

Use of Force

300.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines on the reasonable use of force. While there is no way to specify the exact amount or type of reasonable force to be applied in any situation, every member of this department is expected to use these guidelines to make such decisions in a professional, impartial and reasonable manner.

300.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Deadly force - Force reasonably anticipated and intended to create a substantial likelihood of causing death or very serious injury.

Force - The application of physical techniques or tactics, chemical agents or weapons to another person. It is not a use of force when a person allows him/herself to be searched, escorted, handcuffed or restrained.

300.2 POLICY

The use of force by law enforcement personnel is a matter of critical concern, both to the public and to the law enforcement community. Officers are involved on a daily basis in numerous and varied interactions and, when warranted, may use reasonable force in carrying out their duties.

Officers must have an understanding of, and true appreciation for, their authority and limitations. This is especially true with respect to overcoming resistance while engaged in the performance of law enforcement duties.

The New York State University Police at Delhi recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice to anyone. Vesting officers with the authority to use reasonable force and to protect the public welfare requires monitoring, evaluation and a careful balancing of all interests.

300.2.1 DUTY TO INTERCEDE

Any officer present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force. An officer who observes another employee use force that exceeds the degree of force permitted by law should promptly report these observations to a supervisor.

300.3 USE OF FORCE

Officers shall use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and circumstances perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

The reasonableness of force will be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Any evaluation of reasonableness must allow for the fact that

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officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary in a particular situation, with limited information and in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving.

Given that no policy can realistically predict every possible situation an officer might encounter, officers are entrusted to use well-reasoned discretion in determining the appropriate use of force in each incident.

It is also recognized that circumstances may arise in which officers reasonably believe that it would be impractical or ineffective to use any of the tools, weapons or methods provided by this department. Officers may find it more effective or reasonable to improvise their response to rapidly unfolding conditions that they are confronting. In such circumstances, the use of any improvised device or method must nonetheless be reasonable and utilized only to the degree that reasonably appears necessary to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

While the ultimate objective of every law enforcement encounter is to avoid or minimize injury, nothing in this policy requires an officer to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable force.

300.3.1 USE OF FORCE TO EFFECT AN ARREST

A police officer or a peace officer may use reasonable physical force to effect an arrest or prevent escape (Penal Law § 35.30).

300.3.2 FACTORS USED TO DETERMINE THE REASONABLENESS OF FORCE

When determining whether to apply force and evaluating whether an officer has used reasonable force, a number of factors should be taken into consideration, as time and circumstances permit. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Immediacy and severity of the threat to officers or others.
- (b) The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time.
- (c) Officer/subject factors (i.e., age, size, relative strength, skill level, injuries sustained, level of exhaustion or fatigue, the number of officers available vs. subjects).
- (d) The effects of drugs or alcohol.
- (e) Individual's mental state or capacity.
- (f) Proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices.
- (g) The degree to which the individual has been effectively restrained and his/her ability to resist despite being restrained.
- (h) The availability of other options and their possible effectiveness.
- (i) Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual.
- (j) Training and experience of the officer.

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- (k) Potential for injury to officers, suspects and others.
- (l) Whether the individual appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight or is attacking the officer.
- (m) The risk and reasonably foreseeable consequences of escape.
- (n) The apparent need for immediate control of the individual or a prompt resolution of the situation.
- (o) Whether the conduct of the individual being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to the officer or others.
- (p) Prior contacts with the individual or awareness of any propensity for violence.
- (q) Any other exigent circumstances.

300.3.3 PAIN COMPLIANCE TECHNIQUES

Pain compliance techniques may be effective in controlling a physically or actively resisting individual. Officers may only apply those pain compliance techniques for which they have successfully completed department-approved training. Officers utilizing any pain compliance technique should consider:

- (a) The degree to which the application of the technique may be controlled given the level of resistance.
- (b) Whether the individual can comply with the direction or orders of the officer.
- (c) Whether the individual has been given sufficient opportunity to comply.

The application of any pain compliance technique shall be discontinued once the officer determines that compliance has been achieved.

300.3.4 CAROTID CONTROL HOLD

The carotid control hold is not a hold that is used by members of University Police. However, nothing in this policy shall prevent an officer from taking whatever steps are reasonably necessary to protect their life or the lives of others in certain extreme circumstances.

300.4 DEADLY FORCE APPLICATIONS

Use of deadly force is justified in the following circumstances:

- (a) An officer may use deadly force to protect him/herself or others from what he/she reasonably believes would be an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury.
- (b) An officer may use deadly force to stop a fleeing subject when the officer has probable cause to believe that the individual has committed, or intends to commit, a felony involving the infliction or threatened infliction of serious bodily injury or death, and the officer reasonably believes that there is an imminent risk of serious bodily injury or death to any other person if the individual is not immediately apprehended. Under

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such circumstances, a verbal warning should precede the use of deadly force, where feasible.

Imminent does not mean immediate or instantaneous. An imminent danger may exist even if the suspect is not at that very moment pointing a weapon at someone. For example, an imminent danger may exist if an officer reasonably believes any of the following:

1. The individual has a weapon or is attempting to access one and it is reasonable to believe the individual intends to use it against the officer or another person.
2. The individual is capable of causing serious bodily injury or death without a weapon and it is reasonable to believe the individual intends to do so.

300.4.1 SHOOTING AT OR FROM MOVING VEHICLES

Shots fired at or from a moving vehicle are rarely effective. Officers should move out of the path of an approaching vehicle instead of discharging their firearm at the vehicle or any of its occupants. An officer should only discharge a firearm at a moving vehicle or its occupants when the officer reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others.

Officers should not shoot at any part of a vehicle in an attempt to disable the vehicle.

As per the State University of New York University Police Manual Appendix B.2 7b, "the discharge of a firearm from a moving vehicle is prohibited."

300.5 REPORTING THE USE OF FORCE

Any use of force by a member of this department shall be documented promptly, completely and accurately in an appropriate report, depending on the nature of the incident. The officer should articulate the factors perceived and why he/she believed the use of force was reasonable under the circumstances. The DCJS Use of Force Reporting Guide is attached and is designed to assist the Officer completely document the circumstances of the Use of Force incident. (see attachment) To collect data for purposes of training, resource allocation, analysis and related purposes, the Department may require the completion of additional report forms, as specified in department policy, procedure or law.

300.5.1 NOTIFICATIONS TO SUPERVISORS

Supervisory notification shall be made as soon as practicable following the application of force in any of the following circumstances:

- (a) The application caused a visible injury.
- (b) The application would lead a reasonable officer to conclude that the individual may have experienced more than momentary discomfort.
- (c) The individual subjected to the force complained of injury or continuing pain.
- (d) The individual indicates intent to pursue litigation.

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- (e) Any application of the TASER (TM) or control device.
- (f) Any application of a restraint device other than handcuffs, shackles or belly chains.
- (g) The individual subjected to the force was rendered unconscious.
- (h) An individual was struck or kicked.
- (i) An individual alleges any of the above has occurred.

300.6 MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to booking or release, medical assistance shall be obtained for any person who exhibits signs of physical distress, has sustained visible injury, expresses a complaint of injury or continuing pain, or was rendered unconscious. Any individual exhibiting signs of physical distress after an encounter should be continuously monitored until he/she can be medically assessed.

Based upon the officer's initial assessment of the nature and extent of the individual's injuries, medical assistance may consist of examination by an emergency medical services provider or medical personnel at a hospital or jail. If any such individual refuses medical attention, such a refusal shall be fully documented in related reports and, whenever practicable, should be witnessed by another officer and/or medical personnel. If a recording is made of the contact or an interview with the individual, any refusal should be included in the recording, if possible.

The on-scene supervisor, or if not available, the primary handling officer shall ensure that any person providing medical care or receiving custody of a person following any use of force is informed that the person was subjected to force. This notification shall include a description of the force used and any other circumstances the officer reasonably believes would be potential safety or medical risks to the subject (e.g., prolonged struggle, extreme agitation, impaired respiration).

Individuals who exhibit extreme agitation, violent irrational behavior accompanied by profuse sweating, extraordinary strength beyond their physical characteristics and imperviousness to pain (sometimes called "excited delirium"), or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple officers to be brought under control, may be at an increased risk of sudden death. Calls involving these persons should be considered medical emergencies. Officers who reasonably suspect a medical emergency should request medical assistance as soon as practicable and have medical personnel stage away (see the Medical Aid and Response Policy).

300.7 LIEUTENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

When a supervisor is able to respond to an incident in which there has been a reported application of force, the supervisor is expected to:

- (a) Obtain the basic facts from the involved officers. Absent an allegation of misconduct or excessive force, this will be considered a routine contact in the normal course of duties.
- (b) Ensure that any injured parties are examined and treated.

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- (c) When possible, separately obtain a recorded interview with the individual upon whom force was applied. If this interview is conducted without the individual having voluntarily waived his/her *Miranda* rights, the following shall apply:
 - 1. The content of the interview should not be summarized or included in any related criminal charges.
 - 2. The fact that a recorded interview was conducted should be documented in a property or other report.
 - 3. The recording of the interview should be distinctly marked for retention until all potential for civil litigation has expired.
- (d) Once any initial medical assessment has been completed or first aid has been rendered, ensure that photographs have been taken of any areas involving visible injury or complaint of pain, as well as overall photographs of uninjured areas.
 - 1. These photographs should be retained until all potential for civil litigation has expired.
- (e) Identify any witnesses not already included in related reports.
- (f) Review and approve all related reports.
- (g) Determine if there is any indication that the individual may pursue civil litigation.
 - 1. If there is an indication of potential civil litigation, the supervisor should complete and route a notification of a potential claim through the appropriate channels.
- (h) Evaluate the circumstances surrounding the incident and initiate an administrative investigation if there is a question of policy noncompliance or if for any reason further investigation may be appropriate.
- (i) The Lieutenant shall review each use of force by any personnel within his/her command to ensure compliance with this policy and to address any training issues.

In the event that a supervisor is unable to respond to the scene of an incident involving the reported application of force, the supervisor is still expected to complete as many of the above items as circumstances permit.

See attachment: [uof-report-guide.pdf](#)

300.8 TRAINING

A. Officers will receive annual training on this policy and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Attachments

uof-report-guide.pdf

Use of Force Report Writing Guide

The Constitutional Standard for Use of Force

The U.S. Supreme Court case of *Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386 (1989)*, established “Objective Reasonableness” as the standard for all applications of force in United States. This guide is designed to assist officers in articulating the facts of a Use of Force incident in accordance with the guidance provided in *Graham*. Remember, all Use of Force applications are judged based upon:

- The totality of circumstances
- From the perspective of a reasonable officer
- On the scene
- At the moment force was used.
- Without 20/20 hindsight
- In circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving

The court specified four specific factors, sometimes referred to as the *Graham* factors, which assist in determining reasonableness. Although not required, nor all inclusive, articulating these factors provides a good framework for justifying a particular Use of Force. The factors are:

- The severity of the crime
- Whether the subject was an immediate threat to the officers or others
- How the subject was actively resisting arrest (seizure)
- How the subject was attempting to evade arrest by flight

Other Articuable Facts

The following list represents facts, which if present, may assist in justifying a particular Use of Force. It is not intended to be all inclusive.

- The number of suspects vs. the officers involved (availability of back-up)
- Pre-assault indicators (be specific...describe the subject's actions and statements)
- Size, age, and physical condition of the officer and suspect
- Known or perceived physical abilities of the suspect (i.e. known Mixed Martial Artist)
- Previous violent or mental history, known to the officer at the time
- Perception of the use of alcohol or drugs by the subject
- Perception of the suspect's mental or psychiatric history based on specific actions
- The availability and proximity to weapons
- Environmental factors (night, day, snow, ice, heights, heat, terrain, etc.)
- Injury to the officer or prolonged duration of the incident
- Officer on the ground or other unfavorable position
- Characteristics of being armed (i.e. bulges, adjustment of clothing, “security touches”)

Use of Force Report Writing Guide

Facts vs. Conclusions

Many police reports contain “conclusions” disguised as “facts”. “Conclusions” are phrases or words that describe a subject’s actions, but lack clear articulation of the subject’s behaviors. When articulating force, particular attention should be paid to the specific actions and behaviors of the subject (facts). The following table provides a few examples of when “conclusions” should be replaced by “facts” in a written report.

Conclusions

Facts

Assaultive	“I’m going to kick your ass”, specific verbal threats or statements, turned body 90°, boxer’s / fighting stance, suddenly closed the distance, shoved the officer, weight shifting, clenched fists, raised hands, profuse sweating, clenched mouth, rapidly closed distance, lunged, grabbed, scanning the area, sudden attack, personal grooming...
Non-compliant	“I’m not going to jail”, ignored commands, acted contrary to commands, walked away, repetitive phrases, illogical responses...
Resistant	Pulled away, folded arms, 1000 yard stare, became rigid, attempted to hide, unresponsive to physical force...
Matched description	Height, weight, clothing, gender, race, hair color, vehicle description, direction of travel...
Officer Safety	Weapons, physical size, known criminal history, would not keep hands out of pockets, known violent history, type of crime, NCIC / BOLO info, time of day, characteristics of being armed, proximity to weapons...
High crime area	Number of arrests, types of arrests, personal observations, statistics, citizen’s complaints...
Suspicious activity	Unusual appearance for area (heavy coat in summer), unprovoked flight, looking in vehicles, stealthy movements...