall be the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to maintain an EST and an HNT, either internally or through participation in a regional team, composed of negotiation and tactical teams, and to provide the equipment, manpower and training necessary to maintain such teams. The EST and HNT should develop sufficient resources to perform three basic operational functions:

- (a) Command and control.
- (b) Containment.
- (c) Entry/apprehension/rescue.

## 404.3 CAPABILITIES

This office acknowledges that training needs may vary based on the experience level of team members, team administrators and potential incident commanders (ICs). Therefore, with the preservation of innocent human life being paramount, nothing in this policy shall prohibit individual teams from responding to a situation that exceeds their training level due to the exigency of the circumstances.

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### **404.4 MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION**

Under the direction of the Sheriff, through the Assistant Sheriff, the EST and the HNT shall be managed by the appointed team commander, team leader and/or assistant team leader.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [EST Organization](#) and [HNT Organization](#).

#### **404.4.1 TEAM SUPERVISORS**

The negotiation team and tactical team will be under the direction of designated team supervisors, who shall be selected by the Sheriff upon specific recommendation by command staff and the team commander.

The primary responsibility of the team supervisors is to oversee the operation of their teams, which includes deployment, training, first-line supervisor participation and other duties as directed by the team commander.

### **404.5 READINESS**

An operational readiness assessment should be conducted to determine the type and extent of EST and HNT missions and operations appropriate to this office. The assessment should consider the capabilities, training and limitations of the EST and HNT and should be reviewed annually by the EST/HNT Commanders or authorized designees.

#### **404.5.1 EQUIPMENT INSPECTIONS**

The EST/HNT Commanders shall appoint a team supervisor to perform operational readiness inspections of all EST and HNT equipment at least quarterly. The result of the inspection will be forwarded to the EST/HNT Commanders through Blue Team. The inspections will include personal equipment issued to members of the EST and HNT, operational equipment maintained in the EST facility and equipment maintained or used in EST vehicles.

#### **404.5.2 MULTIJURISDICTIONAL OPERATIONS**

The EST and HNT, including any relevant specialized teams and supporting resources, should develop protocols, agreements, memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or working relationships to support multijurisdictional or regional responses.

- (a) If it is anticipated that multijurisdictional EST and HNT operations will regularly be conducted, multi-agency and multidisciplinary joint training exercises are encouraged.
- (b) Members of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office EST and HNT shall operate under the policies, procedures and command of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office when working in a multi-agency situation.

### **404.6 PROCEDURES**

Situations that necessitate the need for a EST and/or HNT response vary greatly from incident to incident and often demand on-scene evaluation. The guidelines allow for appropriate on-scene decision making and the development of organizational and operational procedures.

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### 404.6.1 ORGANIZATIONAL PROCEDURES

The Office shall develop a separate written set of organizational procedures that should address, at a minimum:

- (a) Specific missions the EST and HNT are capable of performing.
- (b) EST and HNT organization and function.
- (c) Member selection, retention, and termination criteria.
- (d) Training and required competencies including record production and retention.
- (e) Procedures for Threat Assessment/EST Assistance Requests, notification, activation, deactivation, and deployment.
- (f) Command and control issues, including a clearly defined command structure and dedicated lines of communication.
- (g) Multi-agency response.
- (h) Out-of-jurisdiction response.
- (i) Specialized functions and supporting resources.
- (j) Any additional procedures necessary to comply with COMAR 12.04.08.01 et seq.
- (k) Compilation of data required for state reporting and timely transmission to the Records Section for compliance with Md. Code PS § 3-508.

### 404.6.2 OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The Office shall develop a separate written set of operational procedures in accordance with the determination of the EST and HNT's level of capability, using sound risk-reduction practices. The operational procedures should be patterned after the National Tactical Officers Association's (NTOA) SWAT Standard for Law Enforcement Agencies. HNT operational procedures should be patterned after the National Council of Negotiation Associations (NCNA). Because such procedures are specific to EST and HNT members and outline negotiation, tactical and officer safety issues, they are not included within this policy.

The operational procedures should include, at a minimum:

- (a) Designation of members who are responsible for developing an operational or tactical plan prior to, and/or during EST and HNT operations (time permitting).
  - 1. All EST and HNT members should have an understanding of operational planning.
  - 2. EST and HNT training should include planning for both spontaneous and planned events.
  - 3. EST and HNT planning should incorporate medical emergency contingency plans as part of the EST and HNT operational plan.
- (b) Plans for mission briefings conducted prior to an operation unless circumstances require immediate deployment. When possible, briefings should include the specialized teams, certified tactical dispatchers, and other supporting personnel.

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- (c) Protocols for a sustained operation to be developed may include relief, rotation of members, and augmentation of personnel and resources.
- (d) A generic checklist to be worked through prior to initiating a tactical action as a means of conducting a threat assessment to determine the appropriate response and resources necessary, including the use of the EST and HNT.
- (e) Roles for the negotiation team and negotiators.
- (f) A standard method of determining whether a warrant should be regarded as high-risk Threat Assessments.
- (g) A method for deciding how best to serve a high-risk warrant with all reasonably foreseeable alternatives being reviewed in accordance with risk/benefit criteria prior to selecting the method of response.
- (h) Protocols for post-incident scene management, including:
  - 1. Documentation of the incident.
  - 2. Transition to investigations and/or other divisions.
  - 3. Debriefing after every deployment of the EST and HNT.
    - (a) After-action team debriefing provides evaluation and analysis of critical incidents and affords the opportunity for individual and team assessments, helps to identify training needs and reinforces sound risk management practices.
    - (b) Such debriefing should not be conducted until involved members have had the opportunity to individually complete necessary reports or provide formal statements.
    - (c) In order to maintain candor and a meaningful exchange, debriefing will generally not be recorded.
    - (d) When appropriate, the debriefing should include specialized teams and supporting or assisting personnel.
- (i) A sound risk management analysis.
- (j) Standardization of equipment deployed.
- (k) Any additional procedures necessary to comply with COMAR 12.04.08.01 et seq.

For procedures related to Operations, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [HNT Deployment](#) and [EST Deployment](#).

### **404.7 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

The following are guidelines for the operational deployment of the EST and HNT. Generally, the tactical team and the negotiation team will be activated together during a critical incident. It is recognized, however, that the teams can be activated independently as circumstances dictate. The tactical team may be used in a situation not requiring the physical presence of the negotiation team, such as warrant service operations. Operational deployment of the specialized teams shall be at the discretion of the EST/HNT Commander(s).

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### 404.7.1 APPROPRIATE USE

Incidents that may result in the activation of the EST and/or HNT include:

- (a) Barricaded suspects who refuse an order to surrender.
- (b) Incidents where hostages are taken.
- (c) Individuals who are threatening suicide and have refused to surrender.
- (d) Arrests of potentially armed or dangerous persons.
- (e) Service of search and seizure warrant and high-risk arrest warrants.
- (f) Dignitary Protection.
- (g) Any situation that could threaten or undermine the ability of the Office to preserve life, maintain social order, and ensure the protection of persons or property.

Requests for deployment of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office EST and/or HNT from another agency must be approved by the Assistant Sheriff/Sheriff or designee.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [DIGNITARY PROTECTION](#)

### 404.7.2 ON-SCENE DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION

The Duty Officer will assess the need for the EST and/or HNT. The Duty Officer will brief the on-call Commander, who will then notify the Assistant Sheriff/Sheriff for final approval. Such information should include:

- (a) The type of crime involved.
- (b) The number of suspects, identity and criminal history.
- (c) The known weapons and resources available to the suspect.
- (d) If the suspect is in control of hostages and/or barricaded.
- (e) Whether contact has been made with the suspect and whether there have been demands.
- (f) If potential victims are still within the inner perimeter.
- (g) If the suspect has threatened or attempted suicide.
- (h) The location of the command post and a safe approach to it.
- (i) The extent of any inner or outer perimeter and the number of personnel involved.
- (j) Any other assets or resources at the scene including other involved agencies.
- (k) Any other important facts critical to the immediate situation.

In exigent circumstances, the on-Call commander should contact the EST/HNT commanders or their designees to initiate the response of EST/HNT members. The on-call commander will be responsible for notifying the Assistant Sheriff/Sheriff of the EST/HNT activation and the details of the incident.

The EST/HNT Commanders or designees shall then follow current call out procedures.

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Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [EST MEMBER CALL OUT PROCEDURES](#)

### 404.7.3 FIELD PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

While waiting for the EST and/or HNT to respond, field personnel should, if safe, practicable and sufficient resources exist:

- (a) Establish an arrest/response team in case the suspect takes action. The response team's tasks may include:
  - 1. Taking action to mitigate a deadly threat or behavior either inside or outside the location.
  - 2. Securing any subject or suspect who may surrender or attempt to escape.
- (b) Evacuate any injured persons in the zone of danger.
- (c) Evacuate or provide safety instructions to other people in the zone of danger.
- (d) Establish an inner and outer perimeter.
- (e) Establish a command post outside of the inner perimeter.
- (f) Attempt to establish preliminary communication with the suspect. Once the EST and/or HNT have arrived, all negotiations should generally be halted to allow the negotiation and tactical teams time to organize, position and assume the appropriate roles and responsibilities.
- (g) Plan for, and stage, anticipated resources.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [TACTICAL DEPLOYMENT AND STAGING AREA](#)

### 404.7.4 ON-SCENE COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

It will be the EST/HNT Commander's decision, with input from the Incident Commander, whether to deploy the EST/HNT. Once the EST/HNT Commanders authorize deployment, the EST/HNT Commanders or the authorized designee will be responsible for the tactical response and negotiations.

The Incident Commander shall continue supervision of the command post operation, outer perimeter security and evacuation, media access, and support for the EST/HNT. The Incident Commander and the EST/HNT Commanders or the authorized designee shall maintain direct communications at all times.

The Incident Commander will be responsible for notifying and updating the Assistant Sheriff and/or the Sheriff during and at the conclusion of the incident.

### 404.7.5 COMMUNICATIONS WITH EST MEMBERS

All persons who are non-EST and HNT members should refrain from any non-emergency contact or interference with any EST or HNT member during active negotiations. EST and HNT operations require the utmost concentration by involved members and, as a result, no one should interrupt

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or communicate with EST or HNT members directly. All non-emergency communications shall be channeled through the negotiation team or tactical team supervisor or the authorized designee.

### **404.8 TACTICAL TEAM ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES**

The tactical team was established to provide a skilled and trained team for deployment to events that require specialized tactics, in situations where suspects have taken hostages and/or barricaded themselves, and in prolonged or predictable situations where persons who are armed or suspected of being armed pose a danger to themselves or others.

The following procedures serve as directives for the administrative operation of the tactical team.

#### [St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: 402.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOSTAGE NEGOTIATION TEAM MEMBERS](#)

##### **404.8.1 SELECTION OF TACTICAL MEMBERS**

Interested officers shall submit a request for collateral assignment in Blue Team through their chain of command. They must receive a favorable endorsement to be eligible to continue to the next phase. Those qualifying applicants will then be invited to participate in the testing process. The testing process will consist of a physical agility test, firearm qualification, and an oral interview.

The EST commander shall submit a list of successful applicants to the Sheriff through the chain of command for final selection.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [EST Selection](#).

##### **404.8.2 TACTICAL TRAINING**

Training shall be coordinated by the EST Team Leader. The EST will train a minimum of two (2) eight-hour days per month. In addition to the monthly training requirements, the EST will train 40 consecutive hours annually. This will include a review and critique of members and their performance in the exercises, in addition to specialized training. The training standard will be in compliance with Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), Title 12 Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Subtitle 04 Police Training and Standards Commission Chapter 08 Special Tactical Response. (see related EST Procedures).

In addition to the mandatory training:

- (a) Each tactical team member shall perform a physical fitness test twice each year. A minimum qualifying score must be attained by each team member.
  1. Any tactical team member failing to attain the minimum physical fitness qualification score will be notified of the requirement to retest. Within 30 days of the previous physical fitness test date, the member required to qualify shall report to a team supervisor and complete the entire physical fitness test. Failure to qualify after a second attempt will result in the member being placed in an inactive status until satisfactory completion of the test.
  2. Those who are on vacation, are ill or on light-duty status with a medical professional's note of approval on the test date shall be responsible for reporting to a team supervisor and taking the test within 30 days of their return to regular

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duty. Any member who fails to arrange for and perform the physical fitness test within the 30-day period shall be considered as having failed to attain a qualifying score for that test period.

- (b) Each member of the team must undergo a complete physical examination yearly at the expense of the agency.
- (c) All EST members are required to achieve a minimum qualifying score of 90% with all assigned firearms, with the exception of scoped rifles. This includes annual handgun qualifications and biannual rifle qualifications. (EST Snipers must maintain a 100% qualification score, in accordance with MPTC standards)
  - 1. Any member who fails to achieve the required 90% score must immediately requalify. If the member is still unable to obtain the minimum score upon requalification, the EST Commander or their designee must be notified without delay. This notification will be made by the Lead Firearms Instructor conducting the qualification or the Training Coordinator.
  - 2. Any member who fails to meet the minimum qualifying score of 90% after two consecutive attempts shall be placed in a non-operational status. The member will remain non-operational pending completion of remedial training and a subsequent qualification attempt. Operational status may only be reinstated upon successful attainment of the minimum 90% score during the follow-up qualification. The Assistant Sheriff shall be notified anytime a member is placed in a non-operational status. The EST Commander will ensure Personnel Orders are issued anytime a member's status changes.
    - (a) Additional range assignments may be scheduled to assist the member in demonstrating consistent firearm proficiency.
    - (b) Members shall be given credit for a qualification when obtaining a qualifying score or meeting standards AFTER remedial training.
  - 3. An EST member who fails to obtain a minimum qualifying score of 90% within 15 consecutive calendar days of the initial attempt will be removed from the Emergency Services Team.

### **404.9 TACTICAL TEAM EVALUATION**

Continual evaluation of a team member's performance and efficiency as it relates to the positive operation of the team shall be conducted by the EST Team Leader or Assistant Team Leaders. The performance and efficiency level, as established by the EST Team Leader, will be met and maintained by all tactical team members. Any member of the Emergency Services Team who performs or functions at a level less than satisfactory shall be subject to dismissal from the team.

#### **404.9.1 EVALUATION PROCESS**

- (a) All EST members are subject to annual performance evaluations, with the exception of probationary members, who will receive quarterly evaluations during their probationary period. Evaluations will be completed through PowerReady.

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- (b) Annual evaluations will be conducted by the EST Team Leader or Assistant Team Leaders and forwarded to the EST Commander upon completion. Evaluations for the Team Leader and Assistant Team Leaders will be completed by the EST Commander.
- (c) Evaluations will be conducted at the conclusion of each calendar year and will document the following:
  - 1. Weapons handling and marksmanship
  - 2. Equipment readiness
  - 3. Tactical proficiency
  - 4. Attitude
  - 5. Judgement/Decision making
  - 6. Teamwork
  - 7. Preparedness
  - 8. Training participation and Skill Development
  - 9. Physical fitness and Readiness
  - 10. Leadership
  - 11. Adaptability to changes in mission/tactics
  - 12. Initiative

#### 404.9.2 PROBATIONARY EVALUATION PROCESS

- (a) Upon successful completion of an entry-level SWAT school, EST members will begin a one (1) year probationary period. During this time, each probationary member will be assigned to a current EST member for evaluation purposes.
- (b) The assigned evaluator will conduct quarterly performance evaluations using PowerReady, assessing the applicable performance areas covered in the annual evaluations. Upon completion, each evaluation will be submitted to the Team Leader for review and then forwarded to the EST Commander for final approval.

#### 404.9.3 SPECIAL EVALUATIONS

If there is an identified need for an EST member to be placed on Special Reporting Evaluations due to EST specific performance the procedures under 1009.5 Special Evaluation Report will be followed.

[St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: 1009.5 Special Evaluation Report](#)

#### **404.10 NEGOTIATION TEAM ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES**

The negotiation team has been established to provide skilled verbal communicators who will attempt to de-escalate, and effect surrender in critical situations where suspects have taken hostages, barricaded themselves or have suicidal tendencies.

The following procedures serve as directives for the administrative operation of the negotiation team.

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### 404.10.1 SELECTION OF NEGOTIATION MEMBERS

Upon announcement of an HNT opening, interested deputy sheriffs must have at least three (3) years of law enforcement experience. A copy of the request will be forwarded to the HNT commander. Qualified applicants may then be invited to an oral interview. The oral interview board will consist of the HNT commander, team leader and a team member. Interested members shall be evaluated by certain criteria, which include:

- (a) Recognized competence and ability as evidenced by performance.
- (b) Demonstrated good judgment and understanding of the critical role of a negotiator and the negotiation process.
- (c) Effective communication skills.
- (d) Special skills, training, or appropriate education as it pertains to the assignment.
- (e) Commitment to the HNT, realizing that the assignment may necessitate unusual working hours, conditions, and training obligations.
- (f) Demonstrated ability to function on a team.
- (g) Demonstrated emotional intelligence and stress management skills.

The oral interview board shall submit a list of successful applicants to the Assistant Sheriff for final approval.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [HNT Selection Process](#).

### 404.10.2 NEGOTIATION TRAINING

Initial training shall include a Basic Negotiation Training course. Training shall be coordinated by the HNT commander. The HNT commander may conduct monthly training exercises that include a review and critique of members and their performance in the exercises, in addition to specialized training.

Team members shall attend forty hours (40) per year annual training in relevant topics as directed by the team leader. Ideally this will include quarterly training as a team, including role playing, case studies, and/or joint training with EST. This will be coordinated by the team leader.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [HNT Training](#) and [HNT Support Team](#).

### 404.10.3 NEGOTIATION TEAM EVALUATION

Continual evaluation of a team member's performance and efficiency as it relates to the positive operation of the team shall be conducted by the team leader. Performance and efficiency levels, established by the team leader, will be met and maintained by all team members. Any member of the negotiation team who performs or functions at a level less than satisfactory shall be subject to dismissal from the team.

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### **404.11 UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT**

EST and HNT specialized teams from this office should wear uniforms that clearly identify them as law enforcement members. It is recognized that certain tactical conditions may require covert movement. Attire may be selected that is appropriate to the specific mission.

#### 404.11.1 EQUIPMENT

EST and HNT specialized teams from this office should be adequately equipped to meet the specific missions identified by the office.

All equipment will be inspected quarterly for operational readiness.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [HNT EQUIPMENT](#)

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [EST MEMBER ISSUED EQUIPMENT LIST](#)

#### 404.11.2 FIREARMS

Weapons and equipment used by the EST and HNT specialized teams and any supporting resources should be office-issued or approved, including any modifications, additions or attachments.

#### 404.11.3 VEHICLES

The Emergency Services Team is provided with specialized vehicles to assist in their operations, including but not limited to the rescue vehicle (Bear Cat), an equipment van and a personnel van.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [EST VEHICLE USAGE AND CARE](#)

### **404.12 TRAINING**

The EST and HNT commander shall conduct an annual training needs assessment to ensure that training correlates to the team's capabilities and office policy.

#### 404.12.1 TRAINING SAFETY

The use of a designated safety officer should be considered for all tactical training.

#### 404.12.2 INITIAL TRAINING

Tactical and negotiation team members and team supervisors should not be deployed until successful completion of a basic EST and/or HNT course or its equivalent has been approved by this office.

- (a) To avoid unnecessary or redundant training, previous training completed by members may be considered equivalent when the hours and content or topics meet or exceed requirements determined by the office.
- (b) Untrained members may be used in a support or training capacity.

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [HNT TRAINING](#)

Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [HNT SUPPORT TEAM](#)

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Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [EST TRAINING REQUIREMENTS](#)

#### 404.12.3 UPDATE/REFRESHER TRAINING

Tactical and negotiation team members and team supervisors should complete update or refresher training every 24 months.

#### 404.12.4 MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Command and executive personnel are encouraged to attend training for managing the EST and HNT functions at the organizational level. This is to ensure that those who provide active oversight at the scene understand the purpose and capabilities of these specialized teams.

Command personnel who may assume incident command responsibilities should attend a tactical commander or critical IC course or its equivalent that has been approved by this office.

#### 404.12.5 SCENARIO-BASED TRAINING

EST and HNT specialized teams should participate in scenario-based training that simulates the critical field operations environment. Such training is an established method of improving performance during an actual deployment.

#### 404.12.6 TRAINING DOCUMENTATION

Individual and team training shall be documented and maintained through Blue Team. All training conducted by EST and HNT members will be documented via Blue Team Training Attended Report no later than ten (10) days after the training.