

502.2 BODY ARMOR

- I. PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper wearing and care of issued body armor.
- II. POLICY: It is the policy of the Tampa Police Department to maximize officer safety, either while on patrol or during high-risk situations, with 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.
- III. DEFINITIONS:
 - A. High-Risk Situations: An actual or potential act of violence in which police officers are at a disadvantage and are subject to extreme danger. High-risk situations may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Barricaded subject;
 - 2. Civil disorder;
 - 3. Search warrants;
 - 4. Buy-bust operations;
 - 5. Hostage situations;
 - 6. Suicide intervention; and/or
 - 7. Other situations as directed by a supervisor.
 - B. Readily accessible: In an employee's assigned vehicle while working in the field.
- IV. PROCEDURES:
 - A. Issuance of Body Armor:
 - 1. All Tampa Police Department sworn personnel will be issued a ballistic vest (body armor). Officers will receive 2 concealed carriers for their vest, or they may elect to receive 1 concealed carrier and 1 exterior carrier. However, if an exterior carrier is ordered by the officer, due to the extra expense involved, he/she must sign a compliance agreement to wear the ballistic vest while on-duty and performing patrol duties or off-duty and performing authorized extra-duty work (TPD Form 602).

Officers may decline a department-issued vest if the officer provides his or her own body armor that meets or exceeds the protection specifications of currently issued body armor. (See PBA Agreement paragraph 27.3: officers electing to provide their own vest may receive up to \$400.00 credit toward the purchase).

- a. The approved exterior (outer) carrier for Uniform is the Point-Blank Guardian, Model 19, in LAPD Navy Blue. The exterior carrier must be uniform-style and shall not be “load bearing,” featuring a method to carry duty equipment on the vest itself. Exceptions may be made for specialty units or teams at the direction of the Chief of Police or Support Services Division commander. Plain clothes officers utilizing utility/raid vests, shall wear the Point-Blank Endeavor Carrier.
 - b. When load-bearing vests are authorized, only attachments and pouches issued or authorized by the Training Unit, or the Special Support Division Commander may be used. Under no circumstances shall firearms or electronic control devices (Taser) be carried on load-bearing vests. Authorized equipment which may be moved from the duty belt onto the load bearing vest carrier is limited to:
 - i. Handcuffs
 - ii. Ammunition magazines
 - iii. Pepper Spray
 - iv. Extendable Baton
 - v. Portable Radio
 - vi. Flashlight
 - c. Approval for a Uniform Load bearing vest based on Medical Necessity shall require submission of a Medical Release/ Physician’s Statement for Duty Belt Medical Exemption Form (TPD Form 701B)
2. All sworn personnel are authorized to wear personally owned body armor. Authorization is contingent upon approval of the Training Unit. All such armor must meet or exceed current department specifications. For the purpose of uniformity, all external carriers must be the same brand issued by the department.
 3. All body armor must comply with the current minimum protective standards prescribed by the National Institute of Justice.

B. Use of Body Armor:

1. Experience within this department has proven the life-saving effectiveness of body armor and officers are encouraged, in the strongest possible terms, to wear the armor at all times while on duty. However, actual use will be

at the discretion of the individual officer except in known high-risk situations and SWAT operations where the use of body armor is mandatory.

2. The wearing of body armor is required in all high-risk situations for uniform and plainclothes personnel.
3. All sworn officers are required to have their body armor readily accessible at all times while in the field.
4. Probationary officers are required to wear their body armor at all times while on duty during their first year of employment.

C. Inspection of Body Armor:

1. Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn, and compliance is met as required by this policy.
2. Immediate supervisors will inspect body armor, both departments issued and personally owned, of an employee at the time of the annual evaluation and during other inspections.

D. Care and Maintenance of Body Armor:

1. Each officer is responsible for the proper storage of body armor, in accordance with manufacturer instructions.
2. As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer shall be responsible for inspecting his body armor for cleanliness and signs of damage. All officers are responsible for cleaning their issued body armor in accordance with the manufacturers' guidelines.
3. Officers are responsible for reporting any damage or wear to the ballistic panels or cover to the Training Unit. Officers should be cognizant of the expiration date of their armor. As the armor must be current to be worn, officers must contact the Training Unit in advance of the expiration date to arrange for a replacement.

Supersedes SOP 502.2, dated 2/24.