

DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 04-03

OFFICE of the CHIEF OF POLICE
REPLACES: General Order 01-04
SOP 501.13.00

DATE: February 11, 2004

BODY ARMOR

I. PURPOSE.

To establish guidelines for the use of body armor by sworn personnel.

II. DEFINITIONS.

Body Armor - A vest or jacket whose material (such as Kevlar or nylon cloth) affords ballistic protection, and whose construction may or may not accommodate metal or ceramic inserts.

III GENERAL.

Each sworn member of the department shall be issued a set of body armor. The brand and/or style of the armor may vary slightly, but each will provide ballistic protection to the vital organs contained in the torso area of each bearer.

All commissioned officers shall wear department-issued body armor while on duty in uniform, or while working secondary employment in uniform, except as exempted in Paragraph A below.

Commissioned officers assigned to plainclothes duty will routinely be excused from wearing body armor except when making a non-spontaneous arrest or actively seeking a criminal suspect in the field. In such situations, detectives and/or other plain clothes personnel shall be protected by body armor. In addition to the preceding guidelines, the exemptions for vest usage listed in Paragraph A apply equally to plainclothes officers.

However, irrespective if the required wear of body armor falls under one of the exemptions, officers shall maintain the vest in a readily accessible location (locker, vehicle, office, etc.) for use in the event a high-risk situation should arise.

Body armor will be concealed from open view whenever possible. Patrol personnel shall wear the protective vest under their uniform shirts, while investigative personnel will, whenever practical, wear a protective vest under a dress shirt or sweater.

A. Exceptions to Body Armor Usage

- 1). If the Commander of the Field Operations Bureau, one of his subordinate commanders, or a detail/special events commander, determines that weather conditions create a hazard to the health of officers wearing body armor, the requirement for mandatory use can be rescinded until conditions moderate.
- 2). When an employee is regularly assigned to an administrative position, to include all command rank officers.
- 3). When an employee is assigned to attend a funeral or appear in uniform for a public appearance, court session, or other official ceremony. Included herein shall also be those special assignments as determined by the officer's supervisor or commander.
- 4). When an officer possesses a waiver from a licensed physician granting the officer a temporary medical exemption to the body armor requirement.
- 5). When an officer provides a medical waiver from a licensed physician to his/her bureau commander on an annual basis, stipulating that the officer has a medical condition that precludes the regular, mandatory use of body armor.

IV. HIGH-RISK VEST USAGE.

In those instances where a high-threat environment or situation exists, the supervisor or commander responsible to execute and/or manage tactical operations shall require all involved sworn personnel to be clad in body armor in order to reduce the risk of potential injury.

Situations where the use of body armor is mandated shall include, but not be limited to, the following types of incidents:

1. Tactical raids.
2. Execution of search warrants.
3. Hostage/barricaded subject incidents.
4. Protest demonstrations.
5. VIP protection details.
6. Active shooting incidents.
7. Other occurrences deemed suitable by a supervisor or commander.

In a high-risk situation where the threat to officer safety is of paramount concern, if a sworn employee has presented a medical waiver precluding his/her use of body armor, the individual shall be assigned to a support role (traffic control/perimeter posts, etc.). This posting will be as far removed from the point of danger as possible. If an accommodation is impractical, the officer will be temporarily placed on "Light Duty" and assigned to an administrative position.

V. VEST MAINTENANCE.

Body armor should be cleaned in the following manner:

1. Wipe interior panels with clean damp cloth only.
2. When not in use, unfold vest to a flat position and store in a dry location.
3. Periodically wash cloth carrier and either air dry or machine dry utilizing a cool setting.
4. A visual inspection of the vest should be conducted on a periodic basis and any damage or excessive signs of wear should be brought to the attention of the officer's immediate supervisor.

Body armor will generally be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

BY ORDER OF:

THOMAS J. BYRNE
Chief of Police

TJB:dld
CALEA Reference: 41.3.5/41.3.6

