

Hostage Negotiation Throw Phone

Seattle Police Department (SPD)

What is the technology?

The hostage negotiation throw phone is a phone in a hardened case that is part of a communications system for use in police hostage/crisis negotiations with subjects. The phone case includes microphones and speakers to enable two-way communication in an overt or covert manner. It also includes hidden cameras to support threat and tactical assessments.



Why do we use the technology?

At times there are no other means of phone communication with the subject in a hostage or barricaded person situation and this system allows for safe and reliable communication from a distance. The system allows the team monitoring and recording of conversations to facilitate the development of negotiation strategies and ensure the safety-related information is relayed. Throw phone systems of this nature are standardized equipment for Hostage/Crisis Negotiation Teams according to the National Council of Negotiation Associations, FBI Crisis Negotiation Unit, National Tactical Officers' Association, and other industry standards.

The open comment period for this technology is currently underway. You can provide comments to [Seattle.gov/SurveillanceComment](https://seattle.gov/surveillancecomment).

All comments will be included in the Surveillance Impact Report on this technology and submitted to Council.

If you would like to provide feedback outside of the open comment period, please submit them directly to City Council.

Collection

Live-feed video is monitored by HNT or SWAT personnel either from the HNT truck, via a system networked laptop, or through a remote view application in range of the wifi system. Specified employees have controlled access either by password or by permission having to be granted from the main laptop running the software. Video recorded on the hard drive system is only accessible by HNT members through the DVR system.

Use

Deployment of the throw phone system on an incident involves the authorization of the HNT supervisor, incident commander, and the SWAT commander if present. Delivery of the throw phone is typically pre-negotiated with the subject via hailing or other means. For delivery of the throw phone to the subject it is typically brought to the outside of a door or balcony by SWAT team members and the subject is asked to bring it inside for use. For safety purposes occasionally the phone is tossed through an open window or door.

Protections

Deployment into a constitutionally protected area requires an authorized entry into the area via warrant or warrant exception to include consent, exigent circumstances, or community caretaking/emergency. RCW 9.73.030 expressly provides an exception to the "all parties" consent rule for the monitoring, intercepting, and recording of calls involving communications with a hostage holder or barricaded person.



City of Seattle