

Use of Force

300.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy is intended to provide clarity to deputies and promote safety for all by ensuring that all available and appropriate de-escalation techniques are used when possible, force is used appropriately and only when necessary, and the amount of force used is proportional to the threat or resistance the deputy encounters as well as the seriousness of the law enforcement objective that is being served.

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

In addition to those methods, techniques, and tools set forth below, the guidelines for the reasonable application of force contained in this policy shall apply to all policies addressing the potential use of force, including but not limited to the Control Devices and Techniques and Conducted Energy Device policies.

300.1.1 DEFINITIONS

These definitions apply throughout the "Use of Force" policy unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

Chokehold - The intentional application of direct pressure to a person's trachea or windpipe for the purpose of restricting another person's airway (RCW 10.116.020).

Deadly force - The intentional application of force through the use of firearms or any other means reasonably likely to cause death or serious physical injury (RCW 9A.16.010).

De-escalation tactics - Actions used by a peace officer that are intended to minimize the likelihood of the need to use force during an incident (RCW 10.116.020).

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 deputy or another person.

Flight - Any act in an effort to intentionally evade law enforcement.

Less Lethal Alternatives - Include, but are not limited to, verbal warnings, de-escalation tactics, conducted energy weapons, kinetic energy projectile platforms such as a less-lethal shotgun bean-bag rounds, compressed air devices, devices that deploy oleoresin capsicum, and batons.

Immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death - Based on the totality of the circumstances, it is objectively reasonable to believe that a person has the present and apparent ability, opportunity, and intent to immediately cause death or serious body injury to the peace officer or another person (RCW 10.120.020).

Imminent - Ready to take place; impending. Note that imminent does not mean immediate or instantaneous.

Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office

Policy Manual

Use of Force

Necessary - Under the totality of the circumstances, a reasonably effective alternative to the use of physical force or deadly force does not appear to exist, and the type and amount of physical force or deadly force used is a reasonable and proportional response to effect the legal purpose intended or to protect against the threat posed to the deputy or others (RCW 10.120.010).

Neck restraint - Any vascular compression or similar restraint, hold, or other tactic in which pressure is applied to the neck for the purpose of constricting blood flow.

Physical force - Any act reasonably likely to cause physical pain or injury or any other act exerted upon a person's body to compel, control, constrain, or restrain the person's movement. "Physical force" does not include pat-downs, incidental touching, verbal commands, or compliant handcuffing where there is no physical pain or injury (RCW 10.120.010).

Totality of the circumstances - All facts known to the deputy leading up to, and at the time of, the use of force, and includes the actions of the person against whom the deputy uses such force, and the actions of the deputy (RCW 10.120.010).

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. Deputies are involved in numerous and varied interactions daily and may use reasonable force in carrying out their duties.

Deputies must understand and have a 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.

It is the fundamental duty of law enforcement to preserve and protect all human life. Deputies shall respect and uphold the dignity of all persons and use their authority in a bias-free manner.

The proper use of force is essential to ensure impartial policing and build community trust.

Vesting deputies with the authority to use reasonable force and to protect the public welfare requires monitoring, evaluation, and a careful balancing of all interests. The Walla Walla Sheriff's Office regularly reviews Use of Force policies to ensure they comply with federal, state, and local laws.

Nothing in this policy limits or restricts a deputy's authority or responsibility to perform lifesaving measures or community caretaking functions or prevents a deputy from responding to requests for assistance or service.

300.2.1 DUTY TO INTERVENE AND REPORT

Refer to policy 343 (RCW 10.93.190).

300.2.2 PERSPECTIVE

When observing or reporting force used by a law enforcement officer, each deputy 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.

Use of Force

300.2.3 CRITICAL DECISION MAKING

Use of critical decision making can help deputies achieve the expectations outlined in this manual. When safe and feasible, when making or considering whether to make contact with a member of the public, deputies should:

- (a) Begin assessment and planning with available facts before arriving at the scene.
- (b) Request available resources, as needed, such as a crisis intervention team or other appropriate specialty unit or professionals.
- (c) Collect information when on scene.
- (d) Assess situations, threats, and risks.
- (e) Identify options for conflict resolution.
- (f) Determine a reasonable course of action.
- (g) Review and re-assess the situation as it evolves.

Nothing in this policy precludes deputies from taking quick action when faced with a life-threatening situation.

300.3 USE OF FORCE

Deputies shall use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and circumstances perceived by the deputy at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose. Deputies shall use reasonable care when determining whether to use and when using any physical force or deadly force against another person (RCW 10.120.020).

The reasonableness of force will be judged from the perspective of a reasonable deputy on the scene at the time of the incident. Any evaluation of reasonableness must allow for the fact that deputies 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 a deputy might encounter, deputies 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 deputies reasonably believe that it would be impractical or ineffective to use any of the tools, weapons, or methods provided by this office. Deputies 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 a deputy to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable force.

Use of Force

A deputy may not use any force tactics prohibited by applicable departmental policy or otherwise by law, except to protect his or her life or the life of another person from an imminent threat.

300.3.1 FACTORS USED TO DETERMINE THE REASONABLENESS OF FORCE

When determining whether to apply force and evaluating whether a deputy 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 (RCW 10.120.020):

- (a) The immediacy and severity of the threat to deputies or others.
- (b) The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the deputy at the time.
- (c) Deputy/subject factors (e.g., age, size, relative strength, skill level, injuries sustained, level of exhaustion or fatigue, the number of deputies available vs. subjects).
- (d) The effects of suspected drug or alcohol use.
- (e) The individual displays signs of mental, behavioral, intellectual, developmental, or physical impairments or disabilities, including individuals who reasonably appear suicidal.
- (f) The individual's ability to understand and comply with deputy commands.
- (g) Proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices.
- (h) The degree to which the individual has been effectively restrained and the individual's ability to resist despite being restrained.
- (i) The availability of other reasonable and feasible options and their possible effectiveness.
- (j) Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual.
- (k) Training and experience of the deputy.
- (l) Potential for injury to deputies, suspects, and others.
- (m) Whether the individual appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight, or is attacking the deputy.
- (n) The risk and reasonably foreseeable consequences of escape.
- (o) The apparent need for immediate control of the individual or a prompt resolution of the situation.
- (p) Whether the conduct of the individual being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to the deputy or others.
- (q) Prior contacts with the individual or awareness of any propensity for violence.
- (r) The individual is visibly pregnant or claims to be pregnant.
- (s) The individual is a minor, appears to be a minor, or claims to be a minor.
- (t) The individual is known to be a vulnerable adult or appears to be a vulnerable adult as defined by RCW 74.34.020.

Use of Force

- (u) The individual has limited English proficiency.
- (v) The individual is in the presence of a child.
- (w) Any other exigent circumstances.

300.3.2 PAIN COMPLIANCE TECHNIQUES

Pain compliance techniques may be effective in controlling a physically or actively resisting individual. Deputies may only apply those pain compliance techniques for which they have successfully completed office-approved training. Deputies 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 deputy.
- (c) Whether the individual has been given sufficient opportunity to comply.

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

300.3.3 USE OF FORCE TO SEIZE EVIDENCE

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

300.3.4 ALTERNATIVE TACTICS - DE-ESCALATION

When possible, deputies shall use all reasonably available and appropriate de-escalation tactics prior to using physical force (RCW 10.120.020).

Depending on the circumstances, deputies have a number of de-escalation tactics to choose from which include but are not limited to:

- (a) Employing tactical positioning and repositioning to maintain the benefit of distance and cover, such as backing away from the person to re-assess and determine which tactics to use.
- (b) Placing barriers or using existing structures to provide a shield or other protection between deputies and a person.
- (c) Attempting to slow down or stabilize the situation to allow for the consideration and arrival of additional resources that may increase the likelihood of a safe resolution.
- (d) Requesting and using available support and resources, such as a crisis intervention team, a designated crisis responder, other behavioral health providers, or back-up deputies, including more experienced deputies or supervisors.
- (e) Using clear instructions and verbal persuasion.

Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office

Policy Manual

Use of Force

- (f) Employing verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to calm a person (e.g., speaking slowly, regulating tone and body language, uncrossing one's arms, minimizing hand gestures, reducing bright, flashing lights and sirens).
- (g) Attempting to communicate in non-verbal ways when verbal instructions would be inadequate (e.g., when the person and deputy speak different languages, the person is unable to hear or understand instructions).
- (h) Communicating in a way that demonstrates respect for people's dignity.
- (i) When there are multiple deputies, designating one deputy to communicate in order to avoid competing or confusing commands.

300.3.5 CHOKEHOLDS AND NECK RESTRAINTS

Deputies of this office are not authorized to use chokeholds or neck restraints (RCW 10.116.020).

300.3.6 PHYSICAL FORCE APPLICATIONS

Except as otherwise provided in this policy, a deputy may use physical force upon another person to the extent necessary to (RCW 10.120.020):

- (a) Protect against a criminal offense when there is probable cause that the person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit the offense;
- (b) Effect an arrest;
- (c) Prevent an escape as defined under chapter 9A.76 RCW;
- (d) Take a person into custody, transport a person for evaluation or treatment, or provide other assistance under chapter 10.77, 71.05, or 71.34 RCW;
- (e) Take a minor into protective custody when authorized or directed by statute;
- (f) Execute or enforce a court order authorizing or directing a deputy to take a person into custody;
- (g) Execute a search warrant;
- (h) Execute or enforce an oral directive issued by a judicial officer in the courtroom or a written order where the court expressly authorizes a deputy to use physical force to execute or enforce the directive or order; or
- (i) Prevent a person from fleeing or stop a person who is actively fleeing a lawful temporary investigative detention, provided that the person has been given notice that he or she is being detained and is not free to leave;
- (j) Take a person into custody when authorized or directed by statute; or
- (k) Protect against an imminent threat of bodily injury to the deputy, another person, or the person against whom force is being used.

Deputies shall terminate the use of physical force as soon as the necessity for such force ends (RCW 10.120.020).

Use of Force

300.4 REASONABLE CARE

A deputy shall use reasonable care when determining whether to use physical force or deadly force and when using any physical force or deadly force against another person. The least amount of physical force necessary shall be used to overcome resistance under the circumstances (RCW 10.120.020). To that end, a deputy shall:

- (a) When possible, use all de-escalation tactics that are available and appropriate under the circumstances before using physical force;
- (b) When using physical force, use the least amount of physical force necessary to overcome resistance under the circumstances. This includes a consideration of the characteristics and conditions of a person for the purposes of determining whether to use force against that person and, if force is necessary, determining the appropriate and least amount of force possible to effect a lawful purpose. Such characteristics and conditions may include, for example, whether the person: Is visibly pregnant, or states that they are pregnant; is known to be a minor, objectively appears to be a minor, or states that they are a minor; is known to be a vulnerable adult, or objectively appears to be a vulnerable adult as defined in RCW 74.34.020; displays signs of mental, behavioral, or physical impairments or disabilities; is experiencing perceptual or cognitive impairments typically related to the use of alcohol, narcotics, hallucinogens, or other drugs; is suicidal; has limited English proficiency; or is in the presence of children;
- (c) Terminate the use of physical force as soon as the necessity for such force ends;
- (d) When possible, use less lethal alternatives that are available and appropriate under the circumstances before using deadly force; and
- (e) Make less lethal alternatives issued to the officer reasonably available for his or her use.

300.5 REPORTING THE USE OF FORCE

Any use of force by a member of this office shall be documented promptly, completely, and accurately in an appropriate report, depending on the nature of the incident. The deputy 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 Office may require the completion of additional report forms, as specified in office policy, procedure, or law. See Policy 322, Report Preparation, for additional circumstances that may require documentation.

300.5.1 NOTIFICATION TO SUPERVISORS

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

- (a) The application caused a visible injury.
- (b) The individual subjected to the force complained of injury or continuing pain.

Use of Force

- (c) The individual indicates intent to pursue litigation.
- (d) Any application of the Conducted Energy Device (CED) or control device.
- (e) Any application of a restraint device other than handcuffs, shackles, or belly chains.
- (f) The individual subjected to the force was rendered unconscious.
- (g) An individual was struck or kicked.
- (h) An individual alleges unreasonable force was used or that any of the above has occurred.

300.5.2 NOTIFICATION TO INDIAN AFFAIRS

When the use of force by a deputy results in the death of a person who is an enrolled member of a federally recognized Indian tribe, notification shall be made to the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs within a reasonable period of time, but not more than 24 hours after the office has good reason to believe the person was an enrolled member. Notice shall include sufficient information for the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs to attempt to identify the deceased person and tribal affiliation (RCW 10.114.021).

300.5.3 NOTIFICATION TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING COMMISSION (CJTC)

Notification shall be made to CJTC within 15 days of learning of the occurrence of any death or serious injury caused by the use of force by a deputy (RCW 43.101.135).

300.5.4 REPORTING TO WASHINGTON STATEWIDE USE OF FORCE DATA PROGRAM

The Office shall submit reports regarding use of force incidents as provided by RCW 10.118.030 to the Washington statewide use of force data program in the format and time frame established by the program (RCW 10.118.030).

300.6 DEADLY FORCE APPLICATIONS

When reasonable, deputies shall, prior to the use of deadly force, make efforts to identify themselves as peace officers and to warn that deadly force may be used, unless a deputy has objectively reasonable grounds to believe the person is aware of those facts.

A deputy may use deadly force against another person only when necessary to protect against an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death to the deputy or another person.

300.6.1 MOVING VEHICLES

Shots fired at or from a moving vehicle involve additional considerations and risks, and are rarely effective.

A deputy may not fire a weapon upon a moving vehicle unless necessary to protect against an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death resulting from the operator's or a passenger's use of a deadly weapon.

Use of Force

A vehicle is not considered a deadly weapon unless the operator is using the vehicle as a deadly weapon and no other reasonable means to avoid potential serious harm are immediately available to the deputy. (RCW 10.116.060).

When feasible, deputies should attempt to move out of the path of a moving vehicle rather than discharge their weapon at the operator or the vehicle.

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

A deputy should not discharge a firearm from a moving vehicle, unless necessary to protect the deputy or another person against an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death.

300.6.2 DRAWING AND POINTING A FIREARM

- (a) A deputy should only draw a firearm when the deputy makes reasonable observations based on the totality of the circumstances that the situation may evolve to the point where deadly force would be justified.
- (b) The deputy should, as soon as safe and feasible, lower, holster, or secure the firearm.
- (c) Pointing a firearm at a person is a reportable use of force and its justification and circumstances shall be documented in accordance with procedures set by the statewide use of force data collection program (RCW 10.118.030).

300.7 MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Once it is reasonably safe to do so, 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 the individual can be medically assessed. Individuals should not be placed on their stomachs for an extended period, as this could impair their ability to breathe (RCW 10.93.190).

Based upon the deputy'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 deputy 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 deputy 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 deputy 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

Use of Force

pain, or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple deputies to be brought under control, may be at an increased risk of sudden death. Calls involving these persons should be considered medical emergencies. Deputies who reasonably suspect a medical emergency should request medical assistance as soon as practicable and have medical personnel stage away.

See policy 429, Medical Aid and Response Policy, for additional guidelines.

300.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A supervisor should respond to a reported application of force resulting in visible injury, if reasonably available. 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 deputies. 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 individual upon whom force was applied. If this interview is conducted without the individual having voluntarily waived the individual's *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.

If 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.

Use of Force

When an incident results in death, serious bodily harm, or great bodily harm, the supervisor shall immediately contact the Office of Independent Investigations pursuant to the procedures established by the Office of Independent Investigation (RCW 43.102.120).

300.8.1 SHIFT SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY

The Shift Supervisor 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. The supervisor shall ensure that the review is forwarded to the Chief Criminal Deputy. Once the Chief Criminal Deputy has completed his review it will be forwarded to the Undersheriff and then to the Sheriff for review by both.

300.9 TRAINING

All deputies and supervisors shall receive training consistent with this policy and related use of force policies at least annually. Training should be a combination of classroom and scenario based learning and be incorporated into defensive tactics curricula.

Deputies shall receive training and subsequent periodic training on (RCW 43.101.450; RCW 43.101.495; RCW 10.120.010; RCW 10.120.020):

- (a) Vulnerable populations, including but not limited to children, elderly, pregnant persons, and individuals with physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities.
- (b) De-escalation tactics, including reasonably effective alternatives to force including applicable legal requirements.
- (c) Duty to intervene.
- (d) Exercising reasonable care in determining when to use force.
- (e) Evaluation of whether certain applications of force are reasonable as applied to the threat or resistance.

300.10 USE OF FORCE ANALYSIS

At least annually, the Chief Criminal Deputy should prepare an analysis report on use of force incidents. The report should be submitted to the Sheriff. The report should not contain the names of deputies, 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.