

Crowd Management

Presentation to the Public Safety Committee

December 10, 2024

Seattle Mayor's Office



City of Seattle

Presenters: Thank you for hosting us

- **Tim Burgess, Deputy Mayor**
- **Natalie Walton-Anderson, Director of Public Safety**
- **Lisa Judge, Inspector General for Public Safety**
- **Brian Maxey, Chief Operating Officer, SPD**
- **Dan Nelson, Assistant Chief, Metropolitan Bureau, SPD**



Why is this ordinance before you?

- This new ordinance is necessary to ensure consistency between City law and SPD crowd management policies/practices
- Upon passage, this new ordinance and SPD policies will be consistent with national best practices on using less-lethal tools recommended by the Office of the Inspector General for Public Safety, the Center for Policing Equity, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Once adopted, SPD will transmit its Crowd Management policy to the Monitoring Team and DOJ for review/submission to the Court



What does the Ordinance do?

- Affirms the right of the people of Seattle “to assemble to celebrate, engage, worship, watch sporting events, exchange ideas, protest, or simply gather.”
- Recognizes the role of the police to facilitate safe gatherings.
- Requires the prioritization of de-escalation, engagement, and dialogue.
- Prohibits the use of crowd control tools unless there is an “imminent risk of physical injury to any person or significant property damage.”
- Mandates that police use of crowd control tools be objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional to the threat presented.
- Restricts the use of tear gas more than state law
- Mandates that a police officer may only use approved less lethal tools for which that officer has been trained.
- Requires SPD, with the Office of the Inspector General for Public Safety, to issue an annual report on the use of these tools.



Why is this the right approach?

- This ordinance restricts the use of less-lethal tools, not the tools themselves |
- This is a preferred approach so incident commanders have the ability to respond to serious incidents
- SPD policies control how these tools are used with a six-step continuum of possible actions, called CMIC: “Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control Strategies.”



SPD's CMIC - 1-2

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
Phase 1 (Lawful Assembly Standoff)	Events that are typically static or smaller in scale and do not require police assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and assess crowd behavior. • Develop Incident Action Plan (IAP) and objectives. • Minimize police presence observable by crowd.
Phase 2 (Lawful Assembly Police Interaction)	Likely larger and/or preplanned events with designated groups or organizers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize POET Officers for communication • Engender facilitation, not confrontation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and assess crowd behavior. • Minimize police presence observable by crowd. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and modulate response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop IAP and objectives. • Determine appropriate level of police presence



SPD's CMIC - 3-4

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
Phase 3 (Escalating Behavior)	Crowd or individuals within the crowd showing low level signs of disorder.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance. • Utilize POET Officers for communication • Use amplified sound to communicate intent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use low profile tactics when possible. • Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.
Phase 4 (Isolated Unlawful Behavior)	<p>Individual violent acts within the crowd, property damage, unpermitted traffic disruption, and defacement are not protected activities.</p> <p>However, isolated unlawful activity by individuals or small groups within a crowd should not automatically form the basis for declaring an assembly unlawful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated destruction of property • Isolated acts of violence • Isolated rock or bottle throwers • Individual sit-down demonstrators blocking traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance. • Isolate, arrest, and remove law violators quickly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video action of officers and law violators. • Use amplified sound to communicate intent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use low profile tactics when possible. • Effect necessary arrests. • Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to effect necessary arrests. • When it is not possible to make an immediate arrest, identify and track subjects for later arrest. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.



SPD's CMIC - 5-6

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
<p>Phase 5 (Unlawful Assembly (Riot))</p>	<p>Where unlawful behavior within or of a crowd cannot be controlled through intervention strategies, assemblies may be dispersed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent acts by 4 or more persons or acts that pose an imminent threat of violence against persons or substantial property damage. • Significant unpermitted traffic disruption that poses an imminent threat of harm to members of the assembly or the traveling public. • Other criminal acts in the crowd that cannot be addressed through crowd intervention strategies, due to size, intent, or nature of the acts by members of the crowd. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When safe and feasible and considering the risk to officer safety and members of the crowd, force may be used to disperse the crowd or address the acts of violence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue an order to disperse. • Identify dispersal routes. • Identify appropriate area for media, medics, and legal observers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to disperse or move a crowd. • Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.
<p>Phase 6 (Immediate Life Safety)</p>	<p>In certain circumstances crowd management events may escalate to immediate threats to life safety that require immediate police action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowd members throwing Molotov Cocktails. • Vehicle ramming attack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue an order to disperse. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify dispersal routes. • Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to disperse or move a crowd. • Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes • CS gas possible, if authorized by the Mayor.



Central Staff Collaboration

1. Revise the CMIC to align with property damage standards articulated in 14.090 POL 8.

SPD revised its CMIC as recommended and reviewed 14.090 and 8.300 to ensure the “substantial property damage” language was incorporated throughout.

2. Recommend that crowd dispersal orders be given by officers that are ranked Lieutenant and above.

SPD accepted this recommendation and revised policy.

3. SPD could consider amending its crowd control policies to prioritize, when practical and feasible, mutual aid officer deployment into non-force situations.

The use of mutual aid assets is directed by the Incident Commander after a scoping review by the Seattle Police Operations Center (SPOC). Although other departments do not follow SPD Policies, they are subject to state law, the state Model UOF policy and are under the command and control of SPD.

4. SPD could consider clarifying its blast ball deployment policy language to ensure that, absent a life-safety threat, and when used for crowd control/ dispersal, officers deploy blast balls in empty spaces away from people.

SPD modified its policy targeting “empty spaces to address persons engaged in the threats of harm...”.

Questions & Discussion

