WESTMINSTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order: 6-01

Subject: **AUTHORIZED WEAPONS, QUALIFICATIONS, AND INSPECTIONS**

Effective Date: May 1, 2026

This General Order contains the following sections:

I. POLICY
II. DEFINITIONS
III. GENERAL PROTOCOL
IV. AUTHORIZED LESS-LETHAL WEAPONS
V. AUTHORIZED LETHAL WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION
VI. PATROL RIFLES
VII. CEREMONIAL WEAPONS
VIII. INSPECTION AND INVENTORY

I. POLICY

The Westminster Police Department (WPD) will evaluate and designate weapons platforms and ammunition authorized for use by sworn personnel (members); require that members are properly trained and qualified prior to issuing weapons; and regulate proper inspections and maintenance of weapons to ensure safety.

II. DEFINITIONS

WPD Armorer: A member who has received advanced training and certification in the inspection and repair of specific weapon systems.

CCCRT: Carroll County Crisis Response Team.

Firearms Instructors: Members designated by the Chief of Police to conduct mandated qualification courses of fire without supervision who are Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions (MPCTC) certified firearms instructors.

Duty Load: The authorized condition in which an officer's service handgun shall be carried while on duty. A duty load consists of a round chambered and the magazine loaded to full capacity, with the firearm secured in an approved duty holster. This condition is achieved by chambering a round from a fully loaded magazine, holstering the weapon, and then removing the magazine to replace the chambered round so the magazine remains at full capacity before reinsertion.

III. GENERAL PROTOCOL

A. This policy identifies authorized weapons, qualification procedures, and inspection requirements. The use of authorized weapons shall be consistent with WPD training and written directives. General Order 3-27, Use of Force, governs the deployment of authorized weapons.

B. Members shall only carry and use the weapons and ammunition approved by this general order in both an on-duty and off-duty capacity. Weapon and ammunition specifications are included in Appendix A.

C. Members requesting authorization to carry an off-duty firearm shall comply with all qualification and training requirements established in this policy. Appendix A outlines the required criteria for secondary weapons.

D. Only those members specifically authorized and trained on a weapon who have demonstrated proficiency in the use of that weapon may carry and use that weapon. Demonstrating proficiency shall include achieving minimum qualifying scores on a prescribed course, demonstrating knowledge of the laws and policies concerning the use of the weapon, including use of force policies, and demonstrating safe handling procedures with the weapon.

E. Only qualified firearms/weapons instructors shall provide instruction and qualification courses regarding authorized weapons platforms. Instructors shall document all training and proficiency scores.

F. Members authorized to carry a weapon will be provided with applicable policies and procedures prior to carrying the weapon. Instruction shall be provided on related policies. The issuance of weapon policies and instruction shall be documented.

H. Members must demonstrate and maintain proficiency with issued firearms, ASP baton, and OC spray in order to carry those weapons platforms. Members failing to demonstrate proficiency with one of these weapons will not be returned to full duty status until such time as proficiency is demonstrated and documented.

I. Members may carry a pocketknife for utility purposes. If used during a use-of-force or deadly-force encounter, the member's actions shall be evaluated based on objective reasonableness under the totality of the circumstances, and in accordance with Department policy and applicable law.

J. Members who are assigned to the CCCRT may be issued additional authorized weapons platforms beyond those mentioned in this policy. Policies and procedures shall be provided to those members by the CCCRT Commanders. CCCRT members may use these weapons in accordance with CCCRT policies and procedures when circumstances require their use.

K. Members shall be responsible for ensuring adequate and safe storage of authorized weapons and shall practice safe handling procedures of authorized weapons pursuant to their training. Members shall secure authorized weapons in an appropriate and safe manner when not being carried by the member. This includes ensuring that their weapons are not accessible to persons not authorized by the WPD to carry the weapons.

L. While off-duty, members are encouraged to carry an authorized firearm but are not required to do so except while operating a WPD vehicle and in compliance with State Law.

M. Members are not authorized to carry a firearm in another state unless they are in compliance with all applicable laws of that state, including the provisions of the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act (LEOSA). Members shall adhere to the requirements of LEOSA, as applicable.

N. Members whose duties require that they be armed while using air travel shall comply with all Federal Aviation Administration regulations and guidelines, as well as the policies of the air carrier to be utilized.

IV. AUTHORIZED LESS-LETHAL WEAPONS

The WPD authorizes the issuance of less-lethal weapons to members. Members assigned to and engaged in uniformed patrol duties shall, at a minimum, carry two (2) Department-approved less-lethal weapons. Members holding the rank of lieutenant and above are exempt from this requirement.

A. Friction-Lock Extending Baton

1. Members shall train with the approved friction-lock extending metal baton and shall demonstrate proficiency as mandated by the MPCTC. Any member who cannot successfully demonstrate the proper application techniques shall be subject to immediate remedial training before being permitted to carry the baton.

B. OC Chemical Agent

1. Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) is a powerful inflammatory agent that occurs naturally in cayenne pepper and, when sprayed into the face of a violent or uncooperative subject, results in the swelling of the eyes and airway, yet causes no permanent injury to the subject

2. Members, auxiliary members, and the parking enforcement member are authorized to carry OC spray. Plain-clothes members may carry a pen-like canister of this chemical agent issued by WPD.

3. OC canisters shall not be stored in direct sunlight or in places where the temperature may reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

C. Conducted Electrical Weapon (Taser®): A less-lethal weapon designed primarily to discharge electrical charges into a person that will cause involuntary muscle contractions and override the person's voluntary motor responses, governed by General Order 6-03, Conducted Electrical Weapon.

D. FN 303 Less Lethal Launcher: A shoulder-fired, semi-automatic, **less-lethal launcher** designed by FN Herstal for law enforcement, primarily used to control a dangerous or violent subject when deadly force does not appear to be justified or necessary, and marking of subjects. It uses compressed air to fire .68 caliber, fin-stabilized projectiles designed to incapacitate targets through blunt trauma without causing fatal injury. The FIN 303 rounds are designed to incapacitate an individual through kinetic energy and capsaicin II (PAVA) powder. The FN 303 may only be deployed by those personnel trained and qualified on the less-lethal launcher and within the guidelines of this General Order, General Order 3-27, and Standard Operating Procedure PB-18.

V. AUTHORIZED LETHAL WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION

A. Appendix A of this policy may be updated without affecting the other provisions of this General Order.

B. Firearms

1. Members may carry WPD-approved firearms both on and off duty. See Appendix A for a list of approved firearm types.
2. Prior to being authorized to carry an off-duty firearm, a member must:
   a. Meet the criteria outlined in Appendix A.
   b. Meet the annual minimum qualification scores required by MPCTC.
   c. Demonstrate to a Firearms instructor proficiency in the full operation of the firearm.
3. Members attending work-related Court appearances and department-sanctioned training are permitted to carry their primary firearm or an approved off-duty firearm/holster unless otherwise directed due to the specific training requirements.
4. Members may only carry off-duty firearms that they have qualified with in the current year. Members who fail to qualify with an off-duty firearm will be given an opportunity to re-test with that firearm. Members shall remain on full duty assignment if qualified to carry their primary service weapon, regardless of their status with an off-duty firearm.
5. Members may carry an off-duty firearm and holster once they have successfully met the qualification standards established by MPCTC and the criteria outlined in Appendix A, as approved by the WPD Firearms Training Unit.
6. Members assigned to CCCRT shall be authorized to carry additional special weapons platforms that they have been trained and certified to use in accordance with CCCRT policies and procedures. They must demonstrate proficiency with these weapons in addition to any primary, secondary, and less-lethal weapons listed in this policy.
7. Members are not permitted to make alterations or modifications to any WPD firearm unless approved by the Chief of Police. Members may disassemble their weapon for cleaning purposes to the extent instructed by the Firearms Training Unit.
8. A sleeve grip enhancer may be applied to the member's primary firearm to aid in maintaining a proper grip on the weapon. These devices must be inspected and approved by a WPD firearms instructor.
9. Members will be issued a weapon-mounted light. Members may only draw their firearm to use the mounted light as authorized in G.O. 3-27, Use of Force.
10. Only WPD armorers are authorized to make repairs or alterations to any WPD weapon with which they have been trained/certified, following approval from the Deputy Chief.
11. Members are prohibited from carrying firearms when using any substance that may render

them incapable of effectively using the firearm.

C. Handgun Training Requirements

The Department will only issue a firearm to members after they have successfully completed the required training and qualifications.

1. Members shall fire three (3) handgun qualification courses annually, using their normal duty holster. These courses shall include daylight conditions, reduced-lighting conditions, and live-fire drills. Additionally, the Firearms Training Unit may run a decision/stress course.

2. Members must score a minimum of 70% on qualification courses to pass. The decision/stress course is scored differently as it is not regulated by the MPCTC.

3. When members fail to score 70% on a qualification course, the Firearms Training Unit will provide remedial training and retesting, usually on the same day. Members will be afforded one additional opportunity to qualify at this time. If members fail to qualify following remediation and retesting:

    a. The Chief will issue a Personnel Order placing the member in an administrative assignment.

    b. The member shall participate in a remedial firearms training program administered by the Firearms Training Unit.

    c. Following the remedial firearms training program, failure to qualify may result in termination of employment consistent with City regulations pertaining to job performance.

4. The Firearms Training Unit shall provide instruction to members regarding Use of Force guidelines.

5. WPD shall provide in-service training for issued and off-duty weapons in accordance with MPCTC guidelines.

D. Handgun Carry Condition

Authorized handguns shall be in the following condition when carried on-duty or when carried as authorized off-duty:

1. Glock 45: Seventeen (17) rounds per magazine, in addition to the chambered round.

2. Glock 43X: Ten (10) rounds per magazine, in addition to the chambered round.

3. Authorized Off-Duty Firearm: Magazine loaded per capacity with authorized ammunition.

4. Round in the chamber.

5. Clean and properly maintained.

E. Method of Carrying Firearms

1. While on duty, members are authorized to carry their primary firearm:

    a. In the issued holster appropriate for the assignment and on the strong side hip, or

    b. In an approved, non-issued holster authorized by the Westminster Police Firearms Training Unit.

2. As of April 1, 2024, members are not authorized to carry a secondary firearm while on duty except for the two (2) members listed on the Secondary Firearm Survey conducted by the Firearms Training Unit on March 5, 2024, who were previously approved. The secondary weapon shall be in an approved holster, concealed from view, and only authorized for use during those critical situations when the primary firearm has been taken, lost, emptied, or disabled. The Firearms Training Unit and the Deputy Chief will maintain a record of secondary firearms approved for carry.

3. Members who are not wearing the police uniform or an approved outer vest carrier with the police insignia shall keep their weapon concealed from public view, except during an

assignment where their police identification is visible and they are readily identifiable as police members.

4. **Holster Requirements:** For the purposes of this policy, *Level I retention* refers to a holster that relies solely on passive retention, such as friction or molding to the firearm, and does not require any mechanical device or action to release the weapon. *Level II retention or higher* refers to a holster that incorporates one or more active retention mechanisms (e.g., thumb break, hood, strap, or internal locking device) that must be deliberately deactivated by the user before the firearm can be drawn.

   Level I retention holsters shall be worn in a concealed manner. An exception is permitted when the member is operating within a secure environment. Level II retention holsters or higher may be worn in an open carry configuration. This requirement applies to both duty and off-duty weapons. All holsters must be inspected and approved by a member of the WPD Firearms Training Unit (FTU), and approved holsters shall be documented by the WPD FTU.

F . Off-Duty

1. When legally permissible and within the restrictions outlined in this policy, off-duty members are authorized to carry either their primary or their authorized off-duty firearm.
2. Members must be in possession of their badge and WPD photo identification while carrying a firearm off-duty.
3. Members are prohibited from carrying firearms while off-duty when they consume alcoholic beverages or other controlled substances that would interfere with their ability to effectively utilize the firearm.
4. Members shall only carry their firearms consistent with policy and training.
5. Members shall carry their firearms in a concealed manner while off-duty unless they are wearing their police uniform or an authorized outer vest carrier.
6. Members shall carry their firearm when operating a WPD police vehicle. Members on a covert assignment are exempt from this requirement with the approval of the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) Commander.

H. Firearm Safety

1. Members shall be responsible for the care and safety of all primary and approved secondary firearms. This responsibility extends to the members' homes. Members should be keenly aware of the very real danger of keeping a firearm in their residence.
2. When not under the immediate control of the member, all department-issued firearms shall be properly secured in a manner that complies with Maryland laws and ensures they are not accessible to any person who is not a sworn member of the WPD.
3. Members shall not leave firearms unsecured in a vehicle. Handguns may be temporarily secured in a locked compartment (glove box), locked trunk, or in a locked box that is permanently mounted in the vehicle when transferring a prisoner to another facility if that facility does not provide a secure location for a member's handgun, or for short-term storage when carrying the firearm is not reasonable or appropriate.

VI. PATROL RIFLES

A. Members may only carry a patrol rifle after successfully completing an authorized patrol rifle training course approved by the MPCTC. These members will be assigned to the WPD Patrol Rifle Program (PRP). Patrol rifles are intended to enable first-responding members to enhance safety for citizens and other members in high-risk situations. Qualified members shall only use a patrol rifle under appropriate circumstances. The decision to deploy a rifle shall be in accordance with the training provided and based on the information and resources available to the member at the time, the risks posed by the use of the rifle, and the danger posed by the suspect.

B. Members participating in the PRP will be issued a rifle (see Appendix A for the current model), a sling, three magazines, ammunition, a transport case, and a tactical fore-end light.

C. Rifle Training and Qualification

1. Members selected to the PRP must successfully complete a tactical rifle school approved by the Deputy Chief prior to being issued a rifle. This school will satisfy all MPCTC requirements.

2. Members shall qualify biannually with their assigned rifle and must qualify with a minimum score of 80%.

3. Members who fail to qualify may take the qualification course one additional time. If a qualifying score is not achieved, the instructor will terminate the course for that day. The member is not certified to carry a rifle until a qualifying score is obtained. As soon as practical, the member will undergo remedial rifle training. If the member fails to meet the minimum required score after remedial rifle training, the member will be removed from the program.

4. Members participating in the PRP shall receive bi-annual in-service rifle training in accordance with the MPCTC as approved by the Deputy Chief.

5. Supervisors will receive familiarization training on the rifle and the PRP annually.

6. All records of qualification and training will be forwarded by the Firearms instructor conducting the rifle qualifications to the Deputy Chief. The Deputy Chief shall maintain a record of all qualifications.

D. Deployment Guidelines

1. Qualified members shall only use a patrol rifle under appropriate circumstances. The decision to deploy a rifle shall be in accordance with the training provided and based on the information and resources available to the member at the time, the risks posed by the use of the rifle, and the danger posed by the suspect.

2. Trained and qualified members may use Patrol rifles to:

   a. Provide a more immediate tactical response to calls involving armed and/or violent offenders.

   b. Increase citizen and member safety during high-risk incidents.

   c. Provide more accurate and controlled shot placement at distances.

   d. Penetrate ballistic body armor.

3. Qualified members may deploy the issued patrol rifle under any of the following conditions (this list is not all-inclusive):

   a. Perimeter/containment situation involving a hostage situation and/or barricaded subject.

   b. Response to an active shooter.

   c. High-risk traffic stop.

   d. Incident where a member has a reasonable expectation that there is potential for an armed subject encounter.

   e. To provide cover for a police K-9 or another member in the search for an armed subject.

   f. Upon direction of a supervisor for an extraordinary event.

4. Members shall always consider the potential consequences of their actions when making the decision to use a rifle. When contemplating the use of the rifle, members shall consider the following factors:

   a. Reduced use of hands when using the rifle.

b. Handcuffing or searching a suspect requires the assistance of another member.

c. Members shall not search or handcuff a suspect while holding the rifle.

d. Potential background targets and extended ballistic range of a rifle.

e. Possibility of the rifle inciting or aggravating a situation as opposed to being a protective measure.

5. Members participating in the PRP are not intended to function as part of the CCCRT. Members are to perform their duties as trained and not enter situations for which they are not equipped or trained. Members may be used to assist the CCCRT at the discretion of the CCCRT Incident Commander. Members may only use the patrol rifle on which they have qualified.

E. Transporting and Storage

1. The rifle will be kept in one of the following four conditions.

a. Armory Condition: The rifle will be kept in the armory condition at all times when the rifle is stored outside of a member's assigned vehicle. An example is when the rifle is stored in the safe at WPD headquarters. The armory condition is as follows:

i. Magazine removed.

ii. Bolt forward on an empty chamber.

iii. Selector switch on SAFE.

iv. Members will be provided a lock for the rifle, which should be secured on the rifle when the rifle is not actively on patrol.

b. Charged Condition: The rifle will be placed in the charged condition when the rifle is deployed during an incident. The charged condition is as follows:

i. Magazine inserted.

ii. Round chambered in the rifle.

iii. Selector switch on SAFE until ready to fire.

c**.** Safe Condition**:** The rifle will be placed in safe condition when the rifle is going to be inspected, checked for maintenance, or on a break on the shooting line. The safe condition is as follows:

i. Magazine removed.

ii. Bolt locked to the rear.

iii. Selector switch on SAFE.

iv. Ejection port visible.

d. Patrol Condition**:** The rifle will be placed in the patrol condition while a member is on duty. The patrol condition is as follows:

i. Bolt forward on an empty chamber.

ii. Selector switch on safe.

iii. Magazine inserted.

2. The rifle shall be stored in a locked department-installed rifle box/safe in the member's assigned vehicle in the patrol condition when the member is on duty, except during situations in which a rifle is being utilized.

3. While off-duty, members shall store the patrol rifle as follows:

a. Members who are not assigned a take-home vehicle shall secure the rifle in the armory condition in the designated rifle locker at WPD headquarters.

b. Members who are assigned a take-home vehicle may secure the rifle in the armory

condition in the trunk rifle safe or the approved locking stand of their vehicle while off-duty. The rifle will be secured at WPD headquarters rifle locker if the member's vehicle is being serviced.

c. The rifle locker designated for the PRP at WPD headquarters is to remain locked at all times. Members assigned to the program and supervisors will be issued keys for the rifle locker.

F. Maintenance and Care

1. Members are responsible for the periodic cleaning and lubrication of their assigned rifles in accordance with their training.

2. A Firearms instructor will inspect all rifles biannually.

3. Only a WPD armorer shall perform maintenance (other than cleaning and lubrication).

4. All rifles will be armored once a year at a minimum. The Firearms Training Unit shall maintain written records of all maintenance and inspections of each weapon.

5. Any damage to the rifle or mechanical failure will be reported to a WPD armorer and supervisor immediately, and appropriate action will be taken.

6. Failure to properly maintain an assigned rifle may result in removal from the PRP.

G. Removal from the Patrol Rifle Program

1. Any member who fails to meet the PRP requirements shall be removed from the program. Reasons for such removal shall include, but not be limited to, improper maintenance of the weapon, failure to properly follow the mandates of the program, failure to qualify, inappropriate display or use of the weapon based on training received, and/or any other significant breach of this policy or use of force guidelines.

2. A member may be removed from the program upon transfer or promotion or based on the need for placement of the weapon.

3. The Patrol Bureau Commander may remove members from the PRP based upon operational need.

VII. CEREMONIAL WEAPONS

A. Certain ceremonial weapons may be assigned to and used by members of the WPD Honor Guard. Specifications for ceremonial weapons are located in Appendix A. These weapons shall only be used for ceremonial purposes and with blank ammunition.

B. When not in use, ceremonial weapons shall be stored in their designated storage cabinet, which must be locked at all times to maintain the security of the weapons. Only authorized members of the Honor Guard and supervisors authorized by the Chief of Police shall have access to the cabinet.

VIII. INSPECTION AND INVENTORY

A. Firearms

1. Prior to issuance, a WPD armorer shall inspect each firearm received into inventory to ensure that it is functioning properly.

2. The Firearms Training Unit shall establish a maintenance and inspection record for each approved firearm.

3. The property management specialist shall maintain written records for each firearm issued. The records shall contain the following:

a. Member's name and ID number.

b. Weapon make, model, and caliber.

c. Weapon serial number.

d. Receiving member's signature.

e. Issuing official's signature.

4. Any lethal firearm returned to the property management specialist shall be inspected by a WPD armorer and certified in good working order prior to being returned to inventory for reissue. Unsafe or malfunctioning firearms shall not be returned to inventory until repaired and certified functional.

5. Every firearm authorized by the WPD shall be inventoried, inspected, and function tested by a WPD armorer on an annual basis. The lead firearms instructor shall document and validate the inventory annually to ensure that each firearm, excluding special weapons issued to CCCRT, is properly accounted for.

6. Every firearm issued by the WPD shall be inspected on a quarterly basis by the member's immediate supervisor. Any alterations or evidence of poor maintenance shall be reported to the bureau commander. These inspections shall be documented and maintained at the unit level.

B. OC (Oleoresin Capsicum) Spray

1. All incoming shipments of OC spray or chemical agents shall be inspected by the property management specialist prior to issuance or placement into active inventory. The inspection shall verify that:

   a) The approved product has been delivered.

   b) The devices are intact and free of defects or leaks.

   c) The expiration date of the canisters has not passed.

2. Only devices passing inspection shall be issued.

3. The property management specialist shall sign and date a copy of the packing slip for each shipment, which shall be retained for future reference.

4. The property management specialist shall keep records of any chemical munitions issued. Members shall complete and submit a requisition for any chemical munitions issued to them.

5. OC spray shall be inspected quarterly by the member's immediate supervisor to verify the expiration date and to ensure there are no defects or leaks. These inspections shall be documented and maintained at the unit level.

6. Defective or out-of-date OC spray shall be immediately removed from service and replaced with certified OC spray.

C. Batons

1. All incoming shipments of batons shall be inspected by the property management specialist prior to issuance or placement into active inventory. This inspection shall ensure that the approved product has been delivered and that the devices are free of defects. Any baton found to be defective or not functioning properly shall not be issued or placed into service.

2. The property management specialist shall sign and date a copy of the packing slip for each shipment, which shall be retained for future reference.

3. The property management specialist shall maintain records of all batons that are issued.

4. Batons shall be inspected biannually by the member's immediate supervisor to assess their condition. Unsuitable batons shall be removed from service and replaced by the property management specialist.

AUTHORITY:



Christian R. Price
Chief of Police

Appendix A: WPD Authorized Weapons & Ammunition Specifications & Qualifications