



LAW ENFORCEMENT RISK MANAGEMENT **BULLETIN**

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“Hiders” Exposed

No matter how dangerous the job, employees can easily become complacent when it comes to following safety protocol during their daily work activities. To a law enforcement officer, searches can become “routine”, especially when the search is perceived to be a “false alarm”, or “just another open door”. However, with complacency comes an increased opportunity for the element of surprise to interject danger into an otherwise monotonous part of an officer’s job. In a recent article published on PoliceOne.com, 33-year law enforcement veteran and SWAT commander Lt. Dan Marcou (ret.) details the five different kinds of “hiders”, or suspects who attempt to conceal their location during a search, and the dangers associated with each type.

1. The “No Hider”- This is the suspect who is caught totally unaware and unprepared by officers, usually in the case of no-knock entries by a law enforcement team. Lt. Marcou says officers will encounter two types of responses by No Hiders: immediate compliance due to being completely surprised, or the potentially dangerous “fight-or-flight” response. A prepared, focused officer will be ready for either of the two responses.
2. The “Shallow Hider”- These are the suspects who are surprised by officers’ arrival, but who still have time to find a quick hiding place. Marcou warns these suspects are particularly dangerous due to the fact that the hiding places Shallow Hiders choose are usually places where they can see the officers, but officers cannot immediately see the suspects. Lt. Marcou says closets, behind shower curtains, under desks, and in piles of dirty laundry are the favorite spots of Shallow Hiders, as they can easily execute a surprise attack on officers from these locations.
3. The “Deep Hider”- Some suspects will have a prepared hiding spot in anticipation of a police search. Deep Hiders will use false walls, crawl spaces, or floor hatches to evade officers. Marcou advises search teams to remember the space above their heads—attic crawl spaces are often overlooked, causing officers to miss the suspect; worse yet, officers who fail to search attic crawl spaces are often ambushed by Deep Hiders. “Look up or look out!” he warns. Other Deep Hiders will squeeze themselves into very small spaces, often undetected by officers who think, “There’s no way anyone could fit in there.” While these suspects can hardly move, much less attack, Lt. Marcou cautions officers to stay attentive: when Deep Hiders do attack, they are sudden and explosive.



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4. The 'Mobile Hider'- Through the use of an escape hatch or getaway vehicle, the Mobile Hider will flee as soon as they detect a police presence. In order to thwart this suspect, teams should secure the perimeter of every search site. Marcou suggests perimeters should include ample room for police to react to a fleeing suspect and defend against any weapons or ambush attempts. A Mobile Hider will sometimes have intent not to escape, but to out-flank and attack police. This type of hider is often trained in military tactics and should be considered extremely dangerous.
5. The "Undetected Hider"- Sometimes a hider will escape the primary search area but remain on the property, finding shelter in a detached garage, dumpster, or parked vehicle. Be sure your search warrant includes all structures and vehicles on the property and attempt to get keyed access to larger buildings. Often, suspects are missed when officers encounter a locked door and mistakenly assume it was also locked when the suspect found it. Still, some suspects will have escaped; left the areas before officers arrived; or are simply very well-hidden. In this case, Marcou suggests a team stand by quietly near the area or inside the target area—the suspect will likely return, and can quickly be taken into custody.

Lt. Marcou reminds officers remaining focused is imperative to conducting a safe, thorough search. He insists officers never put themselves in the position to be taken by surprise. "You must believe the suspect is around every dark corner, under every pile of dirty laundry until you discover they are not. This is not paranoia," he assures. "It is preparedness."

For questions regarding this or other law enforcement issues, contact AMRRP's Eric Duthie or Michael Branham at (602) 996-8810.