



ARLINGTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE MANUAL

Chapter: 5 <i>Procedures</i>	Revision Date: August 22, 2025	Initiation Date: March 1, 2005	By Authority of the Chief of Police
Accreditation Standard(s): 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4 (CALEA)			 Chief Charles A. Penn

538.01 Weapons

I. Overview

This directive establishes the Arlington County Police Department's (the Department's) primary regulations relating to the issuance, training, possession, care, maintenance, and storage of authorized firearms and issued weapons. In addition, this directive provides procedural guidelines for the deployment and use of less lethal munitions. This directive is not intended to address issues related to the use of deadly force. For requirements and guidelines pertaining to the deliberate use and/or display of firearms during operational situations, refer to [Directive Manual 538.04 - Use of Force](#).

II. Policy

Only Department authorized firearms and ammunition will be used by officers in the performance of their duties. Officers shall receive initial and periodic firearms refresher training to maintain a high level of demonstrated firearms proficiency. Prior to carrying any Department issued or authorized lethal or less lethal weapons, all sworn personnel will review and sign for [Directive Manual 538.04 - Use of Force](#) and attend and successfully complete a training and qualification course approved by the Chief of Police. Department weapons are issued for law enforcement purposes only and their use outside of skill building, and official duties is prohibited. A discharge of any Department issued or approved firearm, other than during training, shall be reported to the officer's chain of command immediately.

III. Definitions

- A. Authorized Impact Weapons - Weapons issued or specifically approved by the Department for use in a striking manner. Such weapons include, but are not limited to, expandable batons, straight batons, side-handle batons, and certain large flashlights. Small flashlights not exceeding eight inches in length are not considered impact weapons for purposes of this directive.
- B. Kinetic Impact Munitions – Includes impact rounds and baton rounds, such as rubber batons, bean bag rounds, foam baton rounds, and plastic, wax, wood, or rubber-coated projectiles.
- C. Law Enforcement Officer's Safety Act of 2004 (LEOSA) - Amends the Federal criminal code to authorize a qualified law enforcement officer carrying photographic governmental agency identification to carry a concealed firearm, notwithstanding any State or local law.
- D. On-Duty – Any employment that is conditional on the actual or potential use of law enforcement powers by an officer.
- E. Off-Duty – Any employment (or personal time) that will not require the use or potential use of law enforcement powers by the officer.
 - 1. Off-Duty Secondary Employment- see [Directive Manual 512.03- Off-Duty Employment](#).

IV. Procedure

A. Firearms

1. Primary On-duty Handguns

Glock – The Glock 17 and 19 are the standard Department issued handguns for all sworn officers and shall be carried by all sworn officers working in uniform while working on-duty or during off-duty secondary employment (see [Directive Manual 512.03- Off-Duty Employment](#)). Uniformed headquarters staff and officers dressed in civilian attire may carry a Department issued Glock 26 or Glock 43X MOS, instead of the Glock 17 or Glock 19. Officers electing to carry the Glock 26 or 43X shall have their issued Glock 17 or 19 readily available in a place where it can be retrieved quickly if staff needs to be deployed.

- a. The following guidelines and procedures shall apply when officers carry a primary on-duty handgun:
 - 1) The handgun shall be carried on and off-duty with a fully loaded issued magazine in the magazine well and with a round chambered.
 - 2) When carried by an officer in uniform, the handgun shall be carried in a holster supplied by the Department. When carried off-duty, the handgun shall be carried in a holster approved by armory personnel or in a secure purse, waist pack, briefcase, or backpack.
- b. Modular Optic System (MOS) handguns – Officers may be issued and carry a Glock 17, 19 or 43X equipped with a red dot sight (RDS). When issued an RDS-equipped weapon, officers shall comply with the standards of IV.A.1 in this directive, and:
 - 1) Shall only carry a weapon that has an authorized RDS mounted by the armory staff.
 - a) MOS firearms shall be equipped with backup iron sights which will be provided and installed by armory staff.
 - 2) Shall attend the Department's RDS-transition training course prior to carrying an RDS-equipped primary duty weapon.
- c. All primary on-duty handguns and handguns carried for off-duty secondary employment shall be loaded exclusively with Department-issued duty ammunition that has not been altered or modified in any way.
- d. A complete inventory of all the types and specifications for all lethal and less lethal weapons and ammunition approved for use by the agency is located on the L:Drive and in the Law Enforcement Records Management System (LERMS) [4.3.1, a, b, e]

2. Back-up weapons – Officers are permitted to carry a personally-owned back-up handgun while on-duty, provided that it meets the following parameters:

- a. Double-action (DAO) semi-automatic pistol; or
- b. Double-action to single-action (DA/SA) semi-automatic pistol; or
- c. Double-action revolver; or
- d. Single-action (S/A) semi-automatic pistol; and
- e. Ammunition size shall not be less than .380 caliber nor greater than .45 caliber.
- f. The handgun has been inspected and approved by the Department's armory personnel.
- g. The handgun's descriptive data, to include manufacturer, model, caliber, and serial number, is documented in the armory's files.
- h. The officer has qualified with the handgun on a Department approved course of fire.
- i. The handgun is loaded with "factory new" ammunition that has been approved by the Department's armory personnel.
- j. The handgun is worn concealed from view and in a holster that has been approved by the Department's armory personnel.

3. Undercover Handguns - Officers working in undercover or highly specialized assignments, while dressed in civilian attire may substitute a personally owned handgun for the Glock 17, Glock 19, Glock 26 or Glock 43X MOS. When electing this option, all the provisions of sub-section IV.A.2 must be satisfied, except that tactical considerations may preclude carrying the firearm in an approved holster.

4. Off-Duty Handguns

- a. Carry Inside of Arlington County - Officers who decide to exercise this option shall wear or carry only Department issued or privately-owned handguns meeting the requirements listed under IV.A.2. above.

- b. Carry Outside of Arlington County - Officers are authorized to be armed in any jurisdiction where the carrying of a firearm by a Virginia law enforcement officer is legal and shall be in compliance with all Federal, State, and local laws related to the regulation of firearms.
5. Shotguns - Officers are permitted, at their discretion, to carry a Department issued shotgun. Officers who are assigned to carry shotguns shall have the weapon readily available, whenever they are on-duty inside Arlington County.
- a. Eligibility- To be eligible to carry and deploy a shotgun, an officer must:
 - 1) Complete all required training and qualifications prior to being authorized to carry and deploy the shotgun.
 - 2) Subsequent training sessions will be conducted annually and will consist of refresher training on all of the initial topics and successful completion of the shotgun qualification course.
 - 3) Discharge of the shotgun shall be in accordance with the provisions outlined in [Directive Manual 538.04 - Use of Force](#).
 - 4) Additional regulations pertaining to the use of shotguns in connection with less lethal munitions and ballistic breaching can be found later in this directive.
6. Patrol Rifles - Patrol rifles may be personally assigned to patrol officers at the discretion of the Operations Division Commander. Officers shall not equip their assigned patrol rifle with aftermarket parts without prior approval from armory personnel.
- a. Eligibility - To be eligible to carry and deploy a patrol rifle, an officer must:
 - 1) Have successfully completed the field training officer (FTO) program.
 - 2) Have successfully completed a Departmentally approved patrol rifle training course.
 - 3) Be assigned to the Operations Division.
 - 4) Favorable recommendation from their chain of command, including the recommendation of their Patrol Commander.
 - 5) Have received favorable recommendation by the Training and Employee Development Unit (TED) Supervisor.
 - 6) Maintain a minimum qualification rating of 80% with both the Department issued handgun and shotgun (if issued).

Patrol rifles may be deployed to assignments outside uniform patrol with approval from the Wellness and Employee Development (WED) Section Commander. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the needs of the unit.
 - b. Personally Owned Patrol Rifles – Officers selected to participate in the Patrol Rifle Program who have trained as a patrol rifle operator and retain an active rifle qualification, but are subsequently reassigned outside the Operations Division may carry a personally owned rifle for deployment during the performance of police duties under the following provisions:
 - 1) Prior written permission has been obtained from the Chief of Police to carry the rifle.
 - 2) The rifle has been previously inspected and approved by the Department's armory personnel.
 - 3) The rifle shall meet the specifications set by the armory and no modifications shall be made without prior approval by armory personnel.
 - 4) The rifle's descriptive data, to include manufacturer, model, caliber and serial numbers, is documented in the armory's files.
 - 5) The officer has qualified with the rifle on a Department approved course of fire.
 - 6) The rifle is loaded with Department issued ammunition that has not been altered in any way.
 - 7) The officer maintains a minimum qualification rating of 80% with both the Department issued handgun and shotgun (if issued).
 - 8) If the officer does not have an assigned vehicle with an electronic locking mount, the officer shall store the rifle in a properly fitted rigid or soft case.
 - c. Deployment - Officers who are assigned to carry Department issued or privately-owned patrol rifles, shall have the weapon readily available, whenever they are on-duty inside Arlington County. In accordance with [Directive Manual 538.04- Use of Force](#), an officer may deploy a patrol rifle under any condition in which the deployment of a Department firearm is authorized.

7. Specialty Firearms - Other types of firearms are restricted to use by designated Emergency Response Team (ERT) personnel. These specialty weapons include sniper rifles and less-lethal launchers. Issuance and/or deployment of these specialty weapons shall occur under the authority of the ERT Commander and shall comply with the provisions of the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
8. Ballistic Breaching Shotguns – The Department “Ballistic Breaching Program” within the Operations Division allows trained officers to gain positive entry into a secured area using a breaching shotgun and approved ammunition.
 - a. Eligibility - To be eligible to carry and deploy a ballistic breaching shotgun, an officer must:
 - 1) Have Successfully completed the FTO program.
 - 2) Have successfully completed a Departmentally approved ballistic breaching shotgun training course.
 - a) Once issued the breaching shotgun, the officer must attend two ballistic breaching recert courses annually, one of which includes a ballistic breaching qualification. Additionally, the operator must attend two SWAT breaching trainings per calendar year.
 - 3) Be assigned to the Operations Division.
 - a) When an officer is transferred outside of operations and is interested in keeping their assigned ballistic breaching shotgun, they may make a request to the WED Section Commander who will make the determination.
 - 4) Receive a favorable recommendation from their chain of command.
 - 5) Receive a favorable recommendation by the TED Unit Supervisor.
 - 7) Must be a rifle operator and maintain a 90% or higher on their annual rifle in-service qualification.
 - 8) Must maintain a 90% or higher on a combat shotgun qualification (conducted during their ballistic breaching training).
 - b. Equipment – Armory personnel shall personally assign each officer in the program a specially-fit Remington 870 shotgun. Officers shall not equip their breaching shotgun with aftermarket parts without prior approval by armory personnel. Only 12-gauge ballistic breaching projectiles issued by the Department will be used during the deployment of a breaching shotgun.
 - c. Deployment – Breaching shotguns shall be deployed in accordance with Departmental training during exigent circumstances in which there is reasonable belief that there is imminent threat to life or the likelihood of serious bodily injury. Ballistic breaching should be considered as a last resort after other breaching methods have been explored or if they are not readily available or feasible given the circumstances. Factors to consider when deploying a breaching shotgun include:
 - 1) Severity and imminency of the threat.
 - 2) Construction and composition of the doorway to be breached.
 - 3) Ability to use manual breaching options in a timely manner.
 - d. Any officer or supervisor may request a ballistic breaching operator. Once the breaching shotgun is deployed, the decision to deploy ballistic breaching projectiles will be at the discretion of the operator. It shall be the responsibility of the operator to visually and physically inspect the shotgun and munitions to ensure that only the appropriate projectiles are loaded into the shotgun. Whenever practical, a second officer will inspect the shotgun to ensure the weapon is unloaded of shotgun ammunition prior to the loading of the ballistic breaching projectiles. For additional information regarding the use of ballistic breaching by SWAT personnel deployed for a SWAT mission, officers should refer to the SWAT SOP.
 - e. Storage – Breaching shotguns shall be stored according to the procedures for storing shotguns and patrol rifles in sub-section IV.B.
- B. **Firearms Storage** - Officers are responsible for the safety and security of their firearms and are expected to make reasonable accommodation to properly maintain and secure their firearms at all times.

1. Handguns - Issued and/or approved firearms will be stored, serviced, carried, and used in a safe, responsible manner. Uniformed officers are permitted to possess their firearms in the courtrooms located at the Arlington County Justice Center. [4.3.2]
 2. Shotguns / Rifles - Sworn employees issued a shotgun or rifle shall ensure the shotgun or rifle is secured in the electronic locking mount of the officer's vehicle or locked in the vehicle's trunk and secured in the rifle case provided by the armory if the vehicle is not equipped with an electronic locking mount.
 - a. When stored in either of these ways, shotguns and rifles shall be in a car-safe condition, which is defined as:
 - 1) A fully loaded magazine inserted in the rifle or a fully loaded magazine tube of the shotgun.
 - 2) No round in the chamber.
 - 3) The safety engaged.
 - 4) The action closed.
 - b. Whenever the shotgun or rifle is removed from the vehicle for a reason other than an actual tactical deployment, it shall be rendered into a "station safe" condition, which is identical to the car-safe condition except that the magazine is removed from the weapon, and the action is open.
 - c. Shotguns and rifles shall be stored inside a secure area of the Department. Rifles and shotguns shall be removed from any vehicle that is left at a repair or maintenance facility. Officers taking their shotgun or rifle home while off-duty shall store the weapon in a locked gun safe.
 - d. Shotguns and rifles shall not be loaded or unloaded inside a vehicle and shall not be loaded or unloaded inside any portion of a building other than a parking garage. These prohibitions do not apply, however, in urgent situations where tactical needs require immediate loading or unloading of the weapon.
- C. **Emergency Response Weapons Locker** - The emergency response weapons locker houses weapons for immediate deployment in case of deadly threat situations at the Department. The weapons assigned to this locker shall be kept at the Department in a car-safe condition, unless deployment is needed to address an active violence incident. The TED Unit shall clean and maintain all weapons assigned to the emergency response weapons locker. The unit will ensure that an inventory of these items is kept and that they are inspected in accordance with the provision of sub-section IV. E.
- D. **Issuance, Maintenance, Return, and Disposal of Firearms**
1. Issuance - The Department's armory personnel are responsible for the issuance and record keeping of all Department firearms.
 - a. Replacement Firearms - A supply of replacement firearms is stored in the Operations Division for use by supervisors who may need to temporarily replace a firearm during hours when armory personnel are unavailable. Only supervisors may issue a weapon from the replacement cache, and must conduct the following actions after they issue the weapon:
 - 1) Immediately note their actions in the logbook maintained in the firearms storage area for that purpose.
 - 2) Immediately notify armory staff via email. The armory personnel may then permit the continued use of the replacement weapon, or require that other arrangements be made, at their discretion.
 2. Maintenance - Officers shall properly clean and lubricate all firearms issued to them by the Department, as well as any privately-owned firearms which they are authorized to carry, in accordance with their training and/or the manufacturer's instructions.
 - a. Officers shall be alert for indications of poor performance or mechanical defects in these firearms. When problems are noted, the officer shall immediately notify the armory personnel or, if unavailable, a supervisor. Officers shall not continue to carry any firearm that they have cause to believe may be defective.

- b. Officers shall not attempt to repair Department issued firearms or adjust the sights of such firearms. All such repairs and adjustments shall be made or arranged by the Department's armory personnel. Similarly, an officer shall not attempt to repair or adjust the sights of privately-owned firearms that they have been authorized by the Department to carry, unless the officer is a qualified armorer.
 - c. When a Department approved, privately-owned firearm has been repaired or serviced by a person other than the Department's armory personnel, that firearm may not then be routinely carried until it has been re-inspected by the Department's armory personnel.
 - d. The TED Unit shall maintain all patrol rifles, shotguns, replacement handguns, and other firearms-related equipment. The unit shall ensure that a current inventory of these items is kept, and that they are inspected in accordance with the provisions of sub-section IV. E. of this directive.
- 3. Return – Department issued firearms shall be returned, by the assigned officer, to armory personnel upon separation from the Department.
- 4. Disposal - Firearms that are unserviceable or otherwise unsuitable for the Department's use shall, upon written permission from the Systems Management Division Commander, be disposed of in accordance with the Arlington County Purchasing Manual.

E. Firearms Inspections

- 1. Supervisory Line Inspections - Supervisors may inspect the on-duty handguns of their subordinates. If any deficiencies are noted, a memorandum shall be forwarded through the chain of command and to the TED Unit.
 - a. When practical, each inspection shall be conducted at the unloading station which is located outside of the armory next to the cleaning bench and is capable of withstanding the impact of handguns, shotguns, and rifles. When this is not practical, firearms inspections shall occur at a safe location where potential for ricochet is low.
- 2. Inspections of Section or Unit Firearms - If replacement and/or specialized firearms have been issued to a section or unit, the commander of that section or unit, shall ensure that the firearms are inspected monthly. A memorandum documenting any deficiencies shall be forwarded to the TED Unit.
- 3. Inspections by the Armory - The Department's armory personnel shall conduct an inspection of each Department owned handgun, shotgun, and patrol rifle as well as approved privately-owned firearms and rifles, at least once per year. Any weapon found to be defective or unsafe will be removed from service and properly repaired or replaced. [4.3.1, c, d]
 - a. In addition to these scheduled annual inspections, armory personnel shall examine other Department issued firearms, upon request. Additional provisions pertaining to inspections by armory personnel may be found in the TED Unit SOP.

F. Training

- 1. Recruit Training
 - a. All recruit officers are required to pass a state approved firearms qualification course during their initial recruit training. Following qualification, and at a time determined by armory personnel and academy staff, the recruit shall be issued a firearm in accordance with the TED Unit SOP.
 - b. Firearms and training barrels will be distributed to recruits during the training process. The factory issued barrel of the handgun will be maintained at the armory until the recruit has qualified with the weapon.
- 2. Biannual Requalification
 - a. General Requirements - Unless directed by the Chief of Police or designee:
 - 1) Officers shall re-qualify at least twice each year with any and all handguns carried on-duty, including primary and back-up weapons.

- 2) Officers shall re-qualify at least once each year with any specialty firearm, such as issued shotguns and patrol rifles.
- 3) Officers shall re-qualify at least once each year with all privately-owned firearms carried off-duty within the Commonwealth of Virginia or under LEOSA.
 - a) The Department shall provide qualification ammunition for all Department issued firearms and all privately-owned firearms whose caliber matches the Department issued firearm. All other personally owned firearms shall be loaded during qualification with "factory new" ammunition approved by the Department's armory personnel.
- 4) Officers on light duty during a re-qualification period, shall make arrangements with the TED Unit, to re-qualify once they return to full duty. Officers on light duty shall adhere to all firearms requirements contained in [Directive Manual 511.09 - Light Duty](#).
- 5) In accordance with Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) standards, the Chief of Police has designated the armorer to serve as their representative with regards to drafting Patrol Rifle and Ballistic Breaching training lesson plans. All lesson plans shall be approved by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR).
- 6) Where the other types of firearms (sniper rifles, less lethal launchers, etc.) are concerned, the ERT Commander shall maintain the list of qualified users, and shall inform the Operations Division Commander, whenever changes to that list occur.
- b. Failure to qualify - The TED is responsible for establishing remedial training and requalification procedures that comply with the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Standards, Department policy, and best practices.

G. Range Facilities, Staff, and Records

1. Range Facilities - The Department uses local area firearm ranges as qualification sites. Officers attending training at any of these ranges shall familiarize themselves with the range's safety rules and other regulations and shall abide by them.
2. Staff -The Department's armory personnel are responsible for coordinating the training and requalification of all officers regarding handguns, shotguns, and patrol rifles. All firearms instructors shall be certified by DCJS. Training and requalification regarding other types of firearms shall be coordinated under the general direction of the ERT Commander, in accordance with the SWAT SOP and related training directives.
3. Records - Records of initial firearms qualifications, subsequent re-qualifications, and firearms-related academic training shall also be maintained.

H. Carrying Firearms Aboard Commercial Aircraft - Federal law, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, and the policies of individual airlines, place various restrictions upon officers who carry firearms aboard a commercial aircraft. These requirements are subject to periodic revision and thus are not listed individually in this directive.

1. Unless otherwise authorized by Transportation Security Administration (TSA), to fly armed, a Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) must:
 - a. Be a federal law enforcement officer or a full-time municipal, county, or state law enforcement officer, who is a direct employee of a government agency; and
 - b. Be sworn and commissioned to enforce criminal statutes or immigration statutes; and
 - c. Be authorized by the employing agency to have the weapon in connection with assigned duties; and
 - d. Have completed the TSA training program, ["Law Enforcement Officers Flying Armed."](#)
2. Additionally, officers with a need to carry a firearm aboard a flight shall:
 - a. Contact the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) to arrange for Departmental training and/or obtain written guidelines for armed air travel; and
 - b. Inquire with the airline at the earliest practical opportunity to identify all current firearms-related laws, regulations, and policies applicable to their flight; and

- c. Transmit, messages required by the TSA Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC), related to flying armed, via the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS).

- I. **Less Lethal Weapons and Weaponless Control Tactics** - All officers, unless directed by the Chief of Police or designee, will receive training and must demonstrate proficiency on less lethal weapons and weaponless control tactics at least biennially on a schedule established by the WED Section. Only DCJS certified control tactics instructors are permitted to monitor and conduct training and proficiency certification. [4.3.3, a]
1. **Kinetic Impact Munitions** – Officers shall not use kinetic impact munitions unless it is necessary to protect the officer or another person from death or serious bodily injury.
 2. **Less Lethal Munitions** - The use of less lethal munitions against armed or dangerous suspects and/or unlawful or dangerous situations offers an alternative to the use of deadly force. Less lethal munitions have the potential to disable a suspect and/or bring an unlawful or dangerous situation safely under control without inflicting serious or fatal injury. When the decision to employ less lethal munitions is made, the following procedures apply:
 - a. Less lethal munitions shall only be fired by officers trained and certified by the Department.
 - b. Only less lethal munitions issued by the Department will be used.
 - c. Any officer or supervisor may request a less lethal munitions operator.
 - d. Supervisors shall be notified by the operator when the less lethal munitions are loaded in the weapon, unless the notification would cause a delay in deployment that might endanger the safety of officers or civilians. Once the operator is deployed, the decision to fire less lethal munitions will be at the operator's discretion.
 - e. It shall be the operator's responsibility to visually and physically inspect the weapon and ensure that only the appropriate less lethal munitions are loaded. Whenever practical, a second officer will inspect the weapon to ensure the weapon is unloaded of live ammunition prior to the loading of the less lethal munitions.
 - f. All perimeter units within the immediate area shall be advised either by radio or direct verbal contact that the operator has been deployed and less lethal munitions may be fired.
 - g. Less lethal munitions should be used from behind cover or at a safe distance. A cover officer should be in a position to engage the subject and/or unlawful or dangerous situation with deadly force, if necessary.
 - h. Intentional impacts to the head or neck shall be avoided, unless deadly force is justified.
 - i. Anyone impacted by a less lethal munitions shall be seen by medical personnel as soon as possible unless circumstances exist that would render such aid improbable or dangerous given the totality of the circumstances.
 - j. If the less lethal munitions are recoverable, a police agent shall collect any less lethal munitions that impact a subject. The less lethal munitions shall be packaged and placed in the Property Management Unit, according to Department procedures.
 3. **Training**
 - a. **Initial Training** - The academy provides initial less lethal and weaponless control tactics for officers. Initial training for other less lethal weapons (such as less lethal munitions) shall be documented on the officer's training record.
 - b. **Refresher Training** – All sworn officers are required to receive refresher training with the baton, OC Spray, and control tactics at least once every 2 years.
 - 1) Refresher training shall include the Department policy on use of force and all training will be documented. Any officer who fails to meet the proficiency standards set during less lethal training will be provided remedial training. Remedial training will be determined by the lead instructor. [4.3.3, b, c]