

**Effective Date**  
**August 1, 2012**

Amends/Supersedes  
December 22, 2008

## USE OF FORCE

**POLICY:**

The South Boston Police Department recognizes and respects the value and special integrity of each human life. In vesting police officers with the lawful authority to use force to protect the public welfare, a careful balancing of all human interests is required. Therefore, it is the policy of this Department that officers shall use only that force which is reasonable to effectively bring an incident under control, while protecting the lives of the officers and/or others.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules and regulations governing the use of force by officers of the South Boston Police Department.

**DEFINITIONS:**

A. GENDER:

The word “he” or any other word importing the masculine gender, shall extend and be applied to females as well as males.

### B. USE OF FORCE WHEEL:

An instructional and wherein an officer is hypothetically placed in the center or "hub" of a "force wheel" and reacts to potential use of force issues using a reasonable amount of force to gain control over a subject. When the subject's actions indicate a behavioral escalation or de-escalation, the officer's new use of force option may either travel around the perimeter of the wheel, straight across the wheel or in any direction to meet the tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving simulations that the officer may encounter.

Examples of the type of force wheel options that are available to officers are: chemical agents; defensive tactics; firearms; impact weapons; mere presence of the officer; police canine; taser; and verbal communications.

C. PROBABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE OR REASONABLE BELIEF:

When facts or circumstances the officer knows, or should know, are such as to cause an ordinary and prudent officer to act or think in a similar way under similar circumstances.

#### D. SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY:

A physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement, or impairment of the function of any bodily organ or limb.

E. DEADLY FORCE INCLUDES:

Any force applied in any manner by any means that could reasonably be expected to cause death or serious physical injury

F. NON-DEADLY FORCE:

Force employed which is neither likely nor intended to cause death or serious physical injury. Included within this definition is the use of a department issued and authorized baton, pepper spray (commonly referred to as OC), and less than lethal uses of force (commonly referred to as "Bean Bag Rounds").

IV. PROCEDURE GENERAL

A. General

1. Officers shall only use that force which is reasonable to protect life and affect lawful objectives.
2. For the purpose of the Use of Force directives, 'use of force' shall encompass both deadly and non-deadly force and will be implemented by the use of the "force wheel".
3. The Department's Use of Force Wheel shall serve as a basis for the use of an officer's discretion in responding to perceived threats of aggression and is listed in the following ascending order:
  - a. Mere Presence
  - b. Verbal Command
  - c. Chemical Spray
  - d. Defensive Tactics /Open hand
  - e. Impact Weapons/Canine/Less lethal
  - f. Deadly Physical Force
4. The "force wheel" is based upon the appropriate selection of force options available in response to the required level of compliance from an individual that is to be restrained or controlled. The minimum force option that will safely accomplish lawful objectives should be chosen.
5. Officers must be familiar with all alternative options on the "force wheel" and should be prepared to respond to the level of the threat present at the specific moment in time, e.g. compliance, escalation, de-escalation.
6. Use of force options will not be used under the following conditions:
  - a. As a threat to make a person comply with an officer's verbal order when no physical violence is imminent.
  - b. To illicit information from a person.
  - c. As a retaliation for verbal or physical abuse.

## **V. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION OF NON-DEADLY FORCE:**

The department trains officers in the use-of-force continuum, emphasizing the recognition of and response to increasing levels of threat. Most instances in which force is applied are non-deadly. Officers shall assess the incident to determine which technique will best defuse the situation and bring it under control. The following discussion reinforces key principles from training.

### **A. VERBAL CONTROL:**

Verbal control refers to the manner in which the officer speaks to a person, which of itself can effectively manage a situation. Verbal control includes advice, persuasion, admonitions, or orders. The volume and tone of the officer's speech may also contribute to control without having to resort to another method of force. The department urges the use of verbal commands without the use of profanity or disrespectful or argumentative behavior.

### **B. CHEMICAL WEAPONS:**

The use of chemical agents is restricted to situations where higher levels of force are necessary and lesser levels are inappropriate or ineffective. The only chemical weapon authorized for patrol personnel is Oleoresin Capsicum (OC), commonly referred to as pepper spray. Chemical agents shall be used only to the extent to overcome the resistance of the subject, and within training standards. Officers may only carry OC issued to them by the Department. The purchasing and use of OC or any chemical agent by an officer is prohibited. Specialized chemical agents, such as tear gas and/or ferret rounds, shall be used only by personnel trained in their application, and then only under direct orders of the on-scene supervisor upon consultation with the Chief of Police, Captain, or Lieutenant, if available.

1. Chemical sprays shall not be used to threaten, to elicit information, or persuade people to comply with orders, nor will they be used on people who are handcuffed, secured, and properly in custody that are non-combative and complying with orders. They shall not be used on subjects who are passively resisting.
2. Keep the application to the absolute minimum required to effectively control the subject.
3. If possible and safety permitting, the officer using pepper spray should clearly announce his intention to use it verbally with loud and clear statements such as "Pepper" or "OC."
4. If the use of tear gas is authorized by the on-scene supervisor, observe the following:
  - a. These chemicals are used primarily in dealing with unruly crowds and armed barricaded subjects.
  - b. Gas grenades are used to disperse unruly crowds and induce the surrender of barricaded subjects when negotiations have failed.
  - c. Tear gas gun is used to fire projectiles into the area of an armed barricaded subject when the use of hand-tossed grenades would be unsafe or impractical.

### **C. DEFENSIVE TACTICS / OPEN HAND:**

At times, uncooperative people who refuse to be taken into custody may only respond to a combination of strength, leverage, hand holds, control holds, or come-alongs with sufficient force to make the lawful arrest without aggravating tension or a suspect's combativeness. The object of this level of force is to gain control and enforce the suspect's compliance while minimizing the risk of injury to officers, bystanders, or the person being placed in custody.

Where lesser levels of force appear ineffective, officers may employ hands, fist, feet, knees, and so on in striking an adversary, according to methods sanctioned through training.

1. No officer shall use any defensive tactic technique until he or she has been properly trained. Training in the use of defensive tactics shall be provided in the basic law enforcement training academy.
2. No officer shall use any defensive tactic or physical holds that they have not been trained in at the basic law enforcement academy; unless the officer is in a combat life/death situation where deadly force is authorized.
3. Officers may be required to attend remedial defensive tactics training whenever supervisory staff determines a need for retraining.

D. IMPACT WEAPONS:

The department authorizes the carrying and use of the ASP baton as the only striking weapon for officers. All other forms of striking or punching weapons are prohibited for carrying or use, including but not limited to saps, slapjacks, nunchuks and similar sticks, and brass knuckles. Officers must be trained in the use of the ASP baton. The weapon may be used in quelling confrontations involving physical violence where higher levels of force are unnecessary or inappropriate, and lesser levels are inappropriate or ineffective.

No officer shall carry an ASP baton unless they have been properly trained in its use.

Batons are authorized for use as a means to:

1. Maintain physical control or restraint of a subject.
2. Defend the officer or another person.
3. Officers should avoid striking any person with a baton in or about the head, unless use of deadly force is being used against the officer or multiple persons attack the officer.

Uniformed officers shall be required to have the baton accessible when answering complaints and/or performing enforcement activities to include any approved off-duty law enforcement related employment.

E. LESS THAN LETHAL/ "BEAN BAG" ROUNDS:

1. The department also issues 12 gauge shotguns with stocks and forearms painted orange, designating them as "Less Lethal" shotguns. These shotguns will be issued with shotgun shells loaded with devices commonly known as "Bean Bags". These rounds may be employed in the same situations as hand held batons and the same guidelines shall apply.
2. The Deputy Chief shall oversee the training regarding these rounds and shall issue the properly marked shotguns and "Bean Bag" rounds.
3. The officer issued the shotgun shall load it as necessary and unload it when the incident is completed.
4. The officers issued these shotguns shall carry no other shotgun shells in these weapons other than the "Bean Bag" rounds and the assigned officer shall maintain control of these shotguns at all times.

F. OTHER / "TASER (ELECTRONIC IMMOBILIZATION DEVICE)":

1. The Air Taser is the only electronic immobilization device that is approved for use in the Department

and will be available to personnel who have been specially trained in its use. The Air Taser may be used to:

- a. Temporarily immobilize a subject.
- b. In defense of an officer or another.
2. The use of the Air Taser is no longer justified once the subject has been restrained or is under control.
3. An officer may remove the probes from the taser from a suspect in accordance with training. Should further medical attention be needed first responders / rescue shall be contacted and an officer may take the suspect to the emergency room at the Halifax Regional Hospital before transporting to the Magistrate's Office.
4. Accessibility / Training Authorization:
  - a. The Department Air Tasers are assigned by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
  - b. Department training in the use of the Air Taser will include both lecture and videotape presentation. A supervisor who has been previously certified to train the use of the specific electronic immobilization device that is used by the Department will conduct the training. This training may not be mandatory for officers who have received this training from another agency if granted a waiver by the Chief of Police.
  - c. The Air Taser will not be operated by anyone who is not specifically trained in its use.

## **VI. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION OF DEADLY FORCE:**

### **A. FIREARMS - GENERAL:**

Firearms may be used:

1. In defense of the officer or others from what is reasonably believed to be an imminent threat of death or serious bodily harm; or
2. To prevent the escape of a fleeing felon whom the officer has probable cause to believe will pose a significant threat to human life should escape occur. The United States Supreme Court, with its decision in TENNESSEE v. GARNER, U.S. 1 (1985) has set forth the guidelines in the use of deadly force against fleeing felons.
3. To kill seriously injured or dangerous animals when no other disposition is reasonably practical. A supervisor's approval should be sought when possible.
4. In routine firearm training or practice at an approved range.

### **NOTE:**

Police officers operate within a legal framework which defines the amount of force which may be used. If excessive force (more than is necessary) is used in making an arrest, the officer is liable to a civil suit and to criminal prosecution as well. However, the fears of being accused of undue force must not influence an officer to the extent that he/she jeopardizes his/her personal safety. The determining factors must be the circumstances surrounding the arrest, the evaluation of the situation and the officer's judgment.

The officer must consider the following factors in combination when assessing the need to use force.

- \* Is the suspect submitting peacefully or is there resistance?
- \* Is the suspect armed?
- \* What is the nature of the crime committed?
- \* What is the suspect's previous arrest record and reputation for violence?
- \* How many subjects are involved and how much police assistance is available at the scene?

C. LIMITATIONS ON FORCE:

The following acts associated with the use of force are strictly prohibited:

1. Firing a warning shot.
2. Firing at or from a moving vehicle, except where the officer reasonably believes that:
  - a. an occupant of the other vehicle is using, or threatening to use, deadly force by a means other than the vehicle; or
  - b. a vehicle is operated in a manner deliberately intended to strike an officer or a citizen, and all other reasonable means of defense have been exhausted (or are not present), which includes moving out of the path of the vehicle, and the safety of innocent persons would not be unduly jeopardized by the officer's action.
3. Firing into a building or through doors when the person fired at is not clearly visible unless officers are being fired upon from such building or through such door.
4. Firing at a suspect when lesser force could be used and the officer believes that the suspect can be apprehended reasonably soon thereafter without the use of deadly force, or when there is any substantial danger to innocent bystanders. (When in doubt, don't shoot.)
5. Application of a choke hold or carotid control holds, except when the officer reasonably believes such holds are the only means of protecting him/herself or another person from an imminent threat of serious physical injury or death.
6. Use of flashlights as batons. An officer may use a flashlight or other object designed for a use other than as a weapon ONLY to defend himself/ herself or another from imminent serious physical injury or death and then ONLY if departmentally sanctioned methods are not available or are impractical.
7. Carrying or use of saps, blackjacks, slapiacks.
8. Use of deadly force against unarmed, non-dangerous fleeing felons, fleeing misdemeanant(s), or traffic offenders.
9. Any use of force not reasonably necessary in the light of the circumstances confronting the officer.

D. REPORTING USE OF FORCE

1. Officers shall document any application of force, except for those arising in training or department demonstration, utilizing the "USE OF FORCE REPORT (Form 112.ADM (01))".

2. If officers have employed chemical weapons or any higher degree of force, they shall:
  - a. Immediately notify the sergeant or immediate supervisor (if the sergeant is unavailable) of any use of physical force.
  - b. Submit the "Use of Force Report Form" and/or, in cases involving the discharge of a firearm, the "DISCHARGE FIREARM REPORT (Form 112.ADM (02))", to the Chief of Police or his/her designee, before the end of the officer's tour of duty.
3. Depending on the seriousness of any injury resulting from the application of force, whether to a citizen or officer, the Chief of Police shall notify the town manager and, in case of death, the Commonwealth's Attorney and the medical examiner.

#### **E. DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE TO USE OF FORCE**

##### **1. Assignment:**

Pending administrative review, any officer who has taken the life of another person or who has caused serious physical injury to another person will be removed from line-duty assignment until the situation is resolved. This action protects both the officer's and the community's interests.

##### **2. Review:**

- a. All reported uses of force will be reviewed by the Chief of Police to determine whether:
  - (1) departmental orders were violated;
  - (2) relevant departmental policy was clearly understandable and effective to cover the situation; and
  - (3) departmental training was adequate;
- b. The Chief of Police may convene a board of inquiry to examine an incident in which force was applied. The board of inquiry will also ascertain training and policy needs.

##### **3. Internal Investigations:**

Internal investigations of serious applications of force (usually of compliance techniques and more severe methods) shall be of two types conducted simultaneously;

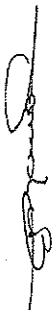
- a. an administrative investigation to determine whether department standards were followed;
- b. a criminal investigation to detect lawbreaking.  
(The criminal investigation shall be discontinued whenever the department is satisfied that no misconduct occurred.)

##### **4. Psychological Services:**

Psychological follow-up of post-shooting trauma may be directed by the Chief of Police whenever deemed appropriate. During an internal investigation, the department will do all within its power to avoid placement of a stigma on the officer who shoots in performance of duty. Following a shooting resulting in a death, the officer shall not return to duty until a psychological evaluation has been conducted, and the officer has received counseling.

AUTHORIZATION:

J. W. BINNER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. W. Binner", written over a horizontal line.

CHIEF OF POLICE