

THE PATROL STANDARD

THEME: SEPARATE. CORROBORATE. ARTICULATE.

DATE	ISSUE	READING TIME
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PURPOSE: Control the scene before you decide the story. This week's briefing focuses on disciplined scene control, early evidence collection, and the distinction between having probable cause to make a family-violence arrest and having lawful authority to enter a residence to make that arrest.

1. OFFICER SAFETY BULLETIN

Domestic Disturbances: Do Not Let Familiarity Create Complacency

Family-violence and domestic-disturbance calls are common patrol assignments, but familiarity with the call type can create a dangerous sense of routine. These scenes are emotionally charged, information is often incomplete, and officers may encounter multiple people whose loyalties, behavior, and level of cooperation can change quickly.

Before closing distance, slow the approach long enough to identify what you actually know and what remains unknown. Listen for yelling, movement, breaking objects, animals, children, or indications that additional people are inside. Avoid standing directly in a doorway or other predictable line of fire, and do not allow the first cooperative person you contact to consume all of your attention.

Today's Officer Safety Focus

- Use available cover and avoid stacking officers unnecessarily at the doorway.
- Identify and control hands before beginning a detailed interview.
- Separate involved parties early when it can be done safely.
- Ask dispatch about weapons, prior calls at the location, protective orders, and known threats when that information is available.
- Keep family members, friends, and bystanders from drifting between officers and involved parties.
- Reassess when a previously calm person becomes agitated, begins pacing, retreats toward another room, or repeatedly attempts to re-enter the residence.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARD: A familiar call type is never a substitute for a fresh threat assessment.

2. TACTICAL REMINDER

Separate First - Then Investigate

Separation is not only an investigative technique. It is also a scene-control tool. When involved parties remain together, officers may have difficulty determining who is influencing whom, whether a victim is modifying a statement because the suspect is present, or whether the argument is about to restart.

When practical and safe, establish physical separation before conducting detailed interviews. Give each officer a clear responsibility and communicate before moving people around the scene.

Before beginning detailed interviews:

- Place involved parties where they cannot easily hear or signal one another.
- Do not position both officers so deeply into interviews that no one is watching the larger scene.

- Avoid revealing one party's account to the other before obtaining an independent version.
- Document spontaneous statements before they are lost in the later narrative.
- Photograph visible injuries, damaged property, disarray, blood, torn clothing, and other relevant conditions when appropriate.
- Identify independent witnesses early and obtain their information before they leave.

REMEMBER: Control the people, preserve the scene, and gather independent accounts before allowing the investigation to collapse into competing conclusions.

3. NATIONAL & TEXAS LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATES

Official-Sources Briefing

Texas DPS - West Texas Violent-Crime Operation

On August 5, Texas DPS reported that a two-day Targeted Violent Crime Operation in Midland County resulted in 51 arrests. DPS Criminal Investigations and Highway Patrol personnel worked with the Midland County Sheriff's Office, Midland Police Department, Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Marshals Service, and federal immigration authorities. DPS reported seizures that included cocaine, firearms, ammunition, currency, and a stolen trailer. The practical patrol reminder is straightforward: coordinated enforcement depends on accurate information, effective communication, and officers documenting facts in a way that can be acted on across jurisdictions.

[Official source: Texas Department of Public Safety, August 5, 2026.](#)

FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin - Malleability of Deception

The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin published an August 4 article examining how repeated or rehearsed deception can become more fluent over time and how repeated retrieval can also alter memory. The article emphasizes interviewing early, avoiding leading questions, and carefully structuring interviews. For patrol officers, this reinforces an important investigative rule: demeanor alone is not proof of truthfulness or deception. Preserve independent accounts early, ask open-ended questions, and test statements against physical evidence, recordings, witness accounts, and known facts.

[Official source: FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, August 4, 2026.](#)

NHTSA - Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over

NHTSA's national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign runs August 13 through September 1. NHTSA reports that one person is killed about every 42 minutes in a drunk-driving crash and notes increased impaired-driving risk around the Labor Day period. Officers should expect impaired-driving enforcement and public-safety messaging to increase as the campaign begins. The operational standard remains the same: develop the case through driving facts, contact observations, standardized procedures, evidence preservation, and precise documentation - not conclusions unsupported by detail.

[Official source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.](#)

4. LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER

Professional Curiosity Without Cynicism

Experienced officers quickly learn that people do not always tell the truth. The danger is allowing that experience to become cynicism. Once an officer decides too early that a victim, witness, suspect, or complainant is lying, the investigation can quietly become an effort to prove that conclusion instead of an effort to determine what actually occurred.

Professional curiosity is different. It means listening carefully, identifying inconsistencies, asking better questions, and looking for independent evidence without becoming personally invested in one version of events.

Today's leadership challenge:

- Do not confuse calm behavior with innocence or emotion with truthfulness.

- Challenge inconsistencies professionally, not sarcastically.
- Allow another officer to point out facts that do not fit your initial theory.
- Be willing to change your conclusion when better evidence develops.
- Model this behavior for less-experienced officers; disciplined objectivity is learned by watching experienced officers practice it.

SERVANT-MOTIVATED LEADERSHIP: The experienced officer who teaches others how to think objectively contributes more to the shift than the officer who simply tells everyone what conclusion to reach.

5. ROLL CALL DISCUSSION

Family-Violence Call - Conflicting Accounts

You respond to a residence for a reported assault between spouses. The caller is outside when officers arrive and has fresh redness and swelling near one eye. She tells officers her husband struck her during an argument. A neighbor reports hearing yelling and a loud impact but did not see the assault.

The husband is now inside the residence with the door locked. Through the door, he tells officers that his wife attacked him first and that he will not come outside. The caller says she does not want him arrested and wants officers to leave. She also says there are firearms inside the house, but she does not know where they are.

Discuss

- What facts currently support or weaken probable cause for an offense involving family violence?
- Does the caller's request that no arrest be made determine whether probable cause exists?
- What additional evidence should be collected before officers finalize the probable-cause decision?
- If probable cause exists, does that alone authorize officers to force entry into the residence to arrest the husband?
- What facts would be relevant to determining whether consent or exigent circumstances justify entry?
- How should the report distinguish the basis for the arrest decision from the separate basis for any entry into the residence?

6. LEGAL WRITING & COURTROOM READINESS

Family-Violence Arrest Authority Is Not the Same as Authority to Enter a Home

Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 14.03(a)(4) authorizes a peace officer to make a warrantless arrest of a person the officer has probable cause to believe committed an offense involving family violence. This authority is important because the offense does not have to occur in the officer's presence before a warrantless arrest may be legally available.

Probable cause, however, must be supported by specific and articulable facts. Texas appellate courts describe the inquiry as whether the facts and circumstances known to the officer, together with reasonably trustworthy information, would warrant a reasonably prudent person in believing the suspect committed or was committing an offense. The totality of the circumstances matters.

A separate legal issue arises when the suspect is inside a residence. **Article 14.05** provides that an officer making a warrantless arrest may not enter a residence to make that arrest unless a resident consents or exigent circumstances require entry. In **Botello v. State**, a 2020 Texas appellate decision arising from a family-violence investigation, the court emphasized this distinction: probable cause supported the family-violence arrest, but lawful entry into the residence still required an additional legal basis.

This distinction should be visible in the police report. Do not combine the arrest justification and the entry justification into one conclusory paragraph.

Write Two Legal Foundations

PROBABLE CAUSE FOR THE ARREST	SEPARATE AUTHORITY TO ENTER
• The relationship between the involved parties and why it meets the applicable family-violence definition. • The specific allegation: who did what, how, when, and where. • Observed injuries and the officer's description of them without exaggeration. • Spontaneous statements, 911 information, witness accounts, damaged property, photographs, video, and other corroboration. • Relevant inconsistencies and how they were investigated. • The facts that caused the officer to believe a particular person committed the offense.	• Who gave consent, if consent was relied upon, and facts supporting that person's authority to consent. • Or the specific exigent circumstances that required immediate entry rather than obtaining a warrant. • Facts demonstrating an immediate safety threat, risk to a victim or officer, hot or continuous pursuit, need to render emergency aid, or another legally recognized exigency when applicable. • What officers knew before entry - not facts learned only after entering.

Weak articulation:

"I determined the husband assaulted his wife and entered the residence to arrest him."

Stronger articulation:

"I observed fresh redness and swelling beneath VICTIM 1's left eye. VICTIM 1 stated SUSPECT 1 struck her once in the face with a closed fist during an argument inside their shared residence. A neighbor independently reported hearing the couple yelling followed by a loud impact. Based on VICTIM 1's statement, the visible injury, the parties' marital relationship, and the corroborating witness information, I believed there was probable cause that SUSPECT 1 committed an offense involving family violence. SUSPECT 1 then locked himself inside the residence and refused repeated requests to exit. [If entry occurred, the report should next state the separate facts establishing consent or exigent circumstances rather than assuming probable cause alone authorized entry.]"

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: When reviewing a family-violence report, ask two different questions: (1) What facts establish probable cause for the arrest? and, if officers crossed the threshold of a residence without a warrant, (2) What facts independently establish lawful authority for the entry? If the report answers only the first question, the legal articulation is incomplete.

Courtroom Readiness

Expect the defense to separate these issues during a suppression hearing. An officer should be able to testify chronologically about what was known before the arrest decision, what was known before entry, and why each legal decision was made. Avoid improving the report from the witness stand. The strongest testimony is usually the testimony that accurately matches a complete report written close in time to the event.

7. THREE TAKEAWAYS

End-of-Brief Reinforcement

- 1. Separate before deciding.** Separate involved parties and gather independent accounts before one story contaminates the entire investigation.
- 2. Build probable cause from facts.** Use specific facts and corroboration - not demeanor, assumptions, or a victim's willingness or unwillingness to pursue the case.
- 3. Separate arrest authority from entry authority.** In a residence, probable cause to arrest and lawful authority to enter are separate questions. Articulate both when both are involved.

"Good police work is not simply reaching the right conclusion. It is being able to show, step by step, how the facts lawfully brought you there."