

Body Armor

607.1 VERSION

Review Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority
01/29/19	07/09/18	Eric D. English, Chief of Police

607.2 POLICY AND PURPOSE

It is the policy of the Harrisonburg Police Department to maximize officer safety through the use of body armor in combination with prescribed safety procedures. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures.

This policy provides officers with guidelines for the proper use of body armor.

607.3 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

607.4 DEFINITIONS

Field activities - Duty assignments and/or tasks that place or could reasonably be expected to place officers in situations where they would be required to act in enforcement rather than administrative or support capacities.

607.5 ISSUANCE

Body armor shall be issued when an officer begins service at the Harrisonburg Police Department

The Administrative Bureau Commander shall ensure that body armor is issued to all officers and that, when issued, the body armor meets or exceeds the standards of the National Institute of Justice.

The Chief of Police may authorize issuance of body armor to uniformed, civilian employees whose jobs may make the wearing of body armor advisable.

607.5.1 USE

Generally, the required use of body armor is subject to the following:

- (a) Members shall only wear department-approved body armor.
- (b) Members shall wear body armor any time they are in a situation where they could reasonably be expected to take enforcement action.

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- (c) Members shall wear body armor when taking part in department range training.
- (d) Members are not required to wear body armor when they are functioning primarily in an administrative or support capacity and would not reasonably be expected to take enforcement action.
- (e) Officers may be excused from wearing body armor when they are involved in undercover or plainclothes work that their supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor, or when a supervisor determines that other circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor.
 - 1. In those instances when body armor is not worn, officers should have reasonable access to their body armor.

607.5.2 INSPECTION

Supervisors should ensure through routine observation and periodic documented inspections that body armor is worn and maintained in accordance with this policy.

Annual inspections of body armor should be conducted by a person trained to perform the inspection for fit, cleanliness and signs of damage, abuse and wear.

607.5.3 CARE AND MAINTENANCE

The required care and maintenance of body armor is subject to the following:

- (a) Members are responsible for inspecting their body armor for signs of damage, wear and cleanliness at the start of each shift.
 - 1. Unserviceable body armor shall be reported to the supervisor.
- (b) Members are responsible for the proper storage of their body armor.
 - 1. Body armor should not be stored for an extended period of time in an area where environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, light, humidity) could potentially degrade its effectiveness.
- (c) Members are responsible for the care and cleaning of their body armor pursuant to the manufacturer's care instructions.
 - 1. Body armor should not be exposed to any cleaning agents or methods not specifically recommended by the manufacturer.
 - 2. Failure to follow manufacturer's care instructions may damage the ballistic performance capabilities of the body armor. If care instructions for the body armor cannot be located, the manufacturer should be contacted to request the instructions.
- (d) Body armor should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended replacement schedule, or when its effectiveness or functionality has been compromised.

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607.6 TRAINING AND TECHNOLOGY

The responsibilities of the Training Unit and/or Property Technician include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Monitoring technological advances in the body armor industry for any appropriate changes to department-approved body armor.
- (b) Assessing the level of weapons and ammunition currently utilized by the public and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.
- (c) Educating officers about the safety benefits of wearing body armor.
- (d) Providing training programs that demonstrate body armor's stopping power under actual firing conditions and that emphasize its safe and proper use.
- (e) Maintaining statistics on incidents where armor has or has not protected officers from harm, including traffic accidents.