

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). It is highly recommended and strongly advised that officers wear body armor at all times while on duty.
 2. 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 issued to the officer, the officer must wear the ballistic vest while on-duty and performing patrol duties or off-duty and performing authorized extra-duty work.

3. Officers may decline a department-issued vest if the officer provides their 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 request credit of up to the vendor's current negotiated contract price in lieu of accepting the departmental issued vests).
4. The only approved outer carriers for all personnel are the TPD Blue (BEL) Point-Blank Maverick, Model 25 carrier equipped with KWIQ Clip closure systems and Molle webbing system to provide load bearing solutions for authorized equipment. unless otherwise approved by the Chief of Police.
5. When load-bearing outer carriers are worn, only authorized attachments and pouches issued or authorized by the Training Unit, or the Support Services Division Commander may be used. Under no circumstances shall firearms, pistol magazines, or the ASP (expandable baton) be worn on the load-bearing outer carrier. Authorized equipment which may be worn on the outer carrier is limited to:
 - a. Handcuffs (black or silver in color)
 - b. Pepper Spray
 - c. Rifle Magazine Pouch
 - d. Portable Radio
 - e. Utility or Telephone Pouch
 - f. Tourniquet and/or IFAK
 - g. Flashlight
 - h. BWC
 - i. Electronic Control Device (Taser)- Proficiency must be demonstrated and documented on TPD Form 604.1
6. Placement of approved pouches for equipment and/or accessories on the outer carrier vest shall be at the officer's discretion. However, pouches will not be stacked on other pouches creating excess bulk. An exception will be made for rifle magazine pouches. They may have an additional pouch attached to the exterior except utility/telephone or radio pouches. Officers will ensure that all equipment on both the outer carrier and duty belt are readily accessible for immediate use and that no such configuration interferes with the ability to access equipment on their duty belt.
7. Only department issued patches designed specifically for wear on the outer carrier and/or the Tampa Police badge may be worn. No unauthorized patches, decals, insignia, markings, or objects may be affixed to the outer vest (or outer garment) without the authorization of the Chief of Police. Officers previously prescribed load bearing outer carrier vests for medical necessity shall be authorized to utilize the pouches

previously purchased for the duration of their serviceability. After that, existing policy requirements must be met.

8. Outer carriers shall not be altered or have design modifications unless approved by the Training Unit and Manufacturer. Any modifications to the carrier or attached equipment, whether issued or personal purchase, will be approved in writing by the Training Unit Sergeant or designee on TPD Form 604.1 - Training Unit Equipment Authorization.
9. Exceptions for gear placement and outer carrier modifications may be made for specialty units or teams at the direction of the Chief of Police. The exception shall only apply while performing the specialty unit duties.
 - a. Previously approved outer carriers for specialty team shall be authorized for use during the duration of their serviceability. After that, existing policy requirements must be met, unless otherwise approved by the Chief of Police. The Marine Unit is exempt from this requirement and authorized the continued usage of its previously approved outer carriers and configuration.
10. 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. Any officer issued an outer carrier must wear the ballistic vest while on-duty and performing patrol duties or off-duty and performing authorized extra-duty work.
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.
5. Load-bearing Outer Carriers shall not be altered or have design modifications unless approved by the Training Unit and manufacturer.

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 department 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 10/25.