

Current Policy on Use of Force (Excerpts from Current Policy)

This department has received numerous requests related to our current Use of Force policy and has asked that we review and change our policy to reflect some of the many theories and practices that lead to a reduction of police use of force. In the immediate aftermath of the death of Mr. George Floyd, a comprehensive review of our current policy and associated practices was commenced. Upon completion of the review, the new policy will be forwarded to the City of Medford Human Rights Commission (HRC) for their input. This department has teamed with the HRC since last year to develop a process for reviewing all police policies. The police department intends on publishing all completed and reviewed policies on its website.

In an effort to answer many of the questions being asked, the department offers the following excerpts from its current policy on Use of Force. This language reflects the standard of expected behavior and training for all Medford Police Officers.

The authority to use force while serving the community is the most awesome responsibility vested in the police officer by the citizens of Medford. This authority is based on trust and the understanding that Medford Police Officers place the highest value on the lives and safety of the public. Consequently, the manner in which a police officer uses force may have significant bearing on the Department's ability to effectively achieve its mission. Reckless or careless use of force cause public indignation and erodes citizen trust and support. Without the confidence, respect and cooperation of the community, the total police effort will be seriously handicapped. It is imperative for officers to use the highest level of good judgement and professional competence when using force.

Police officers will only use deadly force as a means of last resort to protect themselves and others from immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury. The basic responsibility of police officers to protect life also requires that they exhaust all other reasonable means before resorting to the use of deadly force. Although officers must be prepared to use deadly force when necessary, they should always do so with the highest degree of restraint. Consequently, no officer will be disciplined for not using deadly force when it may threaten the life or safety of an innocent person, or if it is not clearly warranted by the policy and rules of this department. Just as important, no officer will be disciplined for using deadly force in self-defense of another when faced with a situation which immediately threatens life or serious bodily injury.

The preferred means of using force are set forth below. An officer should exhaust every reasonable means of using the minimum amount of force before escalating to a more severe application of force, except where it is

necessary to protect the officer from serious bodily injury or death. The actions of the suspect will determine the level of force necessary.

VERBALIZATION: Verbal persuasion used by the officer to defuse a situation or inform a suspect that he/she is under arrest.

PHYSICAL STRENGTH/ HAND CONTROL – PASSIVE RESISTANCE: Level of force normally required to overcome non-aggressive passive resistance.

OLEORESIN CAPSICUM SUBSTANCES (OC): Approved, non-lethal oleoresin capsicum substances used to overcome defensive resistance.

PHYSICAL STRENGTH/ HAND CONTROL – DEFENSIVE RESISTANCE: Level of physical force required to overcome more aggressive defensive resistance.

IMPACT WEAPONS: The approved, department issued baton, when used as an impact instrument or to assist in applying take-down holds, by the officer to defend himself/herself or another from the threat of serious physical injury.

TEAR GAS (CS): Used in dispersing violent, riotous crowds or when dealing with armed or dangerous barricaded subjects.

FIREARMS: The use of deadly force is the last option within the continuum of force.

DEADLY FORCE: GENERAL GUIDELINES - This section sets forth guidelines for all Medford Police Officers in making decisions regarding the use of Deadly Force. The guidelines have been developed with serious consideration for the safety of both police officers and the public, and with the knowledge that officers must sometimes make split-second decisions in life and death situations.

The value of life is immeasurable in our society. The Medford Police Department places its highest value on the life and safety of its officers and the public. The department's policies and procedures are designed to ensure that this value guides police officers in their use of deadly force.

The citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have vested in their police officers the power to use deadly force in the exercise of their service to society. Police officers are allowed to use deadly force as a means of last resort to protect themselves and others from the immediate threat of death or serious physical injury. Even though all officers must be prepared to use deadly force when necessary, the basic responsibility of police officers to protect life also requires that the utmost restraint be

exercised in its use, and that officers exhaust all other reasonable means before resorting to the use of deadly force.

Moving Vehicles: Police Officers shall not fire their weapons at or from a moving vehicle except for the following: 1. When firing at a moving vehicle is necessary to neutralize a threat, as provided for in Section XI above, officer's focus shall be to disable that person presenting the threat, and not the vehicle of which he/she is an occupant. 2. Every precaution should be taken to ensure the safety of the general public in the vicinity.

REPORTING USE OF FORCE: Whenever a member of the Medford Police Department takes an action that results in, or is alleged to have resulted in, injury or death of another person; and/or the officer applies force through the use of any non-lethal weapons, he/she shall file a written report which shall be received and investigated according to the procedures outlined.