

# WOONSOCKET POLICE DEPARTMENT

THOMAS F. OATES, III  
CHIEF OF POLICE



TYPE OF ORDER	NUMBER/SERIES	ISSUE DATE	EFFECTIVE DATE
General Order	300.01	12/3/3035	12/3/2025
SUBJECT		PREVIOUSLY ISSUED DATES	
Response to Resistance		2/9/2021, 10/17/2018, 5/7/2017, 2/12/2027	
ACCREDITATION		RE-EVALUATION DATE	
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## RESPONSE TO RESISTANCE

### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide police officers with guidelines on the use of force.

### II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Woonsocket Police Department to recognize and respect the value and special integrity of each human life. In vesting police officers with the lawful authority to use force to protect the public welfare, a careful balancing of all human interests is required.

Therefore, it is the policy of this department that police officers will use only that force that is objectively reasonable to accomplish lawful objectives and shall adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws. [RI 2.9](#)

### III. DEFINITIONS

**Administrative Review:** A documented review of an incident or occurrence prepared by or for the Chief of Police, or designee. The review should indicate whether policy, training, equipment, or disciplinary issues should be addressed.

**Analysis:** A systematic, structured process for dissecting an event into its basic parts to identify any patterns or trends. Analysis should reveal patterns or trends that could be

predictive or could indicate program effectiveness, training needs, equipment upgrade needs, and/or policy modification needs.

**Appropriate Medical Aid:** Appropriate medical aid may include increased observation to detect obvious changes in condition, flushing chemical agents from the eyes, applying first aid, evaluation by rescue personnel, or, for more serious or life-threatening incidents, immediate aid by medical professionals.

**Choke Hold:** A physical maneuver applied to the neck that restricts an individual's ability to breathe to render the individual unconscious.

**De-Escalation:** Taking action and/or communicating verbally or non-verbally during a potential force encounter in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and/or resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction of the force necessary. De-escalation may include the use of such techniques as command presence, advisements, warnings, verbal persuasion, and/or tactical repositioning.

**Imminent Threat:** Such an appearance of threatened and impending injury would cause a reasonable police officer to act to stop the threat.

**Less Lethal Force:** Any use of force other than that which is considered lethal, or deadly force.

**Lethal Force:** Any use of force that is considered lethal or deadly force.

**Objectively Reasonable Force:** Objectively reasonable force is that force which is necessary and appropriate when analyzed from the perspective of a reasonable officer possessing the same information and faced with the same circumstances as the officer who has used force. Objectively reasonable force is not judged with hindsight and will take into account, where appropriate, the fact that officers must make rapid decisions regarding the level of force to use in tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations. Important factors to be considered when deciding how much force can be used to apprehend or subdue a subject include, but are not limited to:

- The severity of the crime at issue;
- Whether the subject poses an imminent threat to the safety of the officers or others;  
*and*
- Whether the subject is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight.

**Reasonable Belief:** Those facts and circumstances that would lead a normally prudent police officer to believe that their actions are necessary.

**Serious Bodily Injury:** Physical injury that (1) creates a substantial risk of death; (2) causes protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily part, member, or organ; or (3) causes serious, permanent disfigurement.

**Vascular Neck Restraint:** A technique that can be used to incapacitate individuals by restricting the flow of blood to their brain.

## IV. PROCEDURES

### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. De-Escalation [RI 2.9](#)
  - a. When safe and appropriate under the totality of the circumstances:
    - 1) Officers will assess the situation to determine if de-escalation is appropriate to reduce the potential need for force; and
    - 2) Officers shall use de-escalation techniques and other alternatives to higher levels of force consistent with his or her training and experience.
  - b. Whenever possible, and when such delay will not compromise the safety of the officer or another and will not result in the destruction of evidence, escape of a suspect, or commission of a crime, an officer shall allow an individual time and opportunity to submit to verbal commands before force is used.
2. Duty to Intervene – All officers present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances, shall intercede to prevent the use of such force when in a position to do so safely. Officers shall report these observations to a non-involved supervisor without unnecessary delay. [RI 2.25](#)
3. Appropriate medical aid consistent with police officer training will be provided as soon as is practical in all lethal force and less lethal force option usage resulting in injury, or allegation of injury, including injuries incurred during apprehension and /or custody. [RI 2.13](#)
4. The use of physical force shall be discontinued when resistance ceases or when the incident is under control.
5. Physical force shall not be used against individuals in restraints, except as objectively reasonable to prevent their escape or prevent imminent bodily injury to the individual, the officer, or another person.
6. A department-authorized and certified weapons instructor or armorer shall perform and document the inspection of all weapons:
  - a. Before issuance to an individual officer or made available for shared department use; and
  - b. At the time of qualification or recertification of said weapon.
7. Before their initial assignment and at least annually, the department shall ensure that each officer receives training on the department's use of force policies and document receipt of the same. [RI 2.19](#) [RI 2.20](#)

- a. All definitions contained in this policy will be included in the training; and
- b. All officers shall receive and sign for the receipt of the department's Response to Resistance Policy and any revisions thereto in hard copy or digital format.

B. PARAMETERS FOR THE USE OF LETHAL FORCE [RI 2.10](#)

1. A police officer is authorized to use lethal force to:
  - a. Protect themselves, another officer, or others when the officer has an objectively reasonable belief that an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury exists to themselves, another officer, or others; or
  - b. To prevent the escape of a fleeing subject when the officer has probable cause to believe that the person has committed or intends to commit a felony involving serious bodily injury or death, and the officer reasonably believes that there is an imminent risk of serious bodily injury or death to the officer or another if the subject is not immediately apprehended.
2. Where feasible, police officers will identify themselves as a police officer and state their intent to use lethal force.
3. Lethal Force Restrictions: Lethal force should not be used against persons whose actions are a threat only to themselves or property.
4. Police officers will adhere to the following restrictions:
  - a. Except for maintenance or during training, police officers will not draw or exhibit their firearm unless circumstances create a reasonable cause to believe that it may be necessary to use the firearm in conformance with this policy; and
  - b. Warning shots are prohibited. [RI 2.11](#)
5. Discharging a firearm **from** a moving vehicle shall be avoided. However, whenever a situation exists where an officer must consider discharging a firearm from a moving vehicle to stop an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to himself/herself or others, the use of lethal force by the officer must not constitute a greater hazard to the public than does the imminent threat and must be the most reasonable course of action under the circumstances. Officers must weigh the need to use lethal force against the potential harm to innocent bystanders caused by such use.
6. Discharging a firearm **at** a moving vehicle shall be avoided unless a person in the vehicle poses an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person. Officers shall avoid intentionally placing themselves in a position where a vehicle may be used against them. Escape from the path of an oncoming vehicle should be considered before, or in place of, the implementation of lethal force whenever escape is possible. However, whenever a situation exists where an officer must consider discharging a firearm at a moving vehicle to stop

an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to themselves or others, the use of lethal force by the officer must not constitute a greater hazard to the public than does the imminent threat and must be the most reasonable course of action under the circumstances. Officers must weigh the need to use lethal force against the potential harm to innocent bystanders caused by such use.

7. In both Sections 5 and 6 above, the officer's focus will be to stop that person presenting the imminent threat, and not to disable the vehicle of which the suspect is an occupant. (This provision will not preclude tactical responses in a tactical operation.)
8. A police officer may discharge a firearm to euthanize an animal that represents a threat to public safety, or as a humanitarian measure where the animal is seriously injured.

### C. PARAMETERS FOR USE OF LESS LETHAL FORCE

#### 1. Less Lethal Force Options:

- a. The level of force used by an officer is directly related to the facts and circumstances encountered by that officer. Force options currently available to officers include, but are not limited to:

- 1) *Command Presence* - An officer's appearance may be enough to dissuade some persons from engaging in resistive behavior.
- 2) *Verbal Commands* - Dialogue used by an officer can serve to diffuse potentially violent situations.
- 3) *Physical Skills* - Physical techniques used by an officer to control potentially violent situations.
- 4) *Chemical Spray* - Used in compliance with *General Order 310.02 OC Spray*.
- 5) *Impact Tools* - Striking tools used in compliance with a *General Order 310.01 Police Baton*.
- 6) *Conducted Electrical Weapon (CEW)* - Used in compliance with *General Order 310.05 Conducted Electrical Weapons*.
- 7) *K-9* - Used in compliance with *General Order 320.21 K-9*.

2. Police officers are authorized to use department-approved less lethal force options to accomplish lawful objectives, as follows:

- a. To protect themselves or another from physical harm;
- b. To restrain or subdue a resistant individual;
- c. To bring an unlawful situation safely and effectively under control; and
- d. To maintain control of a person or situation.

3. It is not the intent of this policy to direct officers to try each of the force options before moving to another. Officers may employ that force option which they believe is objectively reasonable to accomplish lawful objectives.
4. Choke holds and vascular neck restraints are prohibited unless lethal force is authorized.
5. It is understood that when requesting mutual aid assistance, the available force options of the responding agency may differ from those of the requesting agency. Officers shall be subject to the policies and procedures of their employing agencies at all times.
6. Authorized less lethal options are those with which the police officer has received department-approved training on proper and safe usage.
7. Nothing contained in this section limits an officer's ability to use those means objectively reasonable for self-defense or to accomplish lawful objectives, including but not limited to items of opportunity.

#### D. TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS REGARDING LETHAL FORCE – FIREARMS

1. While on duty, police officers will carry and use only firearms and ammunition authorized by and documented with the department firearms instructor/armorer.
2. At least annually, each sworn officer is required to demonstrate proficiency with the department-authorized duty firearms, including specialized firearms that they are authorized to use. [RI 2.19](#) Proficiency standards are established as follows:
  - a. Attainment of minimum qualification requirements following performance standards as determined by current training doctrine, methods, and/or trends; [RI 2.18\(a\)](#)
  - b. Demonstrating knowledge of the laws concerning the use of authorized weapons and knowledge of department policies on the use of force, escalating force, and deadly force. [RI 2.18\(b\)](#)
  - c. Being familiar with safe handling procedures for these weapons. [RI 2.18\(c\)](#)
3. The program of instruction will be conducted by a qualified instructor who has achieved and maintained certification in the respective less-lethal force option(s). [RI 2.18](#) [RI 2.19\(a\)](#)
4. The Training Lieutenant will maintain training documentation to include lesson plans, attendance sheets, and proficiency records. [RI 2.19\(b\)](#)
5. Authorized firearms are those with which the police officer has qualified and received departmental training on proper and safe usage, and that are documented and comply with departmental specifications.
6. The department shall have a separate policy addressing the authorization of duty, off-duty, and specialized firearms, weapons, and ammunition.
7. Unsafe or defective department-issued firearms shall be replaced or repaired.

8. All recent hires of the department shall be qualified by the hiring agency's certified firearms instructor using that agency's POST-certified qualification course. This qualification shall take place before the officer carrying their department's authorized duty firearms in any official capacity.
9. Police officers who are unable to qualify with their duty firearm(s), per department testing procedures, will be given remedial training by the department's authorized certified firearms instructor. [RI 2.19\(c\)](#)
  - a. Upon successful completion of this training, the officer will be retested.
  - b. If, after a second attempt, the officer does not qualify, a report will be forwarded to the Chief of Police by the department's authorized and certified firearms instructor.
  - c. The Chief of Police will then take such action as they deem necessary and not inconsistent with this policy.
10. A police officer will not be authorized to carry or use any duty firearm for which they have not been able to qualify during the department's most recent qualification period.
11. A police officer who has suffered an illness, injury, or absence that could affect their ability to use a department-authorized firearm will be required to requalify before returning to enforcement duties.
12. Officers who carry personally owned firearms and ammunition off-duty must have said firearms and ammunition authorized by the department and, at least annually, demonstrate proficiency and safe handling techniques to the department's certified firearm instructor.

#### E. TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS REGARDING LESS LETHAL FORCE

1. At least biennially, each sworn officer is required to demonstrate proficiency with the department-approved less lethal force options that they are authorized to use, including less lethal weapons, weaponless control techniques, handcuffing, de-escalation, and duty to intervene. In the case of the conducted electrical weapon (CEW), the demonstration will be on an annual basis. [RI 2.19](#) Proficiency standards are established as follows:
  - a. Attainment of minimum qualification requirements following performance standards as determined by current training doctrine, methods, and/or trends; [RI 2.18\(a\)](#)
  - b. Demonstrating knowledge of the laws concerning the use of authorized weapons and knowledge of department policies on the use of force, escalating force, and deadly force. [RI 2.18\(b\)](#)
  - c. Being familiar with safe handling procedures for these weapons. [RI 2.18\(c\)](#)

2. The program of instruction will be conducted by a qualified instructor who has achieved and maintained certification in the respective less-lethal force option(s). [RI 2.18](#) [RI 2.19\(a\)](#)
3. The Training Lieutenant will maintain training documentation to include lesson plans, attendance sheets, and proficiency records. [RI 2.19\(b\)](#)
4. Proficiency standards shall be satisfied before an officer is authorized to carry and/or utilize the less-lethal force option(s).
5. Police officers who are unable to show proficiency with a less-lethal force option per department testing procedures will be given remedial training by the department's less-lethal force training instructor. [RI 2.19\(c\)](#)
  - a. Upon successful completion of this training, the officer will be retested.
  - b. If, after a second attempt, the officer does not evidence proficiency, a report will be forwarded to the Chief of Police by the department's less-lethal force training instructor.
  - c. The Chief of Police will then take such action as he/she deems necessary and not inconsistent with this policy.

#### F. REPORTING USES OF FORCE

1. A reportable use of force is defined as any incident in which a sworn department member exercises their police powers and uses a force option except for those actions outlined in Subsection 3 below.
2. Reportable uses of force also include:
  - a. Drawing and/or pointing a firearm or CEW at a person to obtain and/or maintain control of that person. [RI 2.14\(b\)](#)
  - b. Applies force through the use of lethal or less-lethal weapons; [RI 2.14\(c\)](#)
  - c. Applies weaponless physical force, such as strikes or takedowns;
  - d. Taking an action that results in, or is alleged to have resulted in, either injury to or the death of another person. [RI 2.14\(a\)](#)
3. Exceptions to reportable force:
  - a. Command presence;
  - b. Verbal commands;
  - c. Physical skills which do not result in injury, the appearance of injury, or the complaint of pain, such as soft empty-hand control techniques;
  - d. Compliance handcuffing that does not result in injury, the appearance of injury, or the complaint of pain.
4. Officers will notify a supervisor who is not involved in the incident, per chain-of-command, without unnecessary delay whenever a reportable use of force incident occurs either on-duty or off-duty.

5. An officer who has used force shall articulate in writing the force used and the facts, circumstances, and reasons for the use of said force.
6. All reportable uses of force resulting in death, serious bodily injury, or allegations of serious bodily injury shall be investigated by trained personnel.
  - a. All other reportable uses of force shall undergo a documented initial review by the officer's supervisor not involved in the force incident. Said documentation shall be forwarded through the chain of command for administrative review and to determine whether further action, including but not limited to a follow-up investigation, is necessary.
7. Where officers respond to an incident involving a reportable use of force, a "Response to Resistance" form must be completed for that incident, setting forth the specific use of force actions taken by each officer. [RI 2.14](#)
  - a. All Response to Resistance forms must be completed, including initial supervisory review, before the end of the shift
  - b. In instances where the officer is not available (injury, illness, OIS, etc.) to complete the required form, it may be completed as soon as practicable.
8. In place of a "Response to Resistance" form, an officer shall be required to prepare a written report following departmental procedures whenever any of the following actions have occurred:
  - a. The officer discharges a firearm under circumstances that are not otherwise classified as a reportable use of force, except for those times when said discharge occurs either during weapons training or during lawful recreational activities where no report is necessary.
  - b. The officer discharges a firearm to euthanize an animal, as outlined in Section IV (B) (8).

#### G. DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

1. Use of Force resulting in death or serious bodily injury:

5Per the Rhode Island Attorney General's Protocols, all police incidents involving the use of deadly force, excessive force, and custodial deaths will be reported to the Attorney General's office for review. [RI 2.23](#)

- a. Where a police officer's use of force causes death or serious bodily injury, the officer will be placed on non-punitive administrative leave pending completion of an administrative review, and until a post-incident evaluation is conducted by a licensed mental health professional, preferably experienced in working with law enforcement personnel. [RI 2.16](#)
- b. The department will conduct both an internal affairs review and a criminal investigation of the incident.

2. Allegations of excessive use of force shall be reported to the department's Office of Professional Standards (OPS) following the department's protocols.
3. Administrative review of the use of force incident(s):
  - a. All reported uses of force will be reviewed by Professional Standards: [RI 2.15](#)
    - 1) Departmental rules, policy, or procedures were violated;
    - 2) The relevant policy was understandable and effective in covering the situation;
    - 3) If department training is currently adequate;
    - 4) If department equipment needs to be addressed.
  - b. All findings of deficiencies shall be reported to the appropriate unit for resolution and/or discipline.
4. All "Response to Resistance" reports will be retained as required by department policy, and a documented annual analysis of those reports will be compiled by OPS. [RI 2.21](#)
5. This analysis shall, at a minimum, identify the following:
  - a. Date and time of incidents;
  - b. Types of encounters resulting in the use of force;
  - c. Trends or patterns related to race, age, and gender;
  - d. Trends or patterns resulting in injury to any person; and
  - e. Impact of findings on policies, practices, equipment, and training.
6. Each calendar year, an annual summary report of this analysis will be made available to the public.

**Per order,**

*Thomas F. Oates, III*

**Chief of Police**

***Written directives published within PowerDMS are in full force and effect on the referenced dates and have been approved by the Chief of Police***

## Appendix

### Attorney General's Protocol Regarding

#### Use of Lethal Force Incidents

##### Background

One of the most sensitive investigations that law enforcement agencies are called upon to conduct is an investigation of the use of lethal force by a police officer. Experience has shown that these investigations frequently pose complex factual and legal issues and are closely followed by the public we serve. This model protocol publishes existing policies and practices of the Office of the Attorney General in such an investigation.

##### What the Office of Attorney General will do:

- As a general rule, present to a grand jury every police-involved lethal force incident resulting in a fatality. Our review of non-fatal incidents may be concluded without a formal grand jury investigation.
- Utilize multi-agency investigative teams to review officer-involved lethal force incidents. Ordinarily, the Rhode Island State Police and the police department in whose jurisdiction the incident took place will comprise the investigative team.
- Assign a senior prosecutor (or prosecutors) to work with your investigators and to provide legal advice throughout the course of your investigation.
- Make available other office resources including assistance with public information and public records requests.

##### What the law enforcement agency should do

##### when an officer-involved lethal force incident occurs:

- Promptly notify the Rhode Island State Police (401-444-1000) and the Office of Attorney General. (After hours, a prosecutor may be reached through the Attorney General's BCI Unit at 401-421-5268). In the case of incidents involving the Rhode Island State Police, they will notify the municipal law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the location of the incident.
- Keeping in mind the value of a multi-agency investigation, investigative steps taken prior to assembly of the multi-agency team should be limited to those necessary to preserve evidence or those required due to other exigent circumstances.
- The Chief of the law enforcement agency whose officer utilized lethal force should normally serve as the primary point of contact for media inquiries, and coordinate responses with the investigative team.

##### What the Investigative Team will do:

- The Investigative Team will be made up of experienced investigators working together to conduct the most informed and efficient review possible and will work with the Office of the Attorney General to review the circumstances of the incident. For grand jury investigations, the investigators will be sworn as grand jury investigators subject to the rules governing grand jury investigations.