

## 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:

**De-escalation** - The process of using strategies and techniques intended to decrease the intensity of the situation.

**Less lethal force** - Force that is not reasonably anticipated and intended to create a substantial likelihood of causing death or serious injury.

**Deadly force** - Any use of force that creates a substantial risk of causing death or serious bodily injury, including but not limited to the discharge of a firearm (Penal Code § 835a).

**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.

**Feasible** - Reasonably capable of being done or carried out under the circumstances to successfully achieve the arrest or lawful objective without increasing risk to the officer or another person (Government Code § 7286(a)).

**Serious bodily injury** - A bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death, unconsciousness, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ (Government Code § 12525.2 (d)).

**Totality of the circumstances** - All facts known to the officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of force (Penal Code § 835a).

### 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 Department 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.

## *Use of Force*

---

### 300.2.1 FORCE DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation tactics and techniques are those actions undertaken by members to avoid physical confrontations, unless immediately necessary to protect someone or to stop dangerous behavior, while minimizing the need to use force during an incident when the totality of the circumstances and time permit. De-Escalation tactics and techniques are employed to increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance and cooperation.

It is the policy of the this Department that when all of the reasonably known circumstances indicate it is safe, prudent, and feasible to do so, a member(s) shall attempt to slow down, reduce the intensity, or stabilize the situation so that more time, options and/or resources may become available for incident resolution.

When time and circumstances reasonably permit, a member(s) shall consider whether a subject's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or is the result of an inability to comply based on factors including, but not limited to:

- Medical conditions
- Mental impairment
- Developmental disability
- Physical limitation
- Language barrier
- Drug interaction
- Behavioral crisis

A member's awareness of these possibilities, when time and circumstances reasonably permit, shall then be balanced against the facts of the incident and which tactical options are the most appropriate to bring the situation to a safe resolution. A member is not expected to engage in force de-escalation measures that could jeopardize the safety of the community or of any employee.

Where circumstances and time reasonably permit, a member shall take those reasonable and prudent actions which operate to mitigate the immediacy of the threat thereby giving the member time to call additional officers, utilize other tactics, or request specialty assistance such as Crisis Negotiators. The number of members on scene may increase the available force options, a circumstance which has the potential to increase the ability of the member(s) to reduce the overall force used by promoting consideration of other viable alternatives such as:

- Decreasing the exposure to the potential threat by using distance or physical barriers between an uncooperative subject and a member.
- Containing the threat.
- Maximizing the use of cover or concealment to reduce member(s) exposure to potential threats by placing the member(s) in a safer position.
- Communicating from a safe position to gain the subject's compliance through the use of verbal persuasion, advisements, and/or warnings.

## *Use of Force*

---

- Generally, communication techniques should engage active listening to calm agitated individuals and promote rational decision-making.
- The member's physical actions may also de-escalate a potentially volatile/violent situation; i.e., exhibiting a relaxed body language.

When the circumstances warrant an application of force, the level of force applied must reflect the totality of the reasonably known circumstances surrounding the immediate situation. Pursuant to existing law, sworn officers need only select a level of force that is within the range of "objectively reasonable" options. At the same time, each member must rely on training, experience, present ability, and an assessment of the situation to decide an appropriate level of force to be applied. Reasonable and sound judgment will dictate the force option to be employed.

Members may either escalate or de-escalate the use of force as the situation progresses or as circumstances change. When a suspect is under control, either through the application of physical restraint or the suspect's compliance, the degree of force shall be de-escalated accordingly.

### **300.2.2 FAIR AND UNBIASED USE OF FORCE**

Officers are expected to carry out their duties, including the use of force, in a manner that is fair and unbiased (Government Code § 7286(b)). See the Bias-Based Policing Policy for additional guidance.

### **300.2.3 DUTY TO INTERCEDE**

Any officer present and observing another law enforcement officer or an employee using force that is clearly beyond that which is necessary, as determined by an objectively reasonable officer under the circumstances, shall, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force.

When observing force used by a law enforcement officer, each officer should take into account the totality of the circumstances and the possibility that other law enforcement officers may have additional information regarding the threat posed by the subject (Government Code § 7286(b)).

### **300.2.4 DUTY TO REPORT EXCESSIVE FORCE**

Any officer who observes a law enforcement officer or an employee use force that potentially exceeds what the officer reasonably believes to be necessary shall promptly report these observations to a supervisor as soon as feasible (Government Code § 7286(b)).

## **300.3 USE OF FORCE**

Officers shall use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose (Penal Code § 835a).

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 officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force that reasonably

## *Use of Force*

---

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. Officers may only use a level of force that they reasonably believe is proportional to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance (Government Code § 7286(b)).

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 approved tools, weapons, or methods provided by the 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 objectively 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

Any peace officer may use objectively reasonable force to effect an arrest, to prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. A peace officer who makes or attempts to make an arrest need not retreat or desist from his/her efforts by reason of resistance or threatened resistance on the part of the person being arrested; nor shall an officer be deemed the aggressor or lose his/her right to self-defense by the use of reasonable force to effect the arrest, prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. Retreat does not mean tactical repositioning or other de-escalation techniques (Penal Code § 835a).

### 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 (Government Code § 7286(b)). These factors include but are not limited to:

- (a) The apparent immediacy and severity of the threat to officers or others (Penal Code § 835a).
- (b) The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time (Penal Code § 835a).
- (c) Officer/subject factors (age, size, relative strength, skill level, injuries sustained, level of exhaustion or fatigue, the number of officers available vs. subjects).
- (d) The conduct of the involved officer leading up to the use of force (Penal Code § 835a).
- (e) The effects of suspected drugs or alcohol.
- (f) The individual's apparent mental state or capacity (Penal Code § 835a).

## *Use of Force*

---

- (g) The individual's apparent ability to understand and comply with officer commands (Penal Code § 835a).
- (h) Proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices.
- (i) The degree to which the subject has been effectively restrained and his/her ability to resist despite being restrained.
- (j) The availability of other reasonable and feasible options and their possible effectiveness (Penal Code § 835a).
- (k) Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual prior to and at the time force is used.
- (l) Training and experience of the officer.
- (m) Potential for injury to officers, suspects, bystanders, and others.
- (n) Whether the person appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight, or is attacking the officer.
- (o) The risk and reasonably foreseeable consequences of escape.
- (p) The apparent need for immediate control of the subject or a prompt resolution of the situation.
- (q) Whether the conduct of the individual being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to the officer or others.
- (r) Prior contacts with the subject or awareness of any propensity for violence.
- (s) Any other exigent circumstances.

### 300.3.3 FORCE OPTIONS

The following tools and techniques for force options are authorized by the Department. Officers are not required to use those force options based on a continuum, but rather use only that amount of reasonable force that appears necessary in accordance with this policy. While deploying a particular force option and when feasible, officers shall continually evaluate whether the force option may be discontinued while still achieving the arrest or lawful objective. The following tools and techniques are not in particular order nor are they all inclusive:

- (a) Verbal Commands/Instructions/Command Presence/Warnings
- (b) Control Holds (300.3.4)
- (c) Pain Compliance Techniques (300.3.4)
- (d) Conducted Energy Device (TASER) (309)
- (e) Impact Weapons (308)
- (f) Chemical Agents, O.C. Spray, etc. (308)
- (g) Canine Apprehension (318)
- (h) Firearms (312)
- (i) Personal Body Weapons (300.3.4)

## *Use of Force*

---

- (j) Physical Controls (300.3.4)
- (k) Impact Projectile (308)

### **300.3.4 PAIN COMPLIANCE TECHNIQUES**

Pain compliance and control hold techniques to direct movement or immobilize a person, or strikes with personal body weapons (fist elbow, knee, leg) 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 person can comply with the direction or orders of the officer.
- (c) Whether the person has been given sufficient opportunity to comply.
- (d) Some physical controls may actually involve a greater risk of injury or pain to a subject than other force options.

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

### **300.3.5 USE OF FORCE TO SEIZE EVIDENCE**

In general, officers may use reasonable force to lawfully seize evidence and to prevent the destruction of evidence. However, officers are discouraged from using force solely to prevent a person from swallowing evidence or contraband. In the instance when force is used, officers should not intentionally use any technique that restricts blood flow to the head, restricts respiration or which creates a reasonable likelihood that blood flow to the head or respiration would be restricted.

In the event where a person has swallowed evidence or contraband, that person shall be promptly examined by paramedics or other qualified medical personnel and should be monitored until examined by paramedics or other appropriate personnel.

### **300.4 CAROTID CONTROL HOLD**

The intentional use of the carotid control hold by members of the department is prohibited (Government Code § 7286.5).

#### **300.4.1 CHOKEHOLDS AND STRANGLEHOLDS**

The intentional use of chokeholds, strangleholds, or other techniques that reduces or prevents the passage of air flow through the neck of an individual is prohibited (Government Code § 7286.5).

### **300.5 DEADLY FORCE APPLICATIONS**

Where feasible, the officer shall, prior to the use of deadly force, make reasonable efforts to identify him/herself as a peace officer and to warn that deadly force may be used, unless the officer has

## *Use of Force*

---

objectively reasonable grounds to believe the person is aware of those facts (Penal Code 835a(5)(c)(1)(B)).

If an objectively reasonable officer would consider it safe and feasible to do so under the totality of the circumstances, officers shall evaluate and use other reasonably available resources and techniques when determining whether to use deadly force. To the extent that it is reasonably practical, officers should consider their surroundings and any potential risks to bystanders prior to discharging a firearm (Government Code § 7286(b)).

The use of deadly force is only justified when the officer reasonably believes it is necessary in the following circumstances (Penal Code § 835a):

- (a) An officer may use deadly force to protect him/herself or others from what he/she reasonably believes is an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person.
- (b) An officer may use deadly force to apprehend a fleeing person for any felony that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury, if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury to another unless immediately apprehended.

Officers shall not use deadly force against a person based on the danger that person poses to him/herself, if an objectively reasonable officer would believe the person does not pose an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person (Penal Code § 835a).

An “imminent” threat of death or serious bodily injury exists when, based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer in the same situation would believe that a person has the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person. An officer’s subjective fear of future harm alone is insufficient as an imminent threat. An imminent threat is one that from appearances is reasonably believed to require instant attention (Penal Code § 835a).

### 300.5.1 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.

### 300.5.2 DISPLAYING OF FIREARMS

Prior to an officer drawing/pointing a firearm, the following considerations shall be observed (Government Code § 7286(b)(4)):

- (a) The Milpitas Police Department recognizes the sanctity of human life, the value of peaceful resolution, and the preservation of human life is paramount.



## *Use of Force*

---

- (b) If feasible and safe to do so, officers shall evaluate the use of other reasonably available resources and techniques when determining whether to draw/point their firearm.
- (c) Officers shall reasonably assess the added risks of drawing a firearm, including the possibility of escalating a situation, or detracting from de-escalation techniques.
- (d) Unnecessarily or prematurely drawing or exhibiting a firearm limits an officer's options in managing a situation, and may result in an unjustifiable or accidental discharge of the firearm. Officers should only draw or exhibit a firearm if the conditions surrounding the incident create a reasonable belief that it may be necessary to use the firearm in accordance with this policy.
- (e) Officer shall consider their surroundings and potential risks to bystanders, to the extent reasonable under the circumstances, before discharging a firearm (Government Code § 7286(b)(5)).

### **300.6 USE OF FORCE (CIVILIANS)**

The Department recognizes that civilian members may find themselves in unavoidable, violent confrontations during the course of their duties. In accordance with existing law, a civilian member may use force as reasonably appears necessary to defend himself/herself or others against an apparent threat of unlawful and immediate violence from another.

It is also recognized that circumstances may arise in which a civilian member reasonably believes that it would be impractical or ineffective to use any of the tools, weapons or methods provided by the Department. A civilian member acting in response to an immediate and unlawful threat of violence to himself/herself or others, may find it more effective or reasonable to improvise their response to the rapidly unfolding conditions confronting him or her. 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 defend himself/herself or others from immediate, unlawful physical harm.

### **300.7 MEDICAL CONSIDERATION**

Once it is reasonably safe to do so, properly trained officers should promptly provide or procure medical assistance for any person injured or claiming to have been injured in a use of force incident (Government Code § 7286(b)).

Prior to booking or release, medical assistance shall be obtained for any person who exhibits signs of physical distress, who has sustained visible injury, expresses a complaint of injury or continuing pain, or who 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 subject's injuries, medical assistance may consist of examination by fire personnel, paramedics, hospital staff, or medical staff at the 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



## Use of Force

---

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 the on-scene supervisor is 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).

Persons 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 if appropriate.

### **300.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY**

A supervisor should respond to any reported use of force, if reasonably available. The responding supervisor is expected to (Government Code § 7286(b)):

- (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.
- (c) When possible, separately obtain a recorded interview with the subject upon whom force was applied. If this interview is conducted without the person 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. 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 subject may pursue civil litigation.

## *Use of Force*

---

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 non-compliance or if for any reason further investigation may be appropriate.

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.

### **300.8.1 WATCH COMMANDER RESPONSIBILITY**

The Watch Commander 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.

## **300.9 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. 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.

### **300.9.1 NOTIFICATION 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.
- (e) Any application of a TASER device 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 unreasonable force was used or that any of the above has occurred.

### **300.9.2 REPORTING TO CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

The Administration Sergeant shall ensure that statistical data required by the California Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding all officer-involved shootings and incidents involving use

## *Use of Force*

---

of force resulting in serious bodily injury is to be reported to the California Department of Justice as required by Government Code § 12525.2.

### **300.10 TRAINING**

All sworn personnel will receive periodic training on this policy and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding (Government Code § 7286(b)).

Subject to available resources, the Training Sergeant should ensure that officers receive periodic training on de-escalation tactics, including alternatives to force.

Training should also include (Government Code § 7286(b)):

- (a) Guidelines regarding vulnerable populations, including but not limited to children, elderly persons, pregnant individuals, and individuals with physical, mental, and developmental disabilities.
- (b) Training courses required by and consistent with POST guidelines set forth in Penal Code § 13519.10.

### **300.11 USE OF FORCE ANALYSIS**

At least annually, the Administration Sergeant should prepare an analysis report on use of force incidents. The report should be submitted to the Chief of Police. The report should not contain the names of officers, suspects or case numbers, and should include:

- (a) The identification of any trends in the use of force by members.
- (b) Training needs recommendations.
- (c) Equipment needs recommendations.
- (d) Policy revision recommendations.

### **300.12 USE OF FORCE COMPLAINTS**

The receipt, processing, and investigation of civilian complaints involving use of force incidents should be handled in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy (Government Code § 7286(b)).

### **300.13 POLICY REVIEW**

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should regularly review and update this policy to reflect developing practices and procedures (Government Code § 7286(b)).

### **300.14 POLICY AVAILABILITY**

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should ensure this policy is accessible to the public (Government Code § 7286(c)).