

Attachment C

Energy Assisted Breaching (EAB)

409.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines, procedures and oversight of Energy Assisted Breaching (EAB) used exclusively by the Pasadena Police Department SWAT Team. EAB is a specialized SWAT capability intended to create or enlarge an opening through a barrier when rapid entry is reasonably necessary to address an immediate safety risk.

EAB materials are deemed Military Equipment in accordance with Assembly Bill 481. EAB is not a routine entry method. It shall be used only in the limited high-risk circumstances described in this policy and in a manner consistent with applicable law, Department policies, and the principles of necessity, proportionality, and minimizing foreseeable harm.

409.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Pasadena Police Department to utilize Energy Assisted Breaching (EAB) only as a specialized tactical option in limited, high-risk incidents where there is a compelling public-safety need, reasonable available alternatives have been evaluated, and appropriate measures have been taken to reduce foreseeable risk to officers, occupants, bystanders, and surrounding property.

EAB may be considered when reasonably necessary to prevent death, serious bodily injury, or other significant harm involving exigency that may include:

- Terrorist incidents or acts involving an immediate threat to life.
- Hostage rescue operations.
- Barricaded or armed suspect situations where rapid entry is necessary to protect life.
- The mitigation or controlled disruption of suspected booby traps or similar explosive hazards.
- Rescue operations involving persons trapped by a natural disaster, terrorist act, or other emergency when no reasonably safe alternative to access the location is available.

All EAB deployments shall be conducted by or under the direct supervision of a certified and properly trained energy breacher. When used, personnel shall employ the least amount of energy or explosive material reasonably necessary to create the required point of entry while minimizing foreseeable risk to victims, officers, subjects, uninvolved persons, and nearby structures.

409.2.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Energy Assisted Breaching (EAB). A tactical breaching method that uses explosive or other energy-generating materials or devices to create or enlarge an opening in a door, window, wall, vehicle, or other physical barrier for lawful entry.

Energy Assisted Breaching

Energy Breacher. A Department member who has completed the required EAB training and certification, has demonstrated ongoing proficiency, and has been formally approved to perform EAB functions. All energy breachers shall also be certified as blasters. The term Blaster is used by California Occupational Safety and Health Administration to identify someone authorized to use explosives during the course of their work.

Assistant Energy Breacher. A designated and qualified EAB Team member assigned to assist with charge preparation, placement, safety measures, communications, or post-deployment procedures under the direction of the designated breacher.

High-Risk Situation. A situation involving an immediate threat to life or officer safety, including hostage rescue; a barricaded or armed suspect presenting an immediate threat; rescue of officers or civilians in distress; or a comparable imminent threat where rapid entry is reasonably necessary.

Breach and Hold Tactic - An energy assisted breach option that creates a tactical advantage by making an access point into a structure when an immediate team entry is not desirable. This tactic creates an opportunity to insert cameras, deploy robots, insert chemical agents, achieve an observation point, and/or allow for later team entry into a structure.

Vulnerable Individual. A person who, because of age, physical or cognitive condition, disability, medical condition, or situational circumstances, may have a reduced ability to protect themselves from harm or respond safely during a tactical operation.

409.3 AUTHORIZED USE AND LIMITATIONS

EAB may be used if objectively reasonable and warranted by a strong governmental interest. This determination may be based on any combination of the following factors:

- The operation involves a High-Risk Situation as defined in this policy.
- Where exigency exists requiring immediate entry into a structure to prevent death or serious bodily injury of another person.
- Where a subject is currently armed and/or threatening anyone's safety.
- Where a subject has a history of violence and access to weapons.
- Where peaceful negotiations, including crisis intervention and other de-escalation techniques, have been unsuccessful in resolving the situation.
- Where a penetration or compromise of the structure is necessary to prevent imminent harm to officers or others.
- Where other breaching methods have been considered but are deemed unsafe or impractical.
- Where the use of energy assisted breaching is the only means of physically breaching the location's barriers/fortifications.

Factors that should be considered in the decision to employ EAB:

- The construction of the doors, walls, or target to be defeated is not known.
- There is a presence of unstable chemicals or other incendiary materials in close proximity to the crisis site.
- The presence or location of occupants cannot be ascertained.
- Other means of breaching would be more effective to provide positive entry, officer safety, and mission success.

Energy Assisted Breaching

Prohibited Uses. EAB shall not be used:

- For routine warrant service, generalized entry convenience, or to avoid the time or effort associated with lower-risk entry methods.
- For immigration-enforcement actions or any operation without a clear and immediate safety concern.
- By personnel who are not currently trained, certified, and designated for EAB. All use to include training must occur under the supervision of an authorized energy breacher.
- In a manner inconsistent with applicable law or department policy.

409.4 OPERATIONAL PLANNING

The decision to authorize the use of EAB shall be at the discretion of the Incident Commander. Prior to the operational use of an energy assisted breach, energy breachers shall conduct a risk assessment.

The following criteria should be considered:

- Target analysis
- Severity of the crime
- Suspect history and current threat
- Officer safety
- Suspect weapons involved
- Number of suspects
- Possible collateral damage
- Other breaching options
- Known or reasonably anticipated occupants, including children, older adults, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable individuals; the proximity of adjacent residences or units; and the potential impact on uninvolved persons.
- Fire hazards, hazardous materials, structural conditions, blast effects, fragmentation, secondary impacts, and potential effects on surrounding structures.
- The tactical implications of sounding a warning prior to the use of an energetic charge

The selection and construction of all breaching charges will be the responsibility of energy breachers.

The SWAT Team Leader, with input from energy breachers, will determine the location of the entry team prior to an energetic breach. Energy breachers will not conduct an energetic breach if it is their opinion that the breach would place the team in unnecessary danger. Energy breachers will be aware of safe standoff distances. Absent exigent circumstances two energy breachers should be present for all operational breaches to verify calculations and charge selection.

Energy breachers will make recommendations on target location and specific breaching charges based on goals of the mission and site considerations, to include hazards that may be present (i.e., a known presence of significant amounts of flammable chemicals). The placement and handling of charges will be supervised by a certified energy breacher.

Energy Assisted Breaching

409.5 SAFETY

All energetic materials will be properly stored as appropriate to ensure their security.

Tactical emergency medical personnel, including paramedics and fire personnel, should be present during operational breaches where energetic breaching techniques are performed.

Energy breachers will always be in control of the initiating device to prevent unintentional detonation by other people.

Energy breachers must be provided with appropriate safety equipment for handling small amounts of energetic material.

All members of the entry team will wear appropriate safety equipment when the use of EAB is anticipated.

An energy breacher will serve as a range safety officer on all training operations.

409.5.1 MISFIRE PROCEDURES

Handling of misfires and non-functioning breaching charges are the responsibility of the energy breachers, in coordination with the SWAT Team Leader, as circumstances permit.

Energy breachers will be responsible for the security of the removed breaching charge and the subsequent disposition of it.

409.6 MUTUAL AID REQUESTS

EAB personnel may be deployed in mutual-aid operations or at the request of an outside agency only when the requirements of this policy are satisfied and approved by the Chief of Police or their designee.

PPD SWAT personnel shall not deploy EAB solely because an outside agency requests it.

When available, a SWAT Supervisor should respond to the Allied Agency Incident to establish a Unified Command, and to ensure all Pasadena Police policies, procedures, and practices are followed.

Upon approving an allied agency's request, a SWAT Supervisor, two energy breachers and two cover operators (hereinafter referred to as the Energy Assisted Breaching Team) will be assigned to support the requesting agency. The EAB Team will respond to the incident and deploy per the needs of the Incident Commander of the allied agency. The EAB Team will not deploy EAB if the deployment conflicts with Pasadena Police Department policies, procedures, practices, or established law.

The EAB Team 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 EAB Team is asked to participate in any part of the Allied Agency's operation other than the EAB, the SWAT supervisor shall contact the SWAT Commander 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 the EAB Team from taking action, if necessary, to prevent loss of life or serious bodily injury.

Energy Assisted Breaching

409.7 TRAINING

Only personnel who have completed specialized EAB training, demonstrate proficiency, and been approved by the SWAT Commander or designee, may independently handle, construct, place, initiate, or otherwise deploy EAB devices. A certified energy breacher may provide instruction and permit another person to handle or assist with an EAB device when under the certified breacher's direct supervision and control. Operational energy breachers shall satisfy all certification, licensing, and renewal requirements imposed by applicable law. Before operational deployment, a breacher shall complete 80 hours of EAB training. All energy breachers shall be licensed as a "blaster" by Cal/OSHA.

The EAB cadre shall conduct annual breaching-method training with the SWAT Team, and complete an appropriate remote-breacher update course as required to maintain certification. Personnel who do not maintain proficiency shall be removed from operational EAB duties until remedial training and reapproval are completed.

409.8 STORAGE

Explosive materials and EAB devices shall be purchased, transported, stored, inventoried, and secured in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local law, including applicable ATF requirements. When multiple standards apply, the Department shall follow the most stringent applicable requirement.

Only authorized EAB personnel may access or handle explosive materials and EAB devices except as otherwise authorized by the SWAT Commander or required for safety, evidence, or maintenance purposes.

409.9 DOCUMENTATION

All operational and training EAB deployments shall be documented in an after-action report and any required incident report. Included in the documentation will be the following information: charge design, how calculations were obtained, target construction, and results. Photo and video will be included if possible.

The report shall include, at a minimum:

- The high-risk operational objective and the immediate safety concern requiring EAB.
- The alternatives considered, the assessment of known or anticipated occupants and vulnerable individuals, and the basis for selecting EAB.
- The authorizing commander and SWAT team leader, the designated energy breacher, the intended and actual entry point, and the general method of deployment.
- The safety and planning measures used, including medical and fire planning or the reason those measures could not reasonably be completed.
- The result of the breach, any injuries, fire incidents, misfires, property damage, or impacts to uninvolved persons or neighboring structures.
- Any deviations from this policy, their justification, and corrective or follow-up actions taken.

The EAB program shall maintain a record of training, certification, recertification, proficiency, training deployments, operational deployments, and technical equipment accountability.

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Each operational EAB deployment shall receive a documented supervisory review to determine compliance with this policy; whether the use met the standards of necessity and proportionality; and whether planning, safety, authorization, documentation, and reporting requirements were followed.

The review process and associated documentation shall be available for review by the Independent Police Auditor consistent with applicable law, confidentiality requirements, and the auditor's authority.

The SWAT Lieutenant is responsible for program oversight, including policy compliance, training standards, equipment accountability, documentation and audit functions, trend review, and recommendations for policy, training, or procedural changes.

The use of EAB will be reported annually in the Military Equipment Report pursuant to AB 481.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Latoya Patillo, Chair, Community Police Oversight Commission

RE: Community Police Oversight Commission Review / Recommendations for PPD's Energy Assisted Breaching Policy

DATE: September 16, 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Public Safety Committee and City Council with an overview of the Community Police Oversight Commission's (CPOC) review process and recommendations regarding the Pasadena Police Department's (PPD) Energy Assisted Breaching (EAB) policy.

This memo summarizes the review process the Commission used, the community priorities and recommendations developed through that process, and PPD's response. Because purchase decisions fall outside the CPOC's authority, this memo does not make any recommendation regarding whether EAB technology should be acquired or deployed.

Background

Section 2.60.110 of the Pasadena Municipal Code stipulates that a key function of the CPOC is to provide input on police department policy. Consistent with that responsibility, the CPOC adopted a structured process for reviewing policies related to new and emerging law enforcement technology or equipment.

This process is initiated when PPD notifies the CPOC of equipment or technology it intends to procure, or when the CPOC independently identifies an item for review. Once initiated, the CPOC Chair may form a temporary ad hoc committee to conduct research and develop recommended community priorities to be addressed by the relevant policy. These draft priorities are then presented to the full Commission for discussion and consideration.

After the Commission adopts the priorities, they are transmitted to PPD for consideration during policy development. PPD then drafts a proposed policy and presents it to the Commission, which may approve it or offer recommended revisions. A memo summarizing the Commission's action—whether approval or recommended revisions—is subsequently forwarded to the City Council.

As an advisory body, the CPOC does not have authority to require PPD to adopt its recommendations. PPD may accept or decline any recommendation in whole or in part. The City Council, either directly or through its Public Safety Committee, may also evaluate and provide input on community concerns and policy issues.

PPD recently expressed interest in procuring Energy Assisted Breaching (EAB) technology. Under the CPOC's review process, an Ad Hoc Committee was convened to develop community priorities regarding PPD's potential acquisition and use of EAB. The Commission adopted the Committee's recommendations at its June 11, 2026, meeting and submitted them to PPD. PPD presented its response and draft EAB policy at the August 13, 2026, meeting, and the Commission voted to approve the draft policy.

Community Priority Development Process

The Ad Hoc Committee, in consultation with Independent Police Auditor Teresa Magula, reviewed policies from other jurisdictions, analyzed relevant legal frameworks, and examined best practices and emerging standards related to EAB. This included review of National Tactical Officer's Association standards, nationwide special team / SWAT standards, guidance from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and findings from civil rights and civil liberties organizations. The Committee also considered pending state legislation, Senate Bill 937, which concerns the use of flash bangs and explosive devices; while the bill does not specifically regulate or directly reference energetic-assisted breaching, it was included for consideration because it reflects broader legislative scrutiny of explosive tools in law enforcement operations, which may inform policy development and oversight in this adjacent area.

The Committee's discussions centered on balancing legitimate public safety needs with the imperative for clear limitations, strong safety protocols, transparency, and accountability measures that reflect community expectations, as we currently understand them.

Because energetic-assisted breaching tools are classified as "military equipment" under California Government Code § 7070 et seq. (AB 481), any potential acquisition by the PPD would be subject to the statute's enhanced transparency, oversight, and approval requirements. These include preparation of a detailed military equipment use policy, public notice, a dedicated community engagement process (typically including a publicly noticed town hall or similar forum), and ultimately formal consideration and approval by the City Council at a public meeting. In light of these mandated, multi-layered opportunities for public input and deliberation, the Committee determined that conducting a separate survey or additional standalone outreach at this stage was not necessary, as the AB 481 process itself is designed to ensure robust community awareness, participation, and policy scrutiny prior to any procurement decision.

The committee developed a set of recommendations organized into seven community priority areas (the full listing is included as Attachment A):

1. Safety and Operational Planning
2. Purpose and Use Limitations
3. Training
4. Privacy and Civil Liberties
5. Authorization and Documentation
6. Evaluation and Accountability
7. Equity and Community Impact

At its June 11 meeting, the CPOC reviewed the Ad Hoc recommended community priorities for the EAB policy and, after substantive discussion, voted unanimously (9–0, with two commissioners absent) to adopt them.

Pasadena Police Department Response

At the August 13, 2026, CPOC meeting, PPD presented its proposed EAB policy along with a detailed response to the Commission’s recommendations. PPD agreed with and incorporated the majority of the CPOC’s seven recommendations. However, the department expressed disagreement with certain elements under the “Privacy and Civil Liberties” category and did not agree with the recommendations under “Equity and Community Impact.”

The presentation gave Commissioners an opportunity to discuss these areas of disagreement directly with the department. The Commission appreciates PPD’s willingness to engage in this collaborative process and to offer detailed explanations of how community priorities were addressed during policy development.

Following this discussion, the Commission voted (7–0, with one abstention, two absences, and one vacancy) to approve PPD’s draft EAB policy.

Attachment A

Community Priorities for Energy Assisted Breaching Technology Policy

EAB involves the use of explosive and non-explosive materials to create an opening in a door, window, wall, or other physical barrier in order to gain entry. This is distinguished from other methods law enforcement might use to gain entry, such as mechanical breaching. This document details the community's priorities regarding authorized uses, limitations, and documentation procedures to ensure safety, accountability, and compliance with applicable laws and department protocols.

1. Safety and Operational Planning

- a. EAB shall be used only when reasonably necessary to achieve rapid entry to address an immediate safety risk and when reasonably available alternatives have been considered and determined to be ineffective, unsafe, or impracticable under the circumstances.
- b. EAB use shall be consistent with use of force principles, including necessity and proportionality, taking into account blast effects, fragmentation, and secondary impacts.
- c. Operational planning shall include:
 - i. identification of and incorporation into tactical planning of any known or reasonably anticipated occupants; and whether any of those occupants might be considered "vulnerable individuals" (persons who, due to age, physical or cognitive condition, or situational factors, may have a reduced ability to protect themselves from harm or respond safely during a tactical operation);
 - ii. assessment of fire hazards in the building or surrounding environs, hazardous materials, and structural risks; and
 - iii. development of a medical and fire response plan.
- d. EAB shall be used only when the risk of imminent harm and threat to life outweighs the risk of injury to occupants, officers, bystanders, and surrounding structures. Additional precautions and reasonable alternatives should be considered when the risk of harm from EAB may be higher, for example:
 - i. near crowds, public gatherings, or demonstrations;
 - ii. where children or other vulnerable individuals are known to be present;
 - iii. in sensitive environments (e.g., multiunit housing, locations with known occupants not connected to the incident).

2. Purpose and Use Limitations

- a. Each use of EAB shall have a clearly stated and documented purpose tied to a specific "high risk" operational objective.
- b. Use of EAB shall be limited to circumstances involving a "high risk" situation, namely:

- i. hostage rescue;
 - ii. barricaded or armed suspects presenting an immediate threat; or imminent threats to life or officer safety.
- c. EAB shall NOT be used in any incidents without a clear and immediate safety concern. For example:
 - i. for routine warrant service;
 - ii. for immigration enforcement actions; or
 - iii. for generalized entry convenience
- d. Policies shall clearly define what constitutes a “high risk” situation, such as the examples above, to ensure consistent and limited application.
- e. Policies shall define the conditions under which EAB may be used in mutual aid operations or at the request of outside agencies, including required approvals, role clarity, and documentation. Even in mutual aid, PPD should not use EAB absent a “high risk” situation.

3. Training

- a. EAB shall be used only by personnel who have completed specialized training and certification.
- b. The department should restrict EAB use to specific units or individuals who have additional training in “high risk” situations, i.e., Special Weapons and Tactics Teams.
- c. Training shall include:
 - i. breaching methods and charge construction;
 - ii. scenario-based decision making, including when EAB is not appropriate;
 - iii. risk assessment for occupied and surrounding environments; and
 - iv. coordination with fire and medical personnel.
- d. The Department shall maintain records of training, certification, and recertification and ensure ongoing proficiency through periodic training requirements.

4. Privacy and Civil Liberties

- a. EAB operations shall be conducted in a manner that minimizes unnecessary intrusion into private spaces beyond what is required to achieve a lawful objective.
- b. Planning shall account for:
 - i. proximity of adjacent residences or units; and
 - ii. potential impact on uninvolved individuals.
- c. EAB shall not be used in a manner that unnecessarily impacts individuals not connected to the operation.
- d. Where feasible, entry methods and points shall be selected to reduce impact on neighboring units and uninvolved occupants.

5. Authorization and Documentation

- a. EAB shall require explicit authorization from the SWAT commander, incident commander, or designee, who is trained in its use.
- b. Operational plans shall document the
 - i. authorizing supervisor;
 - ii. designated breacher;
 - iii. intended entry point; and
 - iv. tactical rationale, including assessment of a “high risk” situation.
- c. Each EAB deployment shall be documented in an after-action report.
- d. Documentation shall include:
 - i. the purpose and justification for EAB use;
 - ii. alternatives considered, assessment of vulnerable persons, and the basis for selecting EAB;
 - iii. the authorizing supervisor;
 - iv. a description of the deployment, including entry point and method; and
 - v. any injuries, fire incidents, or property damage.
- e. The Department shall maintain a centralized record of all EAB uses, including both training and operational deployments.
- f. The Department shall track and report each EAB deployment in a manner consistent with California law, including inclusion in military equipment reporting and governing body review.
- g. Access to EAB related records shall be limited to authorized personnel and retained in accordance with applicable record retention requirements.

6. Evaluation and Accountability

- a. The Department shall establish a formal review process for all EAB deployments to include:
 - i. compliance with policy use criteria;
 - ii. whether the use met necessity and proportionality standards; and
 - iii. adherence to planning and safety requirements.
- b. To the extent practicable, this review should be conducted by a supervisor who was not directly involved in the operation.
- c. The review process should be available for review by the Independent Police Auditor (IPA).
- d. The Department shall designate a responsible unit or supervisor to oversee:
 - i. policy compliance;
 - ii. training standards;
 - iii. documentation and audit functions;
 - iv. whether deployments remain consistent with defined high-risk thresholds; and

- v. whether any policy, training, or procedural modifications are necessary.
- e. The Department shall comply with all applicable California laws governing reporting and oversight of military equipment, including Assembly Bill 481 (AB 481).
- f. There will be a community Town Hall to comply with AB481; that forum will also inform policy and practices.
- g. The Department shall provide publicly available, periodic reporting to the CPOC and/or City Council summarizing:
 - i. the number and type of EAB deployments;
 - ii. general circumstances of use;
 - iii. compliance review findings; and
 - iv. any corrective actions taken.

7. Equity and Community Impact

- a. The Department shall collect and periodically review data regarding EAB use to assess potential disparities or patterns in deployment. This review should include geographic distribution of deployments and the types of incidents in which EAB is used.
- b. The Department should consider community impact, including property damage and impact on occupants and neighboring residents.