



**ARMORED RESCUE VEHICLE (ARV)  
GENERAL ORDER #13.07**

Adopted: 8/1/2022  
Replaces: None

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**POLICY**

The purpose and scope of this policy is to set guidelines for approved use, training, care and storage of the Santa Clara County Office of the Sheriff's armored rescue vehicles, a Lenco Bearcat and an armored Chevrolet Suburban. In this policy, these vehicles will be referred to as the Armored Rescue Vehicle (ARV's). The Sheriff's Office ARV's are defined as "military equipment" pursuant to Assembly Bill 481 and are also under the oversight of General Order #10.08 [Military Equipment Funding, Acquisition and Use Policy]. This policy was created to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and established Sheriff's Office procedures.

The purpose and intent of the ARV's are to enhance and sustain local and regional preparedness for the first responders in the region by allowing for the delivery of emergency services into on-going or planned hazardous situations. This will allow law enforcement, fire and medical personnel the ability to have some level of protection when entering unsecured and unstable areas (warm and hot zones). These vehicles will enhance the ability of first responders to rescue persons in need and help protect first responders at the scene of an emergency. The ARV's are also designated to meet tactical needs of law enforcement agencies tasked with responding to acts of violence and/or terrorism. The purpose is to enhance law enforcement's ability to serve and protect the community.

The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office Lenco Bearcat was obtained through State Homeland Security Grant Funding in 2010. The Bearcat is a Santa Clara County Fleet Management vehicle that adheres to all Fleet licensing, insurance, maintenance, and repair requirements. The Chevrolet Suburban was a standard county vehicle outfitted with ballistic glass and door panels through Fleet Management in 1998. The Suburban is a Santa Clara County Fleet Management vehicle that adheres to all Fleet licensing, insurance, maintenance, and repair requirements.

**PROCEDURE**

**A. USE OF THE ARV**

1. The use of the ARV's assist with the preservation of life and enhance the safety of citizens and deputies. The ARV's should be deployed in situations where its use would enhance the tactical advantage of deputies, aid in the rescue of injured persons, protect life and

property, or improve the likelihood that an incident would be resolved without the use of deadly force or other force options.

2. The ARV's are primarily used for Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (S.E.R.T.) incidents, safe transport of S.E.R.T. personnel to and from critical incidents, high risk warrant service operations, training, delivery of emergency medical staff and/or Tactical Emergency Medicine Support (TEMS) personnel, delivery of equipment, and other rescue capabilities.
3. The ARV's will not be used in the public for community engagement events, unless specifically authorized by the Sheriff.

**B. DEPLOYMENT**

1. The ARV's will only be deployed in a manner consistent with the guidelines in this policy. Approval to deploy the ARV's will be the responsibility of the Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee.
2. A Watch Commander may authorize the deployment of an ARV(s) if there is an immediate need to prevent loss of life or serious bodily injury. Upon deployment, the Watch Commander shall notify the Special Enforcement Captain as soon as practical. In cases where the Watch Commander authorized the deployment of an ARV(s), the S.E.R.T. Lieutenant(s) will assign two (2) S.E.R.T. members to relieve the patrol deputies in charge of the ARV's at the scene of the deployment. Should events dictate a lack of available S.E.R.T. members to operate the ARV, the Watch Commander shall seek out former S.E.R.T. members or other deputies that have received advanced training to fill that role.
3. Nothing in this policy is meant to preclude the immediate deployment of the ARV's to perform a deputy or citizen rescue, to save lives that are in immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death, to assist in the safe de-escalation or containment of barricaded or suicidal subjects, or to deliver an ARV(s) to the scene of a S.E.R.T. callout.

**C. TACTICAL OPERATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT**

1. Deployment of an ARV(s) should be considered in the following circumstances:
  - a. During incidents involving violent felonies.
  - b. Responding to persons with a history of extreme violence involving firearms, explosives, or other dangerous weapons.
  - c. When information is present that the suspect has used, intends to use or is likely to use extreme violence against citizens or law enforcement personnel.
2. An ARV should not be deployed in incidents that do not involve actual, threatened, or suspected violence or investigations of misdemeanor crimes, unless the crime involves a weapon. In the absence of actual, threatened, or suspected violence, an ARV may be deployed during natural disasters, rescue/emergency operations that necessitate the deployment of the ARV's equipment and capabilities.
3. The ARV will not be utilized on the front line in crowd control situations or during times of civil unrest, protest or demonstrations unless clear articulable facts dictate the need to

deploy the ARV (shots fired, suspected violence involving firearms, actual or suspected presence of explosives, etc.) with expressed consent from the Incident Commander with concurrence from the S.E.R.T. Commander or his/her designee.

**D. SHERIFF'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM TACTICS**

1. Breaching: with full consideration for the safety of the occupants of the location, members of S.E.R.T. may use an ARV(s) to breach a structure by a door pull or with the vehicle's ram attachment. Using an ARV(s) for this purpose is appropriate only after a clearly articulated need exists and only when:
  - a. A search warrant and/or arrest warrant is obtained;
  - b. When S.E.R.T. reasonably believes that evidence inside the premises is presently being destroyed; or
  - c. There was an immediate threat of resistance from the occupants which posed a serious danger to deputies or citizens.
2. High-Risk Vehicle Operations: with full consideration for the safety of the occupants, members of S.E.R.T. may use an ARV(s) to conduct the rescue of a hostage or effecting the arrest of a violent armed suspect(s) located in a vehicle, bus, train or aircraft.

**E. RESCUE OPERATIONS**

1. An ARV(s) may be utilized to perform rescue operations of citizens or deputies to prevent loss of life or serious bodily injury.
2. In certain rescue operations, such as an Active Shooter or Criminal Mass Casualty Incident, an ARV(s) may be used to deploy Fire and/or EMS resources into potential Warm Zones as a Rescue Task Force. The integration of Fire and/or EMS into a Rescue Task Force is strictly meant to expedite life-saving efforts. The use of an ARV is meant to provide protection and a safer environment for the Rescue Task Force personnel as well as for victims requiring evacuation or treatment. The Rescue Task Force will be deployed in compliance with the Santa Clara County Active Shooter Protocol.

**F. ALLIED AGENCY REQUEST**

1. Non-Emergency request for deployment of an ARV by an allied agency will be made through the on-duty Watch Commander who will then contact the S.E.R.T. Commander or his/her designee for authorization. If there is an allied agency request for an immediate ARV deployment to an emergency to assist in life-saving operations, the Watch Commander may authorize the deployment of the vehicle pursuant to this order and immediately notify the S.E.R.T. Commander or his/her designee of the deployment.
2. When available, the Sheriff's Office Watch Commander or a Patrol Sergeant should respond to the Allied Agency Incident to establish a Unified Command, and to ensure all Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office policies, procedures, and practices are followed.
3. Upon approving an allied agency's request, two deputies trained in ARV deployment will be assigned to deliver the ARV to the requesting agency. It is recommended that one deputy drive the ARV and one deputy assist with escorting the ARV in a marked patrol vehicle. The deputies will respond to the incident and deploy the ARV per the needs of

the Incident Commander of the allied agency. Santa Clara County Sheriff's deputies will not deploy an ARV if the deployment conflicts with Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office policies, procedures, practices, or established law. Deputies arriving on scene with the ARV will act as operators of the vehicle and security for the vehicle.

4. Santa Clara County Sheriff's deputies deployed with an ARV should not be directly involved in the tactical operations of the allied agency unless specifically requested to do so by the requesting agency. If the Sheriff's deputies are asked to participate in any part of the Allied Agency's operation other than the operation of the ARV, the deputies shall contact the Watch Commander, their direct supervisor or Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee as soon as practical and brief them on the request of the allied agency. This policy is not intended to restrict deputies from taking action, if necessary, to prevent loss of life or serious bodily injury.
5. If the Allied Agency's request for an ARV develops into an extended operation, the deputies deploying the vehicle will contact the Watch Commander, their direct supervisor, Special Enforcement Captain, or his/her designee and advise him/her of the situation. For most extended incidents, the Special Enforcement Captain or S.E.R.T. Lieutenant(s) will assign two (2) S.E.R.T. members to relieve the patrol deputies in charge of the ARV at the scene of the deployment.
6. If multiple simultaneous requests are made for an ARV, the Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee will evaluate the requests and determine which takes priority based on the nature of the incidents.

#### **G. TRAINING**

1. Deputies are to be trained in the operation of the ARV's prior to use. Training requirements will be set by the Special Enforcement Captain and the Training and Professional Development Captain in cooperation with the Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVO) Training Manager. Training will include knowledge of this policy, rules of the road and basic knowledge of electronic/mechanical functions on the vehicle. The training will also include a driving exercise. S.E.R.T. personnel will receive advanced training and are expected to maintain a higher level of operational knowledge and expertise.
2. All training shall be documented and forwarded to the Sheriff's Office Training Unit.
3. Only Santa Clara County Sheriff's personnel who have completed training and possess a County Driving Permit will be authorized to drive/operate the ARV(s), unless a delayed deployment of an ARV would result in serious bodily injury or death.

#### **H. DOCUMENTATION**

1. Each deployment of an ARV, including use by S.E.R.T., shall be documented in the ARV Deployment Log and a S.E.R.T. After Action Report or Sheriff's Office Incident Report. The ARV Deployment Log shall be kept and updated by the S.E.R.T. Administration. This Log shall at minimum include the following information:
  - a. Who requested use of the ARV

- b. Who approved use of the ARV
- c. Why the ARV was necessary
- d. Personnel assigned to the ARV
- e. When the vehicle was deployed (date/time)
- f. When the vehicle was returned (date/time)
- g. Any damage sustained to the vehicle
- h. If not for a critical incident, the timeframe of the use
- i. Mission outcome

**I. PRE-PLANNED OPERATIONS**

- 1. Any Division Commander or Watch Commander of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office may request to deploy an ARV in a pre-planned operation by making the request to the Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee. The request should include but is not limited to; the date and time frame of the operation; the location(s) of the operation; and the reason why the ARV is necessary for the success of the operation. The Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee will be responsible for approving/denying the request.

**K. PRE-PLANNED SPECIAL EVENTS**

- 1. Any Division Commander or Watch Commander of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office may request to stage an ARV in a pre-planned special event by making the request to the Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee. With approval, the ARV may be discreetly staged at the location of a pre-planned special event for the purpose of providing a rapid response to acts of extreme violence. The vehicle should be parked and staged in a manner appropriate for the circumstances. Each event Incident Commander is responsible for communicating the intended use of the ARV's to the Special Enforcement Captain or his/her designee prior to deployment. If approval is granted, a trained ARV driver will be assigned to deliver and provide security for the vehicle.

**L. OPERATIONS, STORAGE, AND MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES**

- 1. Backing
  - a. When operating an ARV in reverse and when persons, equipment or other property is within the immediate area of the ARV, a ground guide or spotter should be used unless officer safety would be jeopardized.
- 2. Inventory
  - a. The Deputy operating an ARV during the deployment shall ensure that all of the vehicle's equipment has been returned to the ARV once the deployment is completed. The operator will also notify the S.E.R.T. Administrative Sergeant if any equipment is damaged or perishable items need to be replaced.
  - b. The S.E.R.T. Administrative Sergeant shall ensure quarterly inventories and inspections are completed and a list of the equipment stored inside of the ARV.

2. Fueling

- a. Prior to securing an ARV after deployment, the Deputy operating the ARV shall ensure that the vehicle has sufficient fuel and is ready for re-deployment.

3. Storage

- a. The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office Bearcat will be stored at the Sheriff's Office Range so that it is readily available to Sheriff's Office personnel and able to respond to the areas where the agency provides law enforcement services. Likewise, the armored suburban will be stored at the West Valley Substation to have an armored vehicle available on the western portion of Sheriff's Office jurisdiction.

4. Maintenance

- a. The ARV's are Santa Clara County Fleet vehicles and will adhere to all Fleet licensing, insurance, maintenance, and repair requirements. The S.E.R.T. Administrative Sergeant will ensure the ARV's receive all required service.

5. Damage

- a. If the ARV's are damaged, the sheriff's deputy shall report damage to the S.E.R.T. Lieutenant(s) as soon as possible and complete a Vehicle Damage Report.

**M. USE OF ARV BY GILROY/MORGAN HILL SWAT TEAM**

1. The Sheriff's Office permits the use of the Bearcat by the Gilroy/Morgan Hill SWAT Team as a South Santa Clara County regional asset. The Gilroy/Morgan Hill SWAT Team will be responsible for the proper use, insurance coverage and damage to the ARV(s) when driven by their personnel.
2. The Gilroy/Morgan Hill SWAT Team will adhere to sections H. (Documentation) and L. (Operations, Storage, and Maintenance Guidelines) of this order to ensure the ARV(s) are available and ready for deployment.



**LAURIE SMITH  
SHERIFF**