University of California, San Francisco
Police Department General Orders

4.3 Use of Force

4.3.1 Use of Force (Revised: 7/31/26)

INTERIM POLICY

A. Policy Summary

The Systemwide UC Police Department (UCPD) on Use of Force Policy outlines how UCPD officers are expected to use force and how they are expected to prioritize the safety, dignity and rights of every person in our community. This policy reflects the University's commitment to fair, equitable and humane policing, where protecting life and upholding trust are the guiding principles in every encounter.

While there is no way to specify the exact amount or type of reasonable force to be applied in any situation, every sworn member of UCPD is expected to use this policy to make decisions in a professional, impartial and reasonable manner. Officers are trained to de-escalate whenever possible, use clear communication and seek resolutions before resorting to physical force.

Officers are required by California law to intercede and report if they observe another officer using excessive or unnecessary force. This law reinforces a culture of accountability, transparency and peer responsibility. Every incident involving force must be documented, reviewed by supervisors and reported to the appropriate state and university offices for oversight.

The policy also requires annual training on de-escalation, mental health awareness and the legal and ethical standards of force and the immediate provision of medical care to anyone injured or in distress following a use of force incident.

B, Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to the use of force by members of the UCSF Police Department. This policy applies to both sworn and non-sworn members unless otherwise specified. While there is no way to specify the exact amount or type of reasonable force to be applied in any situation, every member of this Department is expected to use this policy to make such decisions in a professional, impartial and reasonable manner (Government Code § 7286).

In addition to the methods, techniques and tools set forth in this General Order, the guidelines for the reasonable use of force contained in this policy shall apply to all policies addressing the potential use of force, including but not limited to the use of control devices and techniques, conducted energy devices and firearms.

Prohibitions on retaliation against members for reporting suspected violations of this policy are as provided in Section G of General Order 1.1.9, "Duty to Intervene" [Government Code § 7286(b)(4)].

C. Definitions

1. Active Resistance: Intentionally and unlawfully opposing the lawful order of a peace officer in the form of physically evasive movements to defeat an officer's lawful attempt at control, including but not limited to bracing, tensing, running away or verbally or physically signaling an intention to avoid or prevent being taken into or retained in custody.
2. Deadly Force: Any use of force that creates a substantial risk of causing death or serious bodily injury, including, but not limited to, the discharge of a firearm [PC § 835(a)].
3. Excessive Force: Force that is objectively unreasonable based on the facts and circumstances of the situation, the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same situation andthe totality of circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time.
4. Feasibile: Reasonably capable of being done or carried out under the circumstances to successfully achieve the arrest or lawful objective without increasing risk to the officer or another person [Government Code § 7286(a)].
5. Force: The application of physical techniques or tactics, chemical agents or weapons to another person, except in the following situations:
    a. When applying physical techniques or tactics to escort, direct movement, handcuff, restrain or search with no visible injury or complaint of injury to a compliant subject
    b. When applying a spit mask or spit hood on a subject to prevent spitting
    c. When applying a firm grip control (e.g., wrist lock or other control hold) that does not result in injury, the appearance of injury or complaint of injury (e.g., the use of a grip to control a person's hands while searching or handcuffing)
    d. When applying the use of physical techniques or tactics to assist an intoxicated person or a person with a physical disability that does not result in the appearance of injury or complaint of injury (e.g., lifting an intoxicated person to a standing position).
    e. When applying physical techniques on a subject who is non-compliant and exhibiting passive resistance (e.g., subjects who remain in a sitting, standing or limp or prone position without holding on to fixed objects or other persons, in an attempt to delay or resist arrest).
5. Imminent: Pursuant to PC § 835a(e)(2), a threat of death or serious bodily injury is imminent when, based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer in the same situation would believe that a person has the present ability, opportunity and apparent intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or another person. Imminent harm, therefore, is not merely a

fear of future harm, no matter how great the fear and no matter how great the likelihood of the harm, but is one that, from the totality of the circumstances known to the officer at any given time, must be instantly confronted and addressed.

6. Intercede: Includes, but is not limited to, physical and/or verbal intervention to stop the excessive use of force when safe and reasonable to do so, recording the excessive force if equipped with a body-worn camera, notifying dispatch, notifying a supervisor and documenting all efforts to intervene.
7. Necessary: It is the intent of the Legislature that peace officers use deadly force only when necessary, in defense of human life and based on the totality of the circumstances of a particular situation. Necessity is based on the objectively reasonable standard established by Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).
8. Non-Compliant: The subject refuses to comply with officer's lawful commands or cooperate with an officer's directions. Includes passive resistance where the subject uses dead weight to prevent being taken into custody (e.g., subjects who remain in a sitting, standing, limp or prone position without holding on to fixed objects or other persons in an attempt to delay or resist arrest).
9. Objectively Reasonabile: The legal standard used to determine the lawfulness of a use of force is based on the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution [see Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386 (1989)]. Graham states, in part, "The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation. The test of reasonableness is not capable of precise definition or mechanical application." The force must be reasonable under the circumstances known to or reasonably believed by the officer at the time the force was used. Therefore, an agency will examine all uses of force from an objective standard rather than a subjective standard.
10. Serious Bodily Injury: A serious impairment requiring professional medical treatment of a physical condition, including, but not limited to, the following: loss of consciousness, concussion, bone fracture, protracted loss or impairment of function of any bodily member or organ, a wound requiring extensive suturing, and serious disfigurement [PC § 243(f)(4, 5))24].
11. Totality of the Circumstances: All facts known to or perceived by the officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of force (PC § 835a).

D. Policy

The use of force by law enforcement personnel is a matter of critical concern, both to the public and to the law enforcement community. Officers are involved, on a daily basis, in numerous and varied interactions and, when warranted, may use reasonable force in carrying out their duties.

Officers must have an understanding of and true appreciation for their authority and limitations. This is especially true with respect to overcoming resistance while engaged in the performance of law enforcement duties.

The UC Police Department recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice to anyone. Vesting officers with the authority to use reasonable force and to protect the public welfare requires monitoring, evaluation and a careful balancing of all interests.

1. Fair and Unbiased Use of Force
   Officers are expected to carry out their duties, including the use of force, in a manner that is fair and unbiased [Government Code § 7286(b)(11)]. Refer to General Order 4.2, "Unbiased Enforcement" for additional guidance.
2. Duty to Intercede
   a. Any officer present and observing another law enforcement officer or an employee using force that is clearly beyond that which is necessary, as determined by an objectively reasonable officer under the circumstances, shall, when in a position to do so, intercede [as defined by Government Code § 7286(9)] to prevent the use of unreasonable force.
   b. When observing force used by a law enforcement officer, each officer should take into account the totality of the circumstances and the possibility that other law enforcement officers may have additional information regarding the threat posed by the subject [Government Code § 7286(b)(9)].

   See General Order 1.1.9, "Duty to Intercede" for additional information.
3. Failure to Intercede
   An officer who has received the required training on the duty to intercede and then fails to act to intercede when required by this policy and the law, may be disciplined in the same manner as the officer who used force beyond that which is necessary [Government Code § 7286(b)(19)].
4. Duty to Report Excessive Force
   Any officer who observes another law enforcement officer use force that potentially exceeds that which the observing officer reasonably believes to be necessary shall, when possible, report his/her observations to a supervisor as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so [Government Code § 7286(b)(3)].

E. Use of Force
Officers shall use only that amount of force that is reasonably necessary given the facts and totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose (PC § 835a).

The reasonableness of force will be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Any evaluation of reasonableness must allow for the

fact that officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary in a particular situation, with limited information and in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving.

Given that no policy can realistically predict every possible situation an officer might encounter, officers are entrusted to use well-reasoned discretion in determining the appropriate use and level of force in each incident. Officers may only use a level of force that they reasonably believe is proportional to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance (Government Code § 7286(b)(2)).

It is also recognized that circumstances may arise in which officers reasonably believe that it would be impossible, impractical or ineffective to use any of the approved or authorized tools, weapons or methods provided by the Department. Officers may find it more effective or reasonable to improvise their response to rapidly unfolding conditions that they are confronting. In such circumstances, the use of any improvised device or method must be objectively reasonable and utilized only to the degree that reasonably appears necessary to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

While the ultimate objective of every law enforcement encounter is to avoid or minimize injury, nothing in this policy requires an officer to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable and necessary force.

1. Alternative Tactics – De-escalation

   As time and circumstances reasonably permit and when community and officer safety would not be compromised, officers should consider actions that may increase officer safety and decrease the need for using force:

   a. Summoning additional resources that are able to respond in a reasonably timely manner.
   b. Formulating a plan with responding officers before entering an unstable situation that does not reasonably appear to require immediate intervention.
   c. Employing other tactics that do not unreasonably increase officer jeopardy.

   In addition, when feasible, officers should evaluate the totality of circumstances presented at the time in each situation and consider and utilize reasonably available alternative tactics and techniques that may persuade an individual to voluntarily comply or that may mitigate the need to use a higher level of force to resolve the situation before applying force [Government Code § 7286(b)(1)]. Such alternatives may include, but are not limited to:

   a. Attempts to de-escalate a situation
   b. If reasonably available, the use of crisis intervention techniques by properly trained personnel.

2. Use of Force to Effect an Arrest

Any peace officer may use objectively reasonable force to effect an arrest, to prevent escape or to overcome resistance. A peace officer who makes or attempts to make an arrest need not retreat or desist from his/her efforts by reason of resistance or threatened resistance on the part of the person being arrested; nor shall an officer be deemed the aggressor or lose his/her right to self-defense by the use of reasonable force to effect an arrest, prevent escape or overcome resistance.

"Retreat" does not mean tactical repositioning or other de-escalation techniques. [PC § 835a(d)].

3. Factors Used to Determine the Reasonableness of Force

When determining whether to apply force and evaluating whether an officer has used reasonable force, a number of factors should be taken into consideration, as time and circumstances permit [Government Code § 7286(b)(21)]. These factors include, but are not limited to:

a. The apparent immediacy and severity of the threat to officers or others (PC § 835a)
b. The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time (PC § 835a)
c. Officer/subject factors (e.g., age, size, relative strength, skill level, injuries sustained, level of exhaustion or fatigue, the number of officers available vs. subjects)
d. The conduct of the involved officer(s) leading up to the use of force (PC § 835a)
e. The effects of suspected drugs or alcohol
f. The individual's apparent mental state, mental health, or capacity (PC § 835a)
g. The individual's apparent ability to understand and comply with officer commands (PC § 835a)
h. Proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices
i. The degree to which the subject has been effectively restrained and his/her ability to resist despite being restrained
j. The availability of other reasonable and feasible options and their possible effectiveness (PC § 835a)
k. Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual prior to and at the time force is used
l. Training and experience of the officer
m. Potential for injury to officers, suspects, bystanders and others
n. Whether the person appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight or attacking the officer
o. The risk and reasonably foreseeable consequences of escape
p. The apparent need for immediate control of the subject or a prompt resolution of the situation

q. Whether the conduct of the individual being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to the officer or others
r. Prior contacts with the subject or awareness of any propensity for violence
s. Any other exigent circumstances.

4. Pain Compliance Techniques

Pain compliance techniques may be effective in controlling a physically or actively resisting individual. Officers should apply only those pain compliance techniques for which they have successfully completed Department-approved training. Officers utilizing any pain compliance technique should consider:

a. The degree to which the application of the technique may be controlled given the level of resistance
b. Whether the person can comply with the direction or orders of the officer
c. Whether the person has been given sufficient opportunity to comply.

The application of any pain compliance technique shall be discontinued once the officer determines that compliance has been achieved.

5. Restrictions on the Use of Carotid Control Hold

Officers of this Department are not authorized to use a carotid restraint hold. A carotid restraint means a vascular neck restraint or any similar restraint, hold or other defensive tactic in which pressure is applied to the sides of a person's neck, which involves a substantial risk of restricting blood flow and rendering the person unconscious, in order to subdue or control the person (Government Code § 7286.5). See General Order 4.3.21, 'Carotid Control Hold" for additional information.

6. Restrictions on the Use of a Choke Hold

Officers of this Department are not authorized to use a choke hold. A choke hold means any defensive tactic or force option in which direct pressure is applied to a person's trachea or windpipe (Government Code § 7286.5). See General Order 4.3.23, "Choke Hold" for additional information.

7. Additional Restrictions

Officers are not authorized to use any restraint or method of transportation that might impair an individual's breathing or respiratory capacity for a period beyond the point at which the individual has been adequately and safely controlled. Once the individual is safely secured, officers should promptly check and continuously monitor the individual's condition for signs of medical distress [Government Code § 7286.5].

8. Use of Force to Seize Evidence

In general, officers may use reasonable force to lawfully seize evidence and to prevent the destruction of evidence. However, officers are discouraged from using force solely to prevent a person from swallowing evidence or contraband. In instances when force is used, officers are encouraged to use techniques and methods taught for this specific purpose.

F. Deadly Force Applications
See General Order 4.3.2, "Use of Deadly Physical Force in Defense of Human Life."

G. Displaying of Firearms
1. Given the possibility that individuals might perceive the display of a firearm as a potential application of force, officers should carefully evaluate each tactical situation and use sound discretion when drawing a firearm in public [Government Code § 7286(b)(5)].
   a. If the officer does not initially perceive a threat but reasonably believes that the potential for such threat exists, firearms should generally be kept in the low-ready position or another position not directed toward an individual.
   b. If an officer reasonably believes that a threat exists based on the totality of circumstances presented at the time (e.g., high-risk stop, tactical entry, armed encounter, threatened use of force), firearms may be pointed in a manner reasonable for the situation.
   c. Once it is reasonably safe to do so, officers should carefully secure all firearms.
2. When a firearm is drawn or exhibited to gain compliance from a subject the circumstances shall be documented in a CAD, criminal or incident report. The requirement to report the incident does not apply to a firearm kept in the low-ready position or another position not directed toward at an individual.

H. Medical Considerations
1. Once it is reasonably safe to do so, officers should promptly procure or, if properly trained, provide medical assistance for any person injured or claiming to have been injured in a use of force incident or procure (Government Code § 7286(b)(15)).
2. Medical assistance shall be rendered as quickly as reasonably possible for any person who
   is exhibiting signs of physical distress, has sustained visible injury, expresses a complaint of injury or continuing pain or was rendered unconscious following a use of force.
3. Any individual exhibiting signs of physical distress after an encounter should be continuously monitored until the individual can be medically assessed.
4. Persons who exhibit extreme agitation, violent irrational behavior accompanied by profuse sweating, extraordinary strength beyond their physical characteristics and imperviousness to pain or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple officers to be brought under control, may be at an increased risk of sudden death.
   a. Calls involving these persons should be considered medical emergencies.
   b. Officers who reasonably suspect a medical emergency should request medical assistance as soon as practicable and have medical personnel stage away if appropriate.

5. Based upon an officer's initial assessment of the nature and extent of the subject's injuries or medical condition, medical assistance may consist of examination by fire personnel, paramedics, hospital staff or medical staff at the jail.
6. The on-scene supervisor or, if the on-scene supervisor is not available, the primary handling officer shall ensure that any person providing medical care or receiving custody of the subject is notified that he/she experienced a use of force. This notification shall include a description of the force used and any other circumstances the officer reasonably believes might present a potential safety or medical risk to the subject (e.g., a prolonged struggle, extreme agitation, impaired respiration).
7. If any individual refuses medical attention, such a refusal shall be fully documented in related reports and, whenever practicable, should be witnessed by another officer and/or medical personnel. If a recording is made of the contact or an interview with the individual, any refusal should be included in the recording if possible.

I. Use of Force Complaints

The receipt, processing and investigation of civilian complaints involving use of force shall be handled in accordance with General Order 3.42.4, "Complaint Intake, Acknowledgement and Investigation" [Government Code § 7286(b)(6)].

J. Policy Review

The Chief of Police or designess should regularly review and update this policy to reflect dcveloping practices and procedures [Government Code § 7286(b)(23)].

K Policy Availablility

The Chief of Police or designee shall ensure the Department's use of force policy is accessible to the public [Government Code § 7286(c)].