Minnesota Department of Corrections

Policy Number:	**301.155**
Title:	**Emergency Response Team (ERT)/ Special Operations Response Team (SORT)/ Communications Unit Leader (COML)**
Effective Date:	**8/7/18**

PURPOSE: To provide a trained and qualified emergency response team (ERT), special operations response team (SORT), and communications unit leader (COML) and a process for their activation allowing the ERT, SORT, and COML to respond to an incident command system (ICS) emergency, including hostage rescue and specialized riot operations. The department maintains an ERT that is available to respond to department facilities experiencing a serious incident or emergency situation.

APPLICABILITY: All correctional facilities (MCF)

DEFINITIONS:

Activation – occurs when the warden/incident commander makes a request for their own SORT or CNT. A request for another facility's K-9/SORT or the ERT is made to and approved by the assistant commissioner of facilities services. The appropriate teams respond to a predetermined staging location near or in the facility where the critical incident is occurring.

Canine unit (K-9) – a department trained team consisting of a United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) certified handler and canine.

Communication unit leader (COML) – the individual responsible for planning/managing the technical and operational aspects of communications during an incident or event that requires expanded ICS operations.

Crisis negotiation team (CNT) – a trained and qualified team of DOC employees who are authorized to negotiate during a crisis situation. The team consists of a statewide director who must hold the rank of lieutenant or higher, a facility team coordinator who has completed basic and advance CNT training and holds the rank of sergeant or higher, three primary negotiators who have completed basic and advanced CNT training, two secondary negotiators from each facility who have completed basic and advanced CNT training, and one mental health staff member per two facilities. The CNT consists of a north unit and a south unit. The south unit primary negotiators respond to MCFs: Red Wing, Faribault, Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, and Shakopee. The north unit primary negotiators respond to MCFs: Lino Lakes, St. Cloud, Rush City, Togo and Willow River/Moose Lake.

The north or south team is mobilized and deployed to any facility dealing with a protracted incident, depending on location. The three primary negotiators from each facility, with support from the facility secondary CNTs, are responsible for providing negotiating capability immediately after an ERT situational briefing at an incident until additional department primary CNTs are on the scene.

Crisis situation – a situation involving a perpetrator in an escalated incident, which may include such examples as: work stoppage, hunger strike, disturbance, suicide attempt, escape or attempted escape, hostage situation, and riot.

Deployment – occurs when the order for tactical intervention is given by the incident commander. The parameters of tactical action should be established in the incident action plan (IAP), with rules of

engagement describing what, if any, freedom action strike team operators have in responding to "what if" situations.

Emergency response team (ERT) – an approved team to be activated under the expanded ICS. This team is a combination of department trained members from the following disciplines: crisis negotiation team (CNT), marksman observers (MO), special operations group (SOG), communications unit leader (COML), and canine unit (K-9). All components of the team must be activated together.

Hostage – a person held against the person's will.

Hostage taker – a person who has taken hostage(s) or a barricaded subject threatening to commit violence against the person's victim(s) or their own person.

Incident command system (ICS) – the standard operating procedure for staff response during situations of a non-routine nature. (See Policy 301.140, "Incident Command System.")

Marksman/observer team (MO) – a trained and qualified team of department employees who are authorized to observe activities or use firearms to deliver the amount of force necessary to quell an incident. The marksman/observer team leader and assistant must hold the rank of lieutenant or higher. The team leader and assistant may be from any adult facility or central office unit.

Rules of engagement – rules or directives to correctional response teams/individual team members (SORT, SOG, MO, CNT) that define the circumstances, conditions, degree, and manner in which force, or actions which might be construed as provocative, may be applied. The rules provide authorization for and/or limits on, among other things, the use of force and the employment of certain specific capabilities.

Special operations group (SOG) – a trained and qualified team of department employees who are authorized to use firearms and less lethal munitions to deliver the amount of force necessary to quell an incident. The team consists of a minimum of 24 team members. The team leader and assistant team leader must hold the rank of lieutenant or higher.

Special operations response team (SORT) – each adult facility maintains a team. This team is comprised of facility staff who received additional tactical training to include training in the use of shotgun and less lethal weapons such as the FN 303. They are specially trained to respond to facilities' emergency situations, attempted escape, and riot control. The team must have a facility commander who holds the rank of lieutenant or higher.

Staging – occurs when responding ERT teams rally to a site designated by the incident commander. It is at this site where the teams receive a field-level briefing, and personnel and equipment are accounted for. Although individual teams are led by their respective commanders, all tactical operators are under the operational authority and control of the incident commander. The incident commander (with input from command staff and the command, finances, logistics, operations, and planning (C-FLOP) operations section chief) determines objectives, rules of engagement, and gives final approval for any incident action plan (IAP) before it is authorized. At this stage, all use of force is governed by policy, as directed by the incident commander.

Tactical advantage – the ability to move and respond quickly to take advantage of a tactical change that helps expedite a desired tactical goal.

PROCEDURES:

A. General Information

1. With the approval of the assistant commissioner of facility services, the emergency response team (ERT) deploys upon the request of the warden/designee (incident commander).

2. At the onset of a critical incident, staff must call for one of two responses – direct action response, or staged response.
   a) Direct action responses are more appropriate for smaller, time-sensitive emergencies, and are generally handled at the A-team level. They may or may not require crisis negotiation team (CNT), special operations response team (SORT), and canine unit (K-9) intervention.

   b) Staged responses are appropriate for larger disturbances, riots, and hostage scenarios and may require SORT/CNT or ERT activation.

3. Use of SORT or ERT occurs in stages: activation, staging, and deployment.

4. The facility emergency plan must contain information regarding activation of SORT, the team leader, or designee.

B. Activation

1. The warden/designee (incident commander) may request activation of the ERT or SORT during an incident if he/she deems such activation may assist in resolution of the incident.
   a) All components of the team must be activated together with the exception of the CNT, which can be activated as the solo ERT entity for events that do not require an immediate tactical resolution.

   b) If other facility SORT teams or the ERT team are being requested, the activation must have approval from the assistant commissioner of facility services.

2. To activate facility SORT and/or ERT, designated staff calls the MCF-Rush City (MCF-RC) watch office at 320-358-0479. The MCF-RC watch office then calls the ERT for activation using the emergency notification system "Send Word Now." The facility making the request must give the following information:
   a) A contact person at the requesting facility for responding members; and

   b) The location of the staging area at the requesting facility.

   3. The call must be followed with an e-mail detailing the same information and an agency-wide radio transmission on the DOC main.

4. Each facility has a CNT that may respond to crisis situations without activation of the full ERT, and which may be used at the direction of the incident commander.

5. Each facility maintains a SORT that must also be capable of responding to critical and/or emergency incidents, along with their specific K-9 units.

6. Non-DOC K-9 units are not deployed during routine facility incident command system (ICS) situations, except to assist in maintaining an outer perimeter. All requests for deployment must be noted in the watch commander's log/captain's report.

C. Staging and Deployment

1. All responding ERT/SORT personnel must follow all posted speed limits and obey all traffic laws.

2. All ERT/SORT members must respond to the staging area and receive a pre-deployment briefing before taking any tactical or negotiation steps.

3. In a protracted incident, the incident commander, the operations section chief, and the ERT commander must determine the best time and process to rotate team members to minimize fatigue.

4. No ERT/SORT team member may leave the incident without checking out in person with the team member's ERT/SORT commander. All ERT/SORT members must be physically accounted for before team dismissal after an incident. All team members must write reports before leaving the incident, unless the member was involved in a critical incident during the event. As per Policy 301.081, "Use of Force and Restraints - Adult," Procedure C, 2.b), if the incident involves the use of deadly force, involves the discharge of a firearm, results in substantial bodily harm, results in a staff or offender death or requires outside law enforcement participation for any other reason, OSI in conjunction with the watch commander may defer report writing to a later date to be determined by OSI, and the officer must follow the reporting directions of the incident investigator. Reports are retained at the facility. Team dismissal must follow the ICS protocol for demobilizing equipment and personnel. When staff or offenders have been injured, medical aid must be rendered as soon as possible. Aid must be rendered by trained professionals or by staff only to the extent of the medical training they have received.

D. Post-Incident Review

The team, specialty unit commanders, and their assistant commanders review each member's performance to determine whether the team members remain on the team. The review must be overall satisfactory or above standards. After action reviews of SORT team events must be in writing and are kept by the SORT team leaders at the facility of incident. After action reviews of the ERT, team members are kept in writing and kept by the discipline team leaders.

E. Training and Equipment

1. All ERT members are trained in and follow the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and ICS protocols. For additional team training requirements, refer to Policy 301.156, "Emergency Response Team/Special Operations Response Team – Training Requirements."

2. All SORT/special operations group (SOG) members must comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and department respirator qualifications and requirements.

3. SORT and ERT equipment, weapons, and training must be standardized to the extent possible in compliance with department policy. Each facility designates staff responsible to maintain SORT and ERT equipment.

4. All SOG and marksman observers (MO) members who hold tactical positions are required to wear an agency-purchased ballistic vest during any activation.

5. All training is documented and retained in the agency electronic training management system.

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

A. All training records are kept in the agency electronic training management system.

B. All incident reports are retained at the facility of incident.

C. All after-action review documents are retained by the team leaders.

ACA STANDARDS: 4-4048, 4-4224, 3-JTS-3B-14, 2-CO-1C-01, 4-4203-3A, 2-CO-3A-01, 2-CO-3B-02

REFERENCES: Minn. Stat. §§ 241.01, 243.52, and 609.06
Policy 301.081, "Use of Force and Restraints – Adult"
Policy 301.079, "Juvenile Restrictive Procedures Plan"
Policy 103.410, "In-Service Training"
Policy 105.113, "Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)"
Policy 105.115, "Respiratory Protection Program"
Policy 300.036, "Emergency Assistance Non-State Systems"
Policy 301.100, "Weapons Control"
Division Directive 301.107, "FN 303 Less Lethal Launcher System"
Policy 301.120, "Canine Units"
Policy 301.140, "Incident Command System"
Policy 301.156, "Emergency Response Team/Special Operations Response Team – Training Requirements"
Policy 301.160, "Emergency Plans"
Policy 500.012, "Offender Emergency Health Care"
29 C.F.R. subp. 1910.134 (2008), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards
29 C.F.R. subp. 1910.139 (2003), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards

REPLACES: Division Directive 301.155, "Emergency Response Team (ERT)/Special Operations Response Team (SORT)/Communications Unit Leader (COML),"5/17/16.
All facility policies, memos, or other communications, whether verbal, written, or transmitted by electronic means, regarding this topic.

ATTACHMENTS: SORT/ERT Physical Fitness Certification (301.156A)
SORT/ERT Physical Standards Test (301.156B)

APPROVALS:
Deputy Commissioner, Facility Services
Deputy Commissioner, Community Services
Assistant Commissioner, Facility Services
Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support

Security Instructions
301.155CO, "Specialized Crisis Response Throw Phone System" (applicable to all adult facilities)