

**YOU DON'T ALWAYS NEED
A WARRANT:
SUPREME COURT
CLARIFIES WHEN POLICE
CAN ENTER A HOME TO
SAVE A LIFE**

CASE v. MONTANA
607 U.S. ___ (2026), No. 24-624

The United States Supreme Court recently addressed when law enforcement may enter a home without a warrant to render emergency aid.

In **Case v. Montana**, officers responded to a report that a man had threatened suicide and may have already shot himself. When officers arrived, they knocked on the doors and called out through an open window but got no response. Looking inside, they saw an empty handgun holster and what appeared to be a suicide note. Concerned that the occupant may be seriously injured, the officers decided to enter the home to render emergency aid.

As one officer approached a bedroom closet, the defendant, who had been hiding inside, suddenly pulled open the closet curtain while holding an object that looked like a gun. The officer shot and injured the defendant. Paramedics transported him to the hospital, and officers later found a handgun near where the defendant had been standing.

The defendant moved to suppress the evidence, arguing that the warrantless home entry violated the Fourth Amendment.

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to decide what legal standard applies when officers enter a home without a warrant to render emergency aid.

The defendant argued that officers should be required to have probable cause or reasonable suspicion before entering. The Court rejected that argument, finding that those standards are tied to criminal investigations and do not fit situations where officers are acting to protect life rather than investigate a crime.

Instead, the Court concluded the officers acted lawfully under the Fourth Amendment. The appropriate standard is whether officers have “an objectively reasonable basis for believing that an occupant faces serious danger.” The report of a possible suicide attempt, the lack of response, the visible holster and apparent suicide note, gave officers a reasonable basis to believe someone inside was in immediate danger and needed help.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Officers may enter a home without a warrant under the emergency aid exception when they have an **objectively reasonable basis to believe that someone inside faces serious danger or needs immediate assistance**. The focus is not on investigating a crime, but on protecting life.

Stay Safe!