



Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

Sheriff Carl Ritchie

7-04 Less Lethal Shotgun and Munitions

- ☐ NEW
- ☒ REVISED
- ☒ REVIEWED

ACA Standards Reference: 5-ALDF-2B-08; 09; 10; 11; 12; 7B-15
CALEA Standards Reference:
NCCHC Standards Reference:
SCLEA Standards Reference:
SC Minimum Standards: 1021; 1061(c); 1062(a); 1062(b); 1062(c)

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

I. Purpose:

It is the policy of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office to use the least amount of force necessary to restore order, to protect the safety and welfare of employees, visitors, inmates, or to gain control of a resistive inmate at the Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center (SACDC) and return to normal detention operations as soon as possible.

II. Philosophy:

- A. The Charleston County Sheriff's Office recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity. Vesting detention deputies with the authority to use reasonable force to protect the public welfare requires a careful balancing of all human interests.
- B. The use of the Less Lethal Shotgun and munitions by detention deputies is a matter of critical concern to the public and the detention facility. Detention deputies are involved in numerous and varied human encounters daily and as warranted, may use force in performing their duties.

III. Policy:

The SACDC employs less-lethal munitions and shotguns in those instances where the application of such devices will aid in the accomplishment of the mission, and/or is calculated to reduce the risk to human injury and life for the control of combative or potentially combative persons. Trained Emergency Response Team (ERT) operators are authorized to carry firearms in a non-threatening manner until they transition to a ready position based on a potential threat. At that time, the detention deputies will follow use of force and verbal warning procedures. The display and/or the use of any less lethal device or munitions are considered a use of force incident and will be reported in accordance with the Use of Force policy.

(Ref: SC Min. 1021, 1061C; 5-ALDF-2B-08)

IV. 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, 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).
 - C. *Warning Shot*: For the purposes of this policy, the use of a Noise Flash Diversionary Device (NFDD) which is either deployed by hand or with the 12-gauge shotgun to secure SACDC inmate compliance.
 - D. *Show of Force*: Force shown by a deputy by unholstering/removing a firearm or an intermediate weapon and presenting it towards a subject; in an attempt to gain compliance of the situation at hand.
- V. Procedure:
- A. Special Munitions Devices:
 1. The Less Lethal Shotgun is a manually operated “pump” shotgun that utilizes a 12-gauge shell in order to launch a variety of less-lethal rounds, such as starlight, superstar, medium and extended range slugs. These rounds are designed to gain compliance without causing death or serious bodily injury on impact.
 2. This policy addresses the use of munitions usually considered less-than-lethal, including hand deployed devices and shoulder-fired weapons such as service shotguns, fog generators or 37mm rounds loaded with rubber sabots, rubber pellets, beanbags, oleoresin capsicum or similar projectiles.
 3. Noise Flash Diversionary Devices (NFDD) are devices that use noise and light to temporarily disorient an uncooperative SACDC inmate. Before deployment, the ERT Operator must:
 - a. check the area to make sure it is safe;
 - b. place device in controlled manner;
 - c. not deployed in proximity of flammable materials; and/or
 - d. deployed in a manner that will not deliberately injure human life.
 4. Proper maintenance checks should be made at the beginning of every shift to ensure that the weapon is functioning, loaded with authorized

munitions and is operational.

B. The use of Less Lethal Shotgun and Munitions:

1. Only those ERT operators who successfully complete training in the application and proper maintenance of the Less Lethal Shotgun /Munitions are authorized to use the weapon. (Ref: SC. Min 1062a)
2. ERT operators may only use the weapon while on duty (or during cooperative and approved exercise with another agency). ERT operators will be required to qualify semi-annually.
(Ref: SC Min. 1062a; 5-ALDF-7B-15)
3. ERT operators may use the Less Lethal Shotgun weapon in defensive and/or offensive tactical crowd control, custodial facility situations or when the detention deputy feels that it is essential in resolving a tactical situation.
4. Special munitions devices are not designed to produce shrapnel or expelled projectiles. However, these munitions are capable of causing serious bodily injury or death in some circumstances, especially if not deployed properly. Deployment of these munitions will be in compliance with agency policy and manufacturer recommendations.
5. Only agency approved munitions are authorized for use. Special munitions will remain in the possession and control of ERT operators at all times.
(Ref: 5-ALDF-2B-09)
6. When using the Less Lethal Shotgun it is important that the detention deputy adheres to the manufacture munitions specifications and SACDC training. It is also important the detention deputy ensures the weapon will only be fired from a safe distance at all times. If it becomes necessary to fire the weapon from outside the recommended distances, it will be deployed as a result of detention deputy's self-defense or imminent danger to a hostage, staff, and/or civilian lives.
7. Special munitions are used in emergencies as an alternative to the use of more lethal force.
8. Special munitions are deployed in situations to temporarily disable or detain individuals or to facilitate a tactical maneuver.
9. Less lethal weapons are not a substitute for lethal force. Detention personnel will employ support from personnel trained and qualified with lethal firearms when necessary.

10. The optimum target areas for the weapon are the large muscle groups and soft tissue from the abdomen and below. The head, neck, chest, spine, kidney area, and groin are not approved target areas unless lethal force is authorized as outlined in agency's Use of Force Policies ([7-01 Use of Force](#), [7-02 Use of Deadly Force](#), and [7-03 Use of Less Lethal Force](#)). When deploying special munitions consideration should be made to the surrounding area and potential unintended targets.
11. Medical attention will be given to any inmate who has been exposed to, or in contact with, any form of less lethal devices. If an impact weapon has been used on an inmate, a photograph of the target area must be attached to the inmate's medical records, even if there are no visible marks. An entry will also be made by medical staff in the inmate's medical record.
12. If a deputy maintains a Less Lethal Shotgun /Munitions, during an incident, and only presents it towards a subject, in a Show of Force, the deputy will document the Show of Force on an incident/supplemental report but not on a Use of Force Report Form. A Show of Force will not be reviewed as a Use of Force.

C. Reporting:

1. An Incident Report and Use of Force Report Form shall be completed, and a copy forwarded through their appropriate chain-of-command to the Detention Chief or designee no later than the conclusion of the detention deputy's tour of duty when any of the following occur;
 - a. discharge of a firearm or other weapon;
 - b. force is used to control inmates;
(Ref: SC Min. 1062c; 5-ALDF-2B-11)
2. The report must include the following:
 - a. ERT operator or supervisor authorizing use of special munitions;
 - b. authorizing personnel's perception for the need to deploy special munitions;
 - c. identification of detention deputies deploying munitions;

- d. number and types of rounds expended;
 - e. effects on those targeted and any injuries to include photos; and
 - f. secondary or unintended injury or damage.
3. Administrative Review of Critical Incidents:
- a. All reported uses of less-than-lethal force will be reviewed by the agency's Office of Professional Standards to determine whether:
 - i. agency rules, policy or procedures were violated;
 - ii. the relevant policy was clearly understandable and effective to cover the situation; and
 - iii. agency training is currently adequate.
 - b. All findings of policy violations or training inadequacies will be reported to the Detention Chief for resolution and/or disciplinary action.
 - c. At least annually, the Office of Professional Standards will conduct an analysis of Use of Force (i.e., less lethal, physical, and deadly force) incidents to determine training needs and/or policy modifications.
4. The facility will maintain a written record of routine and emergency distribution of security equipment. Firearms, chemical agents, and related security equipment are inventoried at least monthly to determine their condition and expiration dates.

(Ref: SC Min. 1062b; 5-ALDF-2B-10)

D. Storage:

While not in use, space will be provided for the secure storage of less lethal devices and related security equipment. Access is restricted to authorized persons only, and the storage space is located in an area separate and apart from inmate housing or activity areas. (Ref: SC Min. 1061b, 5-ALDF-2B-09)

E. Summary:

The decision to use force rests with each detention deputy. While there is

no way to specify the exact type or amount of reasonable force to be applied in any situation, each detention deputy shall use these guidelines to make such decisions in a safe, impartial, and professional manner.