



SAFETY PRIORITY

TACTICAL ACTION EVALUATION

This decision-making aid evaluates whether a given tactical **action** (or inaction) is sound or flawed by prioritizing life safety of those involved in an incident. It considers the benefits or risks to people if law enforcement implements a particular plan.

The priorities are: **1** Hostages, **2** Innocent, **3** Responders, **4** Suspect. Mark **Benefit** or **Suffer** for each Priority. A higher Priority should not incur harm while a lower Priority benefits (e.g. Hostages and Innocents suffer while Responders benefit is not a sound tactical action).

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO OR NOT DO? (E.G., BREACH AND NEUTRALIZE THE THREAT, WAIT/NEGOTIATE, ETC.) _____

BENEFIT?

SUFFER?

01

HOSTAGES

Those **injured** or in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death with the least ability to escape the situation or help themselves.

Will hostages benefit from your action? Or suffer?



02

INNOCENT

Those exposed to imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death with limited or impaired ability to escape or be evacuated.



03

RESPONDERS

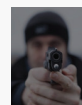
On scene trained and equipped sworn personnel.



04

SUSPECT

Little threat of serious injury. Controls own safety through lawful behavior or surrender.



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EXPLANATION (COURTESY NTOA)

- 1 Hostages/Victims
- 2 Innocent Bystanders/The Public
- 3 Public Safety Personnel/SWAT/Fire/EMS
- 4 Hostage Taker/Suspect

The National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) designed the Safety Priorities to provide decision-makers with a model based on sound doctrine, law, policy, ethics, and tactical principles. Entities within the model are categorized based on an individual's potential jeopardy and ability to control the overall outcome of the situation. The more potential danger or lesser ability to control the outcome, the higher that entity rests in the Safety Priorities.

The objective of a situation is the overarching reason for law enforcement involvement and the basis for planning and decision-making. In the chaos of tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations, command and line-level personnel must clearly understand and apply risk mitigation principles in congruence with this principle.

Examples of Mission Objectives:

- Rescue hostages
- Arrest a barricaded suspect
- Seizure and or preservation of evidence
- Preservation or protection of a crime scene
- Provide a safe environment for detectives to further their investigation

Understanding and embodying this principle in a visual and codified manner is critical to ensuring that it is recognized and adopted from a training and education perspective. In life and death situations that require critical thinking and split-second decision-making, it is crucial to the safety of all involved that objectives and safety priorities do not get inverted, paralleled, or disregarded. Safety priorities will always outweigh the objective and hence will drive decision-making. Therefore, proper planning, risk mitigation principles, training and education, equipment, and sound tactical doctrine, coupled with an understanding of the safety priorities, are essential to increasing the likelihood of a positive outcome.