16-02 - Demonstrations and Protests Inside Station Lobbies

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
NEWSLETTER
Field Operations Support Services, (323) 890-5411

DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS INSIDE STATION LOBBIES

There have been several recent protests by demonstrators using bullhorns and whistles inside the lobby area of a patrol station. This newsletter is provided to enable Departmental personnel to effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities while minimizing the disruption to a station's normal operations.

Department Objectives:

- Protect life and property;
- All laws and ordinances remain in force;
- Enforce law fairly and impartially;
- Remain totally objective toward the protest;
- Protect the rights of all citizens;
- Protestors may demonstrate or picket lawfully;
- Station operations must continue to function;
- The general public retains the right to conduct normal business at the station without interruption.

Actions by Station Personnel:

A sign or notice should be posted outside the station lobby doors to advise any demonstrators against interfering with normal business operations. Additionally, pamphlets or cards may be handed out to the protestors to inform them of applicable laws. The recommended language to be used in such signage may be as follows:

It is unlawful to cause a disturbance in the station lobby which interferes with the station's normal business operations, which includes the dispatchers' ability to clearly hear telephone calls on business and 911 lines (P.C. § 602.1).

No noisemakers (bullhorns, whistles, etc.) or loud yelling will be permitted in the station lobby. Protesters are free to use these items outside the station. **Failure to comply may result in arrest.** Your cooperation is appreciated.

Station personnel should establish contact with the demonstrators and attempt to determine who is leading the protest. Consider the following:

- Explain law enforcement's duties to the protestors;
- Avoid voicing or in any way demonstrating personal opinions;
- Communicate the meaning of the posted notice to the protesters and establish that they clearly understand;
- Consider videotaping the contact to record the above interaction.

If the protesters refuse to comply with the posted sign and continue to disrupt the station's normal operations, additional law enforcement action may be necessary. This may include contacting the Sheriff's Response Team and/or making arrests of the disturbing party as needed; however, arrests should be avoided and only used as a last resort.

Department personnel should understand that without a legitimate interruption to normal business operations, enforcing trespassing provisions of the penal code could conflict with our right to free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment. Our goal is not to make arrests for trespassing, but instead, move the protest to a public area outside of the station lobby. Diplomacy should be attempted before enforcement of Penal Code § 602.1.

Information regarding the content of this newsletter may be directed to Field Operations Support Services at (323) 890-5411.

References

Penal Code §602.1, Intentional interference with business establishment, public agency