

**SAN MARCOS POLICE DEPARTMENT
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

Section Title: Hazardous Materials/Explosive Material **General Order:** 501

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Issuing Authority: *Howard E. Williams*

Howard E. Williams, Chief of Police

I. POLICY

Hazardous material incidents potentially pose a serious danger to first responders, to citizens, to property and to the environment. Controlled initial response to reported hazardous material incidents, bomb threats, or found explosive devices is essential to ensure that appropriate and adequate resources are deployed to contain and investigate the incident. Generally, San Marcos Fire and Rescue will be the primary responder to hazardous material incidents, but officers of the San Marcos Police Department will be prepared to assist in any incident that presents a danger to the public.

II. PURPOSE

The Purpose of General Order 501 is to provide guidelines for officers on how to respond to incidents involving potentially hazardous materials or explosive devices.

III. DEFINITIONS

The terms used in General Order 501 are defined as follows, unless otherwise indicated:

- A. Hazardous Materials – Chemical compounds, mixtures, or devices that can be classified as one of the following:
 - 1. Explosive,
 - 2. Flammable,
 - 3. Combustible,
 - 4. Oxidizer,
 - 5. Corrosive,
 - 6. Compressed gases,
 - 7. Poisons, or
 - 8. Radioactive.
- B. Hazardous Materials Incident – An intentional or unintentional release or abandonment of a hazardous material.
- C. Hazardous Materials Specialist – The individual(s) designated by the Chief of Fire and Rescue to respond to hazardous material incidents.

- D. Inner Perimeter – That area immediately encircling emergency response units.
- E. Outer Perimeter – That area defined by the Incident Commander encircling the area evacuated because of present and forecast hazard conditions.
 - 1. The vehicle staging area is usually close to the entrance of the outer perimeter.
 - 2. The exit and entrance of the outer perimeter should be placed at different locations along the perimeter line.
- F. Staging Area – The ready line and/or parking area for emergency vehicles prior to their being called inside the inner perimeter.

IV. RESPONSE TO HAZARDOUS MATERIAL INCIDENTS

- A. Officers responding to calls involving hazardous materials will give an appropriate description of the situation and advise Communications of the actions they are taking.
- B. The first officer on the scene will be the primary officer for a hazardous materials call, and will assess the incident to determine whether additional resources are needed to control the scene.
- C. To increase efficiency and effectiveness, the San Marcos Fire and Rescue (SMFR) command officer and the Department command officer will communicate and coordinate activities at all such incidents.
 - 1. Command personnel will evaluate the incident and safety concerns.
 - 2. Personnel safety will take priority over minor environmental concerns.
- D. Non-hazmat personnel will not attempt neutralization of any material that cannot be identified as leaking from an auto battery (sulfuric acid) or other normal operating systems (gas tank, oil reservoir) involved in normal operations of a motor vehicle.
- E. Non-hazmat personnel will be allowed to neutralize small spills of common materials when cleaning the roadway at an auto collision. A small spill is a spill of the contents of one (1) auto battery.
 - 1. All spills of materials, other than that found in the normal operation of a motor vehicle, will be mitigated by SMFR or appropriate private contractors.
 - 2. It will be the responsibility of the SMFR to instruct personnel as to the proper neutralization process and the hazards involved when material is not a common material found in the normal operation of a motor vehicle.
 - 3. In any incident involving a commercial vehicle, such as an 18-wheel tractor-trailer, SMFR will be responsible for assigning additional equipment, as a minimum response, if notified by Department staff of a large potential or actual spill.

V. BOMB THREATS

- A. Officers will respond to the area Code 1 and advise Communications of arrival when within one to two blocks from the location.
- B. Communications will notify the Fire Marshal's Office of the bomb threat.

- C. To evaluate the validity of the threat, the first officers to arrive on the scene will locate, identify and interview the person in charge of the premises, the person who received the threat, and anyone else who knows anything about the threat or a suspect.
- D. Unless a suspicious device or package is located, the Bomb Squad should not be called in response to bomb threats targeting a building, dwelling or grounded structures, including stationary structures.
- E. The decision to evacuate should be made by the person in charge of the premises, but the supervisor-in-charge at the scene may request an evacuation when necessary to protect the public safety.
- F. If evacuation occurs, officers will establish a perimeter 300 feet or more from the target.
- G. When possible, officers will coordinate search efforts with SMFR personnel.
 - 1. Should the decision to inspect the property be made, obtain a search team of volunteers who are familiar with the area to be searched.
 - 2. Searchers should systematically search the area starting with areas accessible to the public, and should search for unusual items that seem out of place or suspicious.
 - 3. Searchers should be instructed not to touch any device or suspicious object, but to call for Department or SMFR personnel.

VI. RESPONSE TO EXPLOSIVE DEVICE INCIDENTS

- A. Officers arriving on the scene of a suspected explosive device should limit radio transmissions when in close proximity to the device.
- B. Once a known or suspected explosive device has been discovered, or when a suspicious package believed to contain an explosive device is discovered:
 - 1. Responding officers will;
 - a. notify a supervisor and request assistance;
 - b. establish a safety perimeter and evacuate anyone in the immediate area,
 - c. set up an initial command post and advise Communications of its location,
 - d. direct initial responding units to perimeter locations, and
 - e. request anyone who has seen the device/explosives to stand by at the command post.
 - 2. Communications will;
 - a. immediately contact the Austin Police Department Bomb Squad and request assistance, and
 - b. notify the Fire Marshal's Office for investigation,
- C. Officers will not handle the device/explosives or suspected device/explosives, and will not allow others to handle the device/explosives or any suspected device/explosives.

- D. The first supervisor on the scene will:
1. Assume command;
 2. Notify the duty Commander of the incident;
 2. Establish the primary command post. This site can be the same as the initial command post or it can be moved at the discretion of the supervisor based on the best information available at the time;
 3. Establish an outer perimeter;
 4. Order an evacuation, if necessary; and
 5. Consult with bomb technicians and await their arrival.