

Warrant Service

607.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the planning and serving of arrest and search warrants by members of this department. It is understood that this policy cannot address every variable or circumstance that can arise in the service of a search or arrest warrant, as these tasks can involve rapidly evolving and unique circumstances.

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the Operations Planning and Deconfliction Policy, which has additional guidance on planning and serving high-risk warrants.

This policy is not intended to address the service of search warrants on locations or property already secured or routine field warrant arrests by patrol officers.

607.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Syracuse Police Department to balance the safety needs of the public, the safety of department members, privacy interests and other relevant factors when making decisions related to the service of search and arrest warrants. All warrants shall be executed pursuant to the requirements of CPL 690.

607.3 SWAT TEAM COMMANDER

The SWAT Team Commander or authorized designee (see the Operations Planning and Deconfliction Policy) shall review all risk assessment forms with the involved supervisor to determine the risk level of the warrant service.

The SWAT Team Commander or authorized designee will also have the responsibility to coordinate service of those warrants that are categorized as high risk. Deconfliction, risk assessment, operational planning, briefing and debriefing should follow guidelines in the Operations Planning and Deconfliction Policy.

607.4 SEARCH WARRANTS

Officers should receive authorization from a supervisor before preparing a search warrant application. Once authorization is received, the officer will prepare the affidavit and search warrant, consulting with the applicable prosecuting attorney as needed. The officer will also complete a risk assessment form and submit it, along with the warrant affidavit, to the appropriate supervisor. Based on the score from the risk assessment form, the supervisor may consult with the SWAT Team Commander for review and classification of risk (see the Operations Planning and Deconfliction Policy).

607.5 ARREST WARRANTS

If an officer reasonably believes that serving an arrest warrant may pose a higher risk than commonly faced on a daily basis, the officer should complete a risk assessment form and submit

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it to the appropriate supervisor and the SWAT Team Commander for review and classification of risk (see the Operations Planning and Deconfliction Policy).

If the warrant is classified as high risk, service will be coordinated by the SWAT Team Commander. If the warrant is not classified as high risk, the supervisor should weigh the risk of entry into a residence to make an arrest against other alternatives, such as arresting the person outside the residence where circumstances may pose a lower risk.

607.5.1 FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE

For the guidelines and procedures for the arrest and processing of fugitives from justice who are apprehended by the Syracuse Police Department see the below procedure.

[See procedure for FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE](#)

607.6 WARRANT PREPARATION

An officer who prepares a warrant should ensure the documentation in support of the warrant contains as applicable:

- (a) Probable cause to support the search or arrest, including relevant dates and times to demonstrate timeliness and facts to support any request for nighttime, no-knock or all persons present warrant execution (CPL § 690.35).
- (b) A clear explanation of the affiant's training, experience and relevant education.
- (c) Adequately supported opinions, when relevant, that are not left to unsubstantiated conclusions.
- (d) A nexus between the place to be searched and the persons or items central to the investigation. The facts supporting this nexus should be clear and current. For example, the affidavit shall explain why there is probable cause to believe that a particular person is currently residing at a particular location or that the items sought are present at a particular location.
- (e) Full disclosure of known or suspected residents at the involved location and any indication of separate living spaces at the involved location. For example, it should be disclosed that several people may be renting bedrooms at a single location, even if the exact location of the rooms is not known.
- (f) A specific description of the location to be searched, including photographs of the location, if reasonably available.
- (g) A sufficient description of the items to be seized.
- (h) Full disclosure of any known exculpatory information relevant to the warrant application (refer to the *Brady* Information Policy).
- (i) If an "all persons present" endorsement is requested, the affidavit shall describe the type of premises (e.g., private or public access), the anticipated number and behavior of the persons expected at the time of warrant execution and whether persons with no connection to the suspected activity may be present (CPL § 690.15).

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607.6.1 NO-KNOCK WARRANT APPLICATIONS

Under a limited set of circumstances a member may make an application for a search warrant and request that a search warrant authorize the executing police officer(s) to enter a premises to be searched without giving notice of their authority and purpose (CPL § 690.35(4b)).

Any search warrant application requesting a No-Knock provision, must be reviewed and approved by a command officer (i.e. lieutenant or above) prior to being submitted to the Court.

Authorization must be granted by the Chief of Police or a Deputy Chief prior to the execution of any No-Knock search warrant.

Any member making such application to a court shall articulate that there is reasonable cause to believe that:

- (a) The property sought may be easily and quickly disposed of, or;
- (b) The giving of such notice may endanger the life or safety of the executing officer or another person, or;
- (c) In the case of an application for a search warrant as defined in paragraph (b) of subdivision two of section 690.05 for the purpose of searching for and arresting a person who is the subject of a warrant for a felony, the person sought is likely to commit another felony, or may endanger the life or safety of the executing officer or another person.

607.7 HIGH-RISK WARRANT SERVICE

The case supervisor or the authorized designee shall coordinate the service of warrants that are categorized as high risk with the SWAT Team Commander or their authorized designee. The SWAT Team Commander or their authorized designee shall have sole authority in determining the manner in which the warrant will be served, including the number of officers deployed. The SWAT Team Commander shall prepare an operational order prior to each high-risk search warrant that must be approved by the ERT Commander or their designee prior to execution.

The member responsible for directing the service should ensure the following as applicable:

- (a) When practicable and when doing so does not cause unreasonable risk, video or photographic documentation is made of the condition of the location prior to execution of a search warrant. The images should include the surrounding area and persons present.
- (b) The warrant service is audio- and video-recorded when practicable and reasonable to do so.
- (c) Evidence is handled and collected only by those members who are designated to do so. All other members involved in the service of the warrant should alert one of the designated members to the presence of potential evidence and not touch or disturb the items.
- (d) Persons who are detained as part of the warrant service are handled appropriately under the circumstances.

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- (e) Reasonable care provisions are made for children and dependent adults (see the Child and Dependent Adult Safety Policy).
- (f) A property receipt listing all items seized is prepared and a copy provided to the person in charge of the premises if present. Alternatively, the property receipt shall otherwise be left in a conspicuous place.
- (g) A copy of the search warrant is left at the location.
- (h) The condition of the property is documented with video recording or photographs after the search.

607.8 EXPLOSIVE BREACHING

Explosive Breach: The use of an explosive breaching charge configured using explosive and non-explosive materials to create an opening through a door, window, wall, or other barriers, to allow access for personnel or resources.

Under a limited set of circumstances, Explosive Breaching may be authorized where there is a need to gain access to a structure or vehicle, and where, after a careful analysis, it is determined to be the safest and most efficient method of entry. In those cases, a specially trained Explosive Breacher will be responsible for the construction, placement, and detonation of all explosive breaching charges.

Examples of cases where explosive breaching may be considered include, but are not limited to entering a structure or vehicle to affect the rescue of hostages, entering a structure to safely execute a high-risk search warrant, or entering a vehicle or structure to rescue trapped officers or citizens.

Absent exigent circumstances that require an immediate response (e.g. - active shooters or hostage rescue), explosive breaching must be authorized by the Chief or Deputy Chief of Police.

607.9 DETENTIONS DURING WARRANT SERVICE

Officers must be sensitive to the safety risks of all persons involved with the service of a warrant. Depending on circumstances and facts present, it may be appropriate to control movements of any or all persons present at a warrant service, including those who may not be the subject of a warrant or suspected in the case. However, officers must be mindful that only reasonable force may be used and weapons should be displayed no longer than the officer reasonably believes is necessary (see the Use of Force Policy).

As soon as it can be determined that an individual is not subject to the scope of a warrant and that no further reasonable suspicion or safety concerns exist to justify further detention, the person should be promptly released.

Officers should, when and to the extent reasonable, accommodate the privacy and personal needs of people who have been detained.

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607.10 ACTIONS AFTER WARRANT SERVICE

The supervisor shall ensure that all affidavits, warrants, receipts and returns, regardless of any associated cases, are filed with the issuing judge or magistrate as soon as reasonably possible, but in any event no later than any date specified on the warrant.

607.11 OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL WARRANTS

The Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau or their authorized designee will ensure that cooperative efforts with other agencies in the service of warrants conform to existing mutual aid agreements or other memorandums of understanding and will work cooperatively to mitigate risks including, but not limited to, the following:

- Identity of team members
- Roles and responsibilities
- Familiarity with equipment
- Rules of engagement
- Asset forfeiture procedures

Any outside agency requesting assistance in the service of a warrant within this jurisdiction should be referred to the Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau or their authorized designee. The Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau or their authorized designee should review and confirm the warrant, including the warrant location, and should discuss the service with the appropriate supervisor from the other agency. The Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau or their authorized designee should ensure that members of the Syracuse Police Department are utilized appropriately. Any concerns regarding the requested use of Syracuse Police Department members should be brought to the attention of the Chief of Police or their authorized designee. The actual service of the warrant will remain the responsibility of the agency requesting assistance.

If officers intend to serve a warrant outside Syracuse Police Department jurisdiction, the Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau or their authorized designee should provide reasonable advance notice to the applicable agency, request assistance as needed and work cooperatively on operational planning and the mitigation of risks detailed in this policy.

Officers will remain subject to the policies of the Syracuse Police Department when assisting outside agencies or serving a warrant outside Syracuse Police Department jurisdiction.

607.12 MEDIA ACCESS

No advance information regarding warrant service operations shall be released without the approval of the Chief of Police. Any media inquiries or press release after the fact shall be handled in accordance with the Media Relations Policy.

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607.13 TRAINING

The Commanding Officer of the Training Division should ensure officers receive periodic training on this policy and associated topics, such as legal issues, warrant preparation, warrant service and reporting requirements.