



CALMING THE CROWD

The First Amendment in the United States Constitution protects Americans' right to peaceably assemble.

But for times when peace transitions to violence, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office deploys its Crowd Management Team (CMT).

The 66-member team is designed to respond to incidents involving coordinated team movements or large crowds that have the potential to disrupt traffic flow, thoroughfares, or public areas.

"Law enforcement is trained to handle physical assaults and to react to them," said CMT **Captain Ryan Buckley**. "But during these events, members' movements and actions need to be monitored and directed to avoid unnecessary violence."



The recently formed CMT was established in its current format in response to the recent nationwide scrutiny of law enforcement and the resulting riots in places like Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland.

"Many times, protestors will do everything they can to antagonize police into doing something, then exploiting that response to further their cause," **Captain Buckley** said. "To be successful, it is vital that all members deployed to such events be properly trained to respond appropriately to agitators who wish to entice law enforcement into physically responding to their actions."

The CMT has undergone training at the PCSO shooting range and is scheduled to attend a Department of Homeland Security crowd management certification course, which several members attended in 2012 in preparation for the Republican National Convention in St. Petersburg.

Although it can be exciting to possess a front row seat to large-scale events, the inherent dangers that exist in any law enforcement position prevail.

"Just being in uniform makes you a symbol of law and government, making you a target for some people's wrath or cause," **Captain Buckley** said. "However, when the training is employed in the field and teams are properly managed, the level of danger should be less – our goal is to pacify agitators, control the event, or deter violence."