



THE STATE OF WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Date: January 29, 2020
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WDOC's Crisis Negotiation Team Helps Save Lives

Cheyenne – For the past thirty years, members of the Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC) Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) have been living up to their mission of saving lives.

The WDOC CNT is a 17 member team trained to help negotiate a safe and peaceful resolution to high crisis events such as hostage, suicide and barricaded situations. The team is made up of WDOC staff from Wyoming's five prisons and Field Services (Probation and Parole) Division.

In the field, one of the main objectives of the CNT is to help prevent crisis events from going tactical, because if that happens, experts say there is a 78% chance that someone will get seriously injured or killed.

Since 1993, the group has negotiated 12 different real life situations including four situations in 2019 and one in 2020. In all instances, no lives were lost.

All of the team's activations in the last year were out of Converse County at the request of Douglas Police Chief and the Converse County Sheriff.

In November, 2019, the Douglas Police Department received information that a convicted felon was in possession of firearms and threatening suicide. Eight members of the CNT were able to respond to the incident within a short time, and the rest of the team remained on standby. The incident was resolved peacefully, without any kind of a stand-off or injury to anyone involved, according to Douglas Chief of Police Ronald Casalenda.

"I am not only grateful for the immediate help we received from the Crisis Negotiation Team members who arrived to help, but I am completely amazed and overwhelmed to learn of the significant resources available to us when we need help with this type of incident," Chief Casalenda wrote in a letter to WDOC Director Bob Lampert.

Earlier this month, members of the CNT worked alongside Converse County Sheriff Deputies for several hours to resolve another incident in Douglas involving a possible suicidal subject.

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Sheriff Clint Becker expressed his gratitude to the CNT in a recent letter to the WDOC. "Due to the assistance and professionalism of your [CNT] team, we had another successful and peaceful conclusion to a potentially serious or deadly situation. This team is a credit to the Wyoming Department of Corrections," Becker wrote.

In order to be on the CNT, members must successfully complete a basic class on Hostage Negotiations at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in Douglas. The basic class is a one-week course consisting of 100 hours of lecture, practical exercises, one-on-one negotiations and an extended scenario. Extended scenario training goes for 30-36 hours straight and provides an opportunity for the CNT to work alongside tactical response teams from the WDOC and other law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, team members receive regular training throughout the year and are able to participate in advanced training events such as the Rocky Mountain Hostage Negotiation Association's annual conference in Colorado.

Members of the CNT put their expertise to good use in the classroom as well as the field. Since its inception, the CNT has taught 19 basic hostage negotiation classes and 5 advanced hostage negotiation classes to over 800 Wyoming Correctional Officers, Sheriff's Deputies, Police Officers, FE Warren Air Force Base Military Personnel, Wyoming Highway Patrol Troopers, and law enforcement officials from Idaho, Montana, and the Dakotas.

In addition, the team has done extended scenario training with law enforcement in 14 Wyoming counties as well as the Wyoming State Penitentiary and the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution. The CNT has also put on trainings with the Coalition against Family Violence and state emergency dispatchers on subjects such as crisis intervention, active listening skills, suicide prevention and other related topics.

Senior leadership within the WDOC commends the CNT for their life-saving efforts and the role they play alongside all department staff in providing for public safety in Wyoming. As Director Lampert stated, "Our CNT team is definitely an asset. Each member is dedicated to ensuring the safety of offenders, staff and communities during crisis situations."

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