

## **BODY ARMOR**

WILLIAMSTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE NO.  <b>4.11</b>	EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/21/2022
	REVISION DATE: 03/30/2023
	REVIEW DATE: 03/30/2024

### **I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

Soft, concealable body armor is designed to protect the wearer against projectiles fired by most handguns and shotguns. Its effectiveness depends upon the protection rating. Soft body armor is not designed to protect the wearer from medium to high power rifle projectiles.

Heavier body armor made of ceramic plates may protect against multiple impacts from rifle fire, but it is generally too heavy and inflexible to be worn during normal patrol duties and is generally relegated to special operations.

Soft body armor may protect against improvised weapons, such as broken bottles, but is usually not effective against knives or ice picks unless it is designed, manufactured and rated as such. Sharp, pointed instruments used in a stabbing motion may penetrate body armor and could deliver a fatal injury. Slashing knife attacks may be resisted.

While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures and sound tactics. The purpose of this policy is to provide law enforcement officers with guidelines for the proper use and care of body armor.

### **II. POLICY**

It is the policy of this department to maximize the officer protection available through the use of body armor in combination with prescribed safety procedures and to require that uniformed and non-uniformed officers wear their concealable, soft body armor at all times in field activities both on duty

and during extra-duty employment, e.g., overtime, incidents, etc. unless exempt by the provisions of this policy. Body armor need not be worn to court.

### **III. 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.

### **IV. PROCEDURES [41.3.5]**

#### **Authorized Body Armor**

All body armor worn must be agency-issued or authorized. The body armor must comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current standards of the National Institute of Justice.

#### **Issuance of Body Armor**

##### AVAILABILITY OF BODY ARMOR:

Regardless of whether or not body armor is worn regularly, each sworn employee shall have body armor available for wear. Body armor will be custom fitted to each employee with instruction on how to wear it.

##### INITIAL ISSUE:

Upon beginning employment with this agency and prior to working in the field,

##### REPLACEMENT ISSUE:

The life expectancy of soft body armor is approximately five years. Body armor that is no longer serviceable due to wear or service-connected damage shall be replaced by the department. Employees requiring replacement body armor shall contact the Chief of Police.

#### **Use of Body Armor**

STUDENT OFFICERS: \Body armor shall be worn by recruit officers as specified by the Municipal Police Training Committee or other academy regulations.

##### FIELD OPERATIONS

Uniformed Officers who are assigned to a uniformed function are required to wear body armor while engaged in field activities, unless exempt as follows:

- When the department determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor; or
- When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor.

All officers who are working detail are required to have their body armor readily available to the officer, generally carried in the officers' car with other equipment.

Plain Clothed Officers who are assigned to a non-uniformed function are required to wear body armor while engaged in field activities, as defined in III A. Field Activities, unless exempt as follows:

- When the officer is involved in undercover or plain clothes work that his/her supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor;
- When the department determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor; or
- When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor.

In such instances when body armor is not worn while the officer is engaged in field activities, the body armor must be readily available to the officer, generally carried in the officer's vehicle with other equipment.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS:

Officers assigned to administrative duties are generally not required to wear body armor while performing those administrative duties. When administrative officers perform uniformed or non-uniformed field activities, they must comply with body armor wear requirements for officers involved in field activities.

When not being used, body armor must be readily available to the employee. Body armor may be stored in:

- The officer's work area;
- The officer's locker; or
- The officer's vehicle.

#### FIREARMS TRAINING:

All employees involved in training which involves handling of loaded firearms shall wear body armor during such training.

#### HIGH RISK SITUATIONS:

The wearing of body armor is required during pre-planned, high-risk situations, such as high-risk search or arrest warrants, responding to an active shooter or drug raids.

#### INSPECTIONS OF BODY ARMOR:

Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn as required by this policy through routine observation and periodic documented inspections (Monthly Uniform Inspections.) Cleaning, maintenance and inspection of body armor are the responsibility of the wearer.

**Care and Maintenance of Body Armor**

Officers shall routinely inspect personal body armor for signs of damage or wear and for general cleanliness. Unserviceable body armor shall be reported to the chief of police or lieutenant.

As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer shall be responsible for cleaning personal body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Officers are responsible for the proper storage, maintenance and care of body armor in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.