



# Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

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Sheriff Carl Ritchie

## 9-22 Body Armor

- NEW
- REVISED
- REVIEWED

ACA Standards Reference:  
CALEA Standards Reference: 41.3.5, 41.3.6  
NCCHC Standards Reference:  
SCLEA Standards Reference:  
SC Minimum Standards:

*This policy dated 1/28/2025 replaces prior policies cited above and supersedes all previously issued directives.*

I. Purpose:

To provide agency personnel with guidelines for the wearing, proper use, and care of issued body armor.

II. Policy:

It is the policy of this agency to maximize officer safety through the use of body armor in conjunction with the practice of prescribed safety procedures. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for sound, basic safety procedures. (Ref: CALEA 41.3.5)

III. Definitions:

A. For purposes of this procedure, the word "deputy" applies to all agency employees with a certification classification of Class I, Class II, Class III, or Reserve Deputy, as defined by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

The following terms are used interchangeably; however, they carry guidance to specific employees based on usage of the term:

1. Deputy, deputy sheriff, detention deputy, sworn employee, uniformed sworn employee, sworn administrative employee, etc., and
2. civilian, non-sworn employee.

B. *Employee*: When used without further clarification, the term employee is inclusive of all agency members (sworn and non-sworn) to include volunteers and contractors.

IV. Procedure:

A. Issuance of Body Armor:

1. All body armor issued must comply with the current minimum protective standards prescribed by the National Institute of Justice.
2. All deputy sheriffs and detention deputies that are weapons qualified shall be issued body armor. Detention deputies must wear their body armor when carrying a duty weapon.

3. Body armor that is expired, worn or damaged shall be replaced by the Sheriff's Office. Body armor that must be replaced due to misuse or abuse by a deputy shall be paid for by the deputy who misused or abused the body armor. (Ref: CALEA 41.3.5)

**B. Use of Body Armor:**

1. Body armor shall be worn by deputy sheriffs during recruit and field training.
2. Detention deputies shall wear their body armor at all times when carrying a duty weapon or while still in an official capacity.
3. Deputy sheriffs are required to wear the issued body armor while engaged in field activities while on duty and when working off-duty assignments unless exempted as follows:
  - a. when an agency approved physician determines that a deputy sheriff has a medical condition that would preclude use of body armor;
  - b. when the deputy sheriff is involved in undercover or plainclothes work that their supervisor determines would be compromised by use of body armor;
  - c. when the deputy sheriff is assigned to perform an administrative function; or
  - d. when the agency determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate body armor.
4. Deputies exempted for medical conditions will not be allowed to participate in pre-planned, high risk activities.
5. All personnel will wear only agency-approved/issued body armor. (Ref: CALEA 41.3.5 and 41.3.6)

**C. Inspections of Body Armor:**

1. Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn and maintained as required by this directive by a periodic documented inspection of their personnel's body armor.

2. There shall be an annual inspection of all body armor for fit, expiration date, cleanliness, and signs of damage, abuse, and wear.

D. Care and Maintenance of Body Armor:

1. Each deputy is responsible for the proper storage of body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and daily inspection for signs of damage and general cleanliness.
2. As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each deputy shall be responsible for cleaning their body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Deputies are responsible for reporting any damage or wear to the ballistic panels or cover to the Logistics Sergeant or other staff responsible for the uniform supply function.

E. Logistics:

The Logistics Sergeant shall be responsible for maintaining the following information:

1. technological advances in the body armor industry that may necessitate a change in body armor;
2. a description of weapons and ammunition currently in use, and whether or not issued body armor can withstand their impact; and
3. expiration dates of all issued body armor for replacement when due.

F. Training:

The Training Section shall be responsible for maintaining training programs that inform sworn personnel about body armor and emphasize its safe and proper use.