



Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



6.210 – Strip Searches

Effective Date: 03/01/2022

6.210-POL

A sworn employee may strip search a person if the requirements of [RCW 10.79](#) have been met. A sergeant will authorize the strip search based on specific facts constituting reasonable suspicion or probable cause to believe the search was necessary.

Nothing in this section is intended to preclude sworn employees from seizing and holding clothing as evidence whenever that clothing is reasonably believed to be evidence of a crime.

1. Sworn Employee Requirements for Strip Searches

Strip Search – having a person remove or arrange some or all of their clothing so as to permit an inspection of the genitals, buttocks, anus, or other undergarments of the person or breasts of a female person ([RCW 10.79.070](#))

The person being strip searched must be in custody at a police facility or jail holding facility.

Captains may adopt section policies that authorize their personnel to conduct strip searches at locations other than precinct or jail holding facilities when transporting the subject to a precinct or jail holding facility presents safety or security concerns.

- Measures will be taken to ensure the privacy of the subject being strip searched regardless of the location of the strip search.

[RCW 10.79.130](#) states that no person will be strip searched without a warrant unless:

- There is a reasonable suspicion to believe that a strip search is necessary to discover weapons, criminal evidence, contraband, or any other thing concealed on the body of the person to be searched that constitutes a threat to the security of a holding, detention, or local correctional facility; or

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- There is probable cause to believe that a strip search is necessary to discover other criminal evidence concealed on the body of the person to be searched, but not constituting a threat to facility security; or
- There is a reasonable suspicion to believe that a strip search is necessary to discover a health condition requiring immediate medical attention.
- For this section, reasonable suspicion is deemed to be present when the person to be searched has been arrested for:
 - A violent offense as defined in [RCW 9.94A.030\(54\)](#); or
 - An offense involving escape, burglary, or the use of a deadly weapon; or
 - An offense involving possession of a drug or controlled substance under RCW Chapter [69.41](#), [69.50](#), or [69.52](#).

The determination of whether reasonable suspicion or probable cause exists to conduct a strip search will be made only after less-intrusive means have been used and will be based on the consideration of all information and circumstances known to the sergeant authorizing the strip search, including, but not limited to, the following factors:

- The nature of the offense for which the person to be searched was arrested.
- The prior criminal record of the person to be searched.
- Physically violent behavior of the person to be searched, during or after the arrest.

(see also manual section [16.200 – Interaction with Gender-Diverse Individuals](#))

All the factors that led to the determination of the sergeant to authorize the strip search will be articulated on the report and the Strip Search Record (Form 17.7).

2. Sworn Employees Will Assure Privacy

The search will be done in private, where the search will not be viewed by anyone other than the sworn employee conducting the strip search and the witness sworn employee. The steps taken to assure the privacy of the strip search will be documented on the Strip Search Record (Form 17.7).

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

To protect privacy and dignity, Body Worn Video (BWV) will not be recording when sworn employees conduct strip searches, unless BWV must be activated before the strip search has concluded, to record consistent with manual section 16.090 In Car and Body-Worn Video, should circumstances warrant (such as an assault on an officer).

(see also manual section [11.010-POL-5 In Department Facilities, Employees Will Secure Detainees in Areas Monitored by Cameras, Where Available](#))

(see also manual section [16.090 – In-Car and Body-Worn Video](#))

6.210-PRO-1 Conducting Strip Searches

Sergeant

1. **Screens** the circumstances of the arrest and **determines** if the legal criteria for a strip search has been met prior to giving authorization for the search.

Sworn Employee/Detective

2. **Conducts** less-intrusive means, such as pat-downs, metal detectors (where available), and clothing searches prior to the strip search.
3. **Explains** to the subject why they are being strip searched and give the person the opportunity to voluntarily produce the suspected item. The person will be allowed to voluntarily produce the item only if the sworn employee and sergeant believe that the item can be produced without compromising officer safety or risking destruction of evidence.
4. **Conducts** the strip search (must be conducted and witnessed by sworn employees of the same sex as the person to be searched).

Sergeant

5. The sergeant who has authorized the strip search will **witness** the strip search, unless the sergeant is a different sex as the person being searched. In that case the sergeant will assign another sworn employee of the appropriate sex to witness the search.

(see also manual section [16.200 – Interaction with Gender-Diverse Individuals](#))

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

6. The authorizing sergeant must **remain** at the location where the strip search is to take place.

Sworn Employee

7. **Completes** a Strip Search Record (Form 17.7) with the following information:
 - The offense(s) for which the person was arrested.
 - The specific facts constituting reasonable suspicion or probable cause to believe the search was necessary.
 - The name and serial number of the sergeant authorizing the search.
 - The name and serial number of the sworn employee conducting the search.
 - The name(s) of all other persons present during the search.
 - The time, date, and place of the search.
 - Any weapons, evidence, contraband, property, or health condition discovered as the result of the search.

Sergeant

8. **Reviews** and **approves** the Strip Search Record (Form 17.7) and the report.