

Unit Order 24 - Overcrowding

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this order is to establish a guideline and procedure for the West Hollywood Sheriff's Station regarding over crowded occupancies.

SCOPE:

This Station Order applies to all station personnel.

ORDER:

The Uniform Fire Code, Section 2501.16.3 OVERCROWDING states, "overcrowding and admittance of persons beyond the approved capacity of assembly are prohibited. The (Fire) chief upon finding overcrowding conditions or obstructions in aisles, passageways or other means of egress, or upon finding a condition which constitutes a serious menace to life, is authorized to cause the performance, spectacle, or entertainment to be stopped until such condition is corrected."

When West Hollywood Sheriff Station personnel believe that an establishment or event is overcrowded, the following procedures shall be a guide.

Desk personnel shall notify the watch sergeant when units are dispatched to a call of overcrowding and they shall dispatch the field sergeant to respond to the call with the handling unit.

The handling deputy shall check the posted "occupant load" for the establishment or event and determine if the club might be overcrowded. If they determine there might be overcrowding, they shall notify the Fire Department.

The handling deputy, field sergeant, and fire captain shall devise a mutual plan to allow the Fire Department to safely enter the premises or event to conduct a further assessment of the crowd capacity. The purpose of deputy personnel is to provide security for fire personnel.

Involved deputy personnel shall concentrate on the Department's basic law enforcement mission of protecting life and property.

The field sergeant shall deploy the video camera to document the incident.

If the Fire Department determines the establishment or event is overcrowded, a headcount of the patrons will be conducted by the Fire Department. The count will be conducted as the patrons leave the establishment or event. The patrons will be safely moved from the establishment to a predesignated area after they are counted. In some situations, this area may be a portion of the blocked-off streets. It is imperative that this movement be well coordinated between deputy personnel and fire personnel. Remember, patrons may leave at any time, but if they leave they should not be allowed to return. Deputy personnel will be responsible for crowd control.

After the count has been conducted, the fire captain will decide if a citation will be issued for

overcrowding. The fire captain will issue the citation either to the owner or manager of the establishment. Patrons will be allowed to re-enter the establishment and it will be the responsibility of the establishment management to determine which patrons may return, as long as the establishment does not exceed capacity again. This should be monitored by deputy personnel.

When responding to a call of an overcrowded establishment or event, the following objectives should be considered:

Containment - to confine the problem and crowd to a specific area. Patrons cannot be forced into an area. If they wish to leave, they may, but forfeit their right to return. Those who wish to stay must be contained in a safe area.

Isolation - to prevent growth of the crowd by cordoning off the area and denying access to those individuals that are not involved. As with all situations, large crowds tend to attract larger crowds.

Dispersal - to disperse the crowd in an orderly and safe fashion and take the appropriate law enforcement action against any law violators. At some point, some patrons will need to leave. A clear path should be available for them to safely leave the area. Traffic control of the area should be considered.

Reminder - deputy personnel shall adhere to Department Force Policy and the Situational Use of Force Options Chart when dealing with crowd or riot situations.

In the above situation, it is imperative that deputy personnel and fire personnel work together as a **team** to achieve the desired results.
