

MVD Procedural Quick Update

#83

RE: Coping with Threats and Violence
Effective date: Immediate

Date: January 6, 2008
To: All MVD
From: Mac Lewis, MVD Policy and Procedures Manager

[This is the latest in a series of procedural updates. These updates deal with specific MVD procedures and practices. Managers and Supervisors should consistently distribute the updates to all personnel and integrate them into regular information and training sessions.]

Effective immediately, all MVD personnel and agents are expected to follow guidelines presented by the New Mexico Department of Public Safety (DPS) (State Police) for coping with threats and violence. Complete an Incident Reporting Guide whenever an individual leaves before a law enforcement officer arrives on the scene.

At the MVD Managers Meeting in September, 2008, New Mexico Department of Public Safety (DPS) representatives presented techniques for coping with threats and violence, including telephone threats. They also provided an Incident Reporting Guide for use when an incident is reported to law enforcement and the individual whose behavior or activity is reported leaves before an officer arrives.

As adapted for use by MVD, the guidelines below and in the Incident Reporting Guide (MVD-10017) should be communicated to all MVD personnel and agents for appropriate use in cases of threats, violence and/or the reporting of incidents to law enforcement.

General guidelines for dealing with an angry or hostile customer or coworker:

- Stay calm. Listen attentively.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Be courteous. Be patient.
- Keep the situation in your control.

When an individual is shouting, swearing or threatening:

- Signal a coworker, or supervisor, that you need help.
- (Use a duress alarm system or prearranged code words.)
- Do not make any calls yourself.
- Have someone call the contract guard (if any) or local police.

If anyone threatens you with a gun, knife, or other weapon:

- Stay calm. Quietly signal for help.
- (Use a duress alarm or code words.)
- Maintain eye contact.
- Stall for time.
- Keep talking — but follow instructions from the person who has the weapon.
- Don't risk harm to yourself or others.

- Never try to grab a weapon.
- Watch for a safe chance to escape to a safe area.

Note: Each field office should (with assistance if needed from the appropriate Bureau Chief) develop its own pre-arranged signals, code words or alarm system based on the individual office's situation and staffing.

If you receive telephone threats:

- Keep calm. Keep talking.
- Don't hang up.
- Signal a coworker to get on an extension.
- Ask the caller to repeat the message and write it down.
- Repeat questions, if necessary.
- For a bomb threat, ask where the bomb is and when it is set to go off.
- Listen for background noises and write down a description.
- Write down whether it's a man or a woman; pitch of voice, accent; anything else you hear.
- Try to get the person's name, exact location and telephone number.
- Signal a coworker to immediately call building security personnel (if any) and/or the local police.
- Notify your immediate supervisor.

Note: As a general rule, a manager or supervisor should be notified as soon as possible; should make the decision to call for security and/or law enforcement; and should make the call. However, every field office agent should have contact information for security (if applicable) and law enforcement and is authorized to make the call if a manager or supervisor is not available or cannot be quickly notified.

Emergency Phone Numbers:

Each agent should have emergency phone numbers readily accessible at his or her station. These emergency contact numbers should include any of the following that apply:

- Building Security _____
- Local Police/Sheriff _____ or 911
- State Police _____ or 911
- Fire Department _____ or 911
- Ambulance _____ or 911
- FO Manager direct line and/or cell phone _____
- FO Supervisor direct line and/or cell phone _____
- Bureau Chief direct line and/or cell phone _____
- MVD Director's Office _____

IMPORTANT NOTE RE "FIGHT OR FLIGHT":

The human body's response to acute stress is one of two options – flee the cause of the stress, or face the stress head on in combat.

The vast majority of criminals, even those with violent tendencies, experience acute stress when committing even a minor criminal act. The conditioned response of "fight or flight" pushes the offender to flee first – this is the safest choice for the human and the least risky with respect to getting hurt.

Do not ever attempt to detain a suspect. **We are not law enforcement.**

In the final analysis, the safest course of action for everyone involved is to . . .

“Let them flee!”

Field office managers and supervisors should refer any comments or questions regarding this Procedural Quick Update to their Bureau Chiefs, with cc to mac.lewis@state.nm.us. Others are encouraged to direct comments or questions directly to Mac Lewis.
