



2-52 Use of Force - General

2-52-1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the procedures, requirements, and expectations surrounding the use of force by sworn personnel of the Albuquerque Police Department.

2-52-2 Policy

While officers must at all times comply with the minimum legal requirements governing the use of force, they must also comply with even stricter standards set forth by Department policy.

Officers shall make every effort to preserve human life in all situations.

The Department shall hold officers accountable for upholding lawful, professional, and ethical standards through assertive leadership and supervision before, during, and after every use of force incident.

Officers who use force shall use the minimum amount of force that is reasonable, necessary, and proportional based on the totality of the circumstances confronting the officers in order to bring about a lawful objective.

Once force is used, officers shall reduce the level of force or stop using force as the resistance or threat decreases.

Officers derive their authority to use force from the United States Constitution, Federal and State laws, APD Policies, and the community. Unreasonable force degrades the legitimacy of the officer's authority. The unreasonable use of force will subject officers to discipline, as well as to possible criminal prosecution and/or civil liability.

2-52-3 Definitions

For a listing of definitions specific to use of force, refer to SOP 2-53 – Use of Force Definitions.

2-52-4 Use of Force Requirements

A. General Requirements

1. Officers shall first use de-escalation techniques when feasible to gain the voluntary compliance of an individual to reduce or eliminate the need to use force.



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Among these techniques are the use of advisements, warnings, and verbal persuasion. (Refer to the De-Escalation policy.)

2. An officer shall use only the degree of force that is reasonable, necessary under the circumstances, and proportional to the threat or resistance of the individual.
3. Officers shall continually assess whether the use of force is necessary and whether a different level of force is appropriate, and shall adjust the use of force accordingly, to include stopping the use of force.

B. Reasonable Force

Force is reasonable under the circumstances when it is the minimum amount of force necessary to effect an arrest or protect the officer or other person.

C. Necessary Force

Force is necessary when no reasonable alternative to the use of force exists. When force is necessary, officers shall use the minimum amount of force required and shall avoid unnecessary risk of injury to the officer or any individual.

D. Proportional Force

Force is proportional when it reflects the totality of circumstances surrounding the situation, including the presence of imminent danger to the officer or others.

The use of proportional force by an officer does not require the use of the same type or amount of force as that used by the individual.

The more immediate the threat and more likely that the threat will result in death or serious physical injury, the greater the level of force that is reasonable and necessary to counter it.

E. Totality of the Circumstances

1. When force is used, the decision to use force and the level of force must be reasonable, necessary, and proportional under the totality of the circumstances.
 - a. Factors defining the totality of the circumstances include, but are not limited to the following:
 - i. The severity of the crime(s) at issue;
 - ii. Whether the individual is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight;
 - iii. Whether the individual poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officer(s) or others.



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- b. Other factors may include the following:
- i. The knowledge or belief the individual is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
 - ii. The individual's medical or mental health history or condition is known to the officer at the time.
 - iii. The individual's known history to include violent tendencies or previous encounters with law enforcement which were combative.
 - iv. Disparities of force (i.e. differences in factors such as physical size, numbers, gender, age, weapons, injury, special knowledge or skills that place an officer at an advantage (positive disparity) or disadvantage (negative disparity), are part of the "totality of the circumstances" and can have direct implications on the reasonableness of a use of force. The existence of a negative disparity for the officer could justify the use of a higher level of force in a given situation whereas a positive disparity for the officer could reduce the level of force deemed reasonable in a given situation.
 - v. The individual's condition if known (e.g., it is apparent to the officer that an individual is in crisis) must be considered in the officer's approach to the situation. (also refer to SOP 2-19 - Response to Behavioral Health Issues)
 - vi. The opportunities the officer had to give a warning, use verbal de-escalation, use other de-escalation techniques or tactics or to limit the amount of force used.
 - vii. Whether the officers made statement(s) or took action(s) that created the need to use force.
- c. The dynamics of a use-of-force encounter can change rapidly which may affect the reasonableness of the officers' current actions and require them to quickly escalate or de-escalate the level of force they are using against an individual.

F. Lawful Objectives

1. Officers shall only use force to achieve a lawful objective. Officers are authorized to use force:
 - a. To effect a lawful arrest or detention of a person;
 - b. To prevent and/or terminate the commission of a crime;
 - c. To intervene in a suicide or self-inflicted injury;
 - d. To enforce a valid Certificate of Evaluation;
 - e. To defend an officer or person from the physical acts of another; or
 - f. To conduct a lawful search.



2-52-5 Use of Force Prohibitions

1. Officers shall not use force to attempt to gain compliance with an unlawful command.
2. Officers shall not engage in actions or tactics, or make statements that escalate a situation such that the use of force becomes necessary.
3. Officers shall not use force against a restrained or handcuffed individual unless the force is necessary:
 - a. To prevent imminent bodily harm to the officer or another person or persons;
 - b. To overcome active resistance;
 - c. To move an individual who is passively resisting.
4. Officers shall not use deadly force when an individual is only threatening suicide or self-injury.
5. Officers shall not use deadly force against any individual whose only threat is to property and not a threat to an officer or other individual.
6. Officers shall not use neck-holds, as defined in SOP 2-53, unless deadly force is justified.
7. Officers shall not fire warning shots.
8. Officers shall not shoot into a crowded area unless the risk to officer(s) and bystanders is immediate and the failure to shoot is likely to result in more and greater injuries compared to shooting when there is a risk of striking bystanders.
9. The use of unreasonable force will subject officers to discipline, as well as to possible criminal prosecution and/or civil liability.

2-52-6 Use of Force Procedures:

A. General Procedures

1. Officers shall, whenever possible, announce their intent to detain, search, or arrest an individual before resorting to using force. When feasible, officers will identify themselves as peace officers before using force.
2. Officers shall recognize and utilize distance, cover, concealment, or intermediate barriers in order to maximize their reaction time and deployment of resources.
3. Where feasible, and when doing so would not increase the danger to officers or others, officers shall issue a verbal warning to the individual prior to using force.
4. Officers shall take all reasonable steps under the circumstances, before and during any use of force, to avoid unnecessary risk to bystanders, victims, hostages, and other involved civilians, as well as other officers and emergency personnel.



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5. In situations where the individual is forced into a face-down position, Officers shall release pressure/weight from the individual and position the individual on their side or sit them up as soon as it is safe to do so. Officers shall monitor the individual for any respiratory or breathing problems or any other signs of distress.
6. The use of leg sweeps, arm-bar takedowns, prone restraints, or a use of force against a handcuffed individual, when necessary, must be objectively reasonable and shall only be considered and used in the following circumstances:
 - a. To prevent imminent bodily harm to the officer or to another person or persons;
 - b. To overcome active resistance; or
 - c. To overcome passive resistance and handcuff the individual, as is objectively reasonable and where physical removal is necessary.
7. Any on-scene officer who observes another officer using force that a reasonable officer would view as excessive or unnecessary under the circumstances shall, when in a position to do so, safely intercede to stop the officer's actions.
8. An officer is expected to immediately notify a supervisor and document any use of force as set forth in SOP 2-56 Use of Force Reporting and Investigations.

B. Response to High Threat Situations

1. Absent an immediate need to act, officers should take time to plan how they will respond to the situation. When feasible, officers arriving on scene will secure additional force options, to include less-lethal and lethal force, as a part of a force array prior to the initial contact.
2. When an individual officer arrives on the scene of a potentially violent encounter, the officer should not attempt to resolve the incident alone, unless there is an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury. For example, in an active shooter scenario, immediate intervention should be considered. Officers should continuously evaluate whether their response is reasonable, necessary, and proportional.
3. Officers shall recognize and utilize distance, cover, concealment, or intermediate barriers in order to maximize their reaction time and deployment of resources.
4. Supervisors should manage the overall response to a potentially high threat or violent encounter by coordinating resources and ensuring that a force array is employed.

C. Deadly Force

1. All of the provisions of this policy, that govern use of force, including the officers' duty to preserve human life, the requirement to use de-escalation techniques and tactics, the requirements that officers use only the minimum amount of force reasonable,



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necessary, and proportional under the circumstances governing force, also govern lethal force.

2. Officers shall not use deadly force against an individual unless an officer has probable cause to believe that an individual poses a significant threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or anyone else.
3. Officers shall not use deadly force against an individual who is fleeing or attempting to escape unless:
 - a. The officer has probable cause to believe that the individual has committed or is in the process of committing a felony involving the infliction or threatened infliction of death or serious bodily injury, and
 - b. If permitted to flee or escape, the individual would pose a significant threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer(s) or anyone else not apprehended, and
 - c. When feasible the officers have identified themselves as law enforcement officers, have stated the intention to use deadly force, and have given the individual a reasonable opportunity to comply, if time, safety, and the totality of the circumstances permit.

D. Deadly Force is:

1. Discharging a firearm at an individual, whether intentional or accidental;
2. Any neck hold as defined by Department policy;
3. Intentional strikes with any hard object such as a baton, flashlight, radio, weapon stock/handle, or improvised weapon to the head, neck, throat, sternum, groin or kidneys;
4. Intentionally striking an individual's head against a hard, fixed object such as a roadway, floor, wall, or steel/iron bars;
5. Intentionally targeting the head, neck or chest of an individual with a beanbag shotgun;
6. Intentionally targeting the head, neck or chest with a 40 millimeter;
7. Intentionally striking an individual's head, neck or genitalia with an ECW;
8. Kneeing or kicking an individual's head or neck while the individual is in a prone or supine position;
9. The use of any force against an individual whose health, age, condition, or circumstances make it likely that death or serious bodily injury will result.
10. Verbal warnings shall be given, when feasible, prior to the use of deadly force.



E. Deadly Force and Motor Vehicles

1. Officers shall not reach into vehicles, or place themselves in the path of a vehicle.
2. Officers shall move out of the path of a moving vehicle to a position of cover.
3. Officers shall not discharge a firearm at or from a moving vehicle, unless an occupant of the vehicle the officer is engaging is using lethal force (other than the vehicle itself) against the officer or another person. Such action must be necessary for self-defense, for the defense of other officers, for the protection of another person, or because the officer has no reasonable alternative course of action.

F. Duty to Provide Medical Attention

1. Following a use of force and once it is safe to do so, officers shall:
 - a. Determine whether any person was injured by the use of force.
 - b. Immediately render aid consistent with the officer's training.
 - c. Immediately request medical attention when an individual is injured or complains of injury following a use of force.
 - d. Officers shall immediately request medical attention for the following use of force events regardless of visible injury or complaint of injury:
 - i. Baton (Expandable or Straight)/Bokken
 - ii. Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray
 - iii. Electronic Control Weapons
 - iv. Use of patrol canine
 - v. Use of Force with a vehicle (refer to SOP 2-45 Pursuit by Motor Vehicle)
 - vi. Impact Munitions
 - vii. Firearm
 - viii. Strikes to the head, throat or neck with a hard object.
2. If officers are unable to secure the scene, officers may safely extract the individual and transport them to a safe location for medical treatment, if necessary.
3. Officers shall closely monitor individuals who are taken into custody if the individual is injured, exhibits physical distress, complains of pain, or has been rendered unconscious.

G. Use of Force Training and Certification

1. For training and certification requirements and for all training in use of force options, please refer to the current APD Academy and New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy



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lesson plans housed on APDWeb, and to the Intermediate Weapons policy.

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