



DE-ESCALATE

How You Can Help Defuse Potentially Violent Situations

DE-ESCALATION SERIES FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OWNERS AND OPERATORS



RECOGNIZE



ASSESS



DE-ESCALATE



REPORT

DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation can be an effective method to prevent potential violence. Individuals are encouraged to use purposeful actions, verbal communication, and body language to calm a potentially dangerous situation.



“De-escalation’ is the use of communication or other techniques during an encounter to stabilize, slow, or reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation without using physical force or with a reduction in force.”¹

Your safety and the safety of others is the highest priority. Maintain a safe distance and avoid being alone with an individual who is combative or potentially violent. If there is a risk of imminent violence, remove yourself from the situation and seek safety.

Know your limits. Keep in mind some individuals may be more adept at applying these techniques. Know your own vulnerabilities and tendencies and recognize that sometimes the best intervention is knowing when to seek additional help.

Obtain help. If you feel the individual or situation is escalating and violence may occur, call for help from your security staff or local law enforcement and move yourself to a safe location.

PURPOSEFUL ACTIONS

After choosing to intervene in an attempt to de-escalate a potentially volatile situation, effective de-escalation can hinge upon a number of critical purposeful actions.

REMAIN CALM



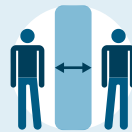
A purposeful demonstration of calmness and composure can enable de-escalation.

CHANGE THE SETTING



If possible, remove people from the area. This could involve parties to the conflict and onlookers.

RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE



Maintain a safe distance and avoid touching the other person.

LISTEN



Give your full attention, nod, ask questions, and avoid changing the subject or interrupting.

EMPATHIZE



Present genuine concern and a willingness to understand without judging

TIPS



Be aware of your non-verbal communications. Ensure your tone, facial expressions, body language, and gestures relay calm and empathy.

Remain respectful and courteous. Address the individual with civility and use phrases such as “please” and “thank you.”

This document describes activities and behaviors that may be concerning or indicative of impending violence. Some of these activities while concerning, may be constitutionally protected and should be reported only when there are sufficient facts to support a rational conclusion that the behavior represents a potential threat of violence. Do not report based solely on protected activities, or on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or a combination of only such factors. In addition, be aware that critical that critical infrastructure owners and their operations may also be targeted based on these factors.

1 Department of Homeland Security Policy Statement O44-05, [dhs.gov/Law Enforcement](https://www.dhs.gov/Law-Enforcement) | Homeland Security





VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Tone + Volume + Rate of Speech + Inflection of Voice = Verbal De-escalation

- **Tone:** Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy.
- **Volume:** Monitor your volume and avoid raising your voice.
- **Rate of Speech:** Slower can be more soothing.
- **Inflection:** Be aware of emphasizing words or syllables as that can negatively affect the situation.

Instead of:	Calm down.	I can't help you.	I know how you feel.	Come with me.
Say...	I can see that you are upset...	I want to help, what can I do?	I understand that you feel...	May I speak with you?

BODY LANGUAGE

Instead of:	Standing rigidly directly in front of the person	Pointing your finger	Excessive gesturing or pacing	Faking a smile
Try...				
	Keeping a relaxed and alert stance off to the side of the person	Keeping your hands down, open, and visible at all times	Using slow, deliberate movements	Maintaining a neutral and attentive facial expression

HELPFUL LINKS

CISA De-escalation Products and Resources: cisa.gov/de-escalation

CISA Employee Vigilance Through the Power of Hello: cisa.gov/power-hello

CISA Insider Threat Mitigation Resources: cisa.gov/insider-threat-mitigation

These de-escalation tactics are options for consideration. This is not intended to mandate policy or direct any action.