

**Metropolitan Police Department
City of St. Louis
Office of the Chief of Police
Special Order**

Subject: Body Armor

Date Issued: August 28, 2007

Effective Date: August 28, 2007

Order No.: Section III of SO 2-05

Expiration: Indefinite

Reference:

CALEA Standards: 22.2.8, 41.3.4, 41.3.5, 41.3.6, 46.2.3

To: All Bureaus, Districts and Divisions

PURPOSE: To provide the procedures for the use of body armor by commissioned officers assigned to uniform, plain clothes and administrative positions.

POLICY: To maximize officer safety through the use of body armor in combination with prescribed safety procedures. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures.

A. ISSUANCE OF BODY ARMOR (22.2.8) (41.3.4) (41.3.5) (46.2.3)

1. The Department provides all commissioned officers with body armor. Body armor issued by the Department will provide protection equal to or exceeding Threat Level II as defined by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).
2. Officers assigned to the Hostage Response Unit's, Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) are provided with additional body armor which is used during team deployments that provide protection equal to or exceeding Threat Level III A and are equipped with a Threat Level IV ballistic plate as defined by the NIJ.

B. USE OF BODY ARMOR (41.3.4) (41.3.5) (41.3.6)

1. The wearing of Department-issued body armor is mandatory for all Officers, Detectives and Sergeants while engaged in street level enforcement activities, while on patrol, while involved in enforcement or investigative activities, while making arrest attempts or any other high risk situations.

Exception: Officers working in an undercover capacity that could be compromised by the wearing body armor are exempt from the provisions of this Order upon written approval of the Chief of Police.

2. Officers assigned to administrative functions are strongly encouraged, but not required to wear body armor unless engaged in one of the activities listed above.

3. Officers working Department grant or overtime programs involving the activities in paragraph B1 above are required to wear body armor.
4. All Commanders on staff duty or engaged in one of the activities listed in paragraph B1 are required to wear body armor.
5. Officers working Department-approved secondary employment are strongly encouraged, but not required to wear body armor.

C. MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS (41.3.5)

1. Officers claiming a medical reason for not wearing body armor are required to be evaluated by the Department Medical Director who will make a recommendation to the Commander, Special Services concerning the wearing of body armor.
2. Officers are required to provide the Commander of Special Services with all pertinent medical records and documentation concerning the diagnoses, treatment and final medical report.
3. The Commander of Special Services, in consultation with the Department Medical Director and Quartermaster, will determine if an alternate vest carrier or a different type of vest material is a reasonable solution for the Officer.
4. The Commander of Special Services will then make a report and recommendation to the Chief of Police.

D. APPROVED BODY ARMOR CARRIERS (22.2.8) (41.3.4) (41.3.5)

1. Police Officers and Sergeants may use the undershirt vest carrier or the exterior blue 'shirt' vest carrier.
2. Detectives may use the undershirt vest carrier or the black exterior vest carrier.
3. Commanders may use the undershirt vest carrier, the external white 'shirt' vest carrier or the black external vest carrier.

E. INSPECTIONS OF BODY ARMOR

Supervisors and Commanders are responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn and maintained as required by this Order through routine observation and periodic inspections.

F. CARE, MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT OF BODY ARMOR

1. Inspection

- a. Officers will routinely inspect personal body armor for signs of damage and for general cleanliness. Under no conditions will an Officer attempt to repair body armor. Officers are responsible for reporting damage or excessive wear to the ballistic panels or cover to their supervisor and the Quartermaster.

2. Effects of Moisture & Chemicals

- b. Perspiration can sometimes generate sufficient moisture to reduce the effectiveness of ballistic fabric. When thoroughly saturated or totally immersed in water, a decreased level of ballistic resistance can result while they remain in such a saturated condition. Once dry, ballistic performance will be restored.
- c. The ballistic element should never be exposed to any petroleum, chemical or chlorine products. Exposure to these agents will result in a loss of ballistic resistance.

3. Care & Laundering of Body Armor

As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer will be responsible for cleaning his/her body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

a. Outer Carrier:

- 1) remove ballistic panels from front and back outer shell;
- 2) close or remove all Velcro® fasteners before washing;
- 3) automatic machine wash the outer shell using 'durable press' cycle only at a medium water temperature (about 120 F);
- 4) use low-sudsing detergent, according to detergent manufacturer's directions;
- 5) air dry or machine dry with low-temperature setting;
- 6) do not use bleach;
- 7) only the outer shell may be commercially dry cleaned; and
- 8) outer shell must be completely dry before inserting the ballistic panels.

b. Ballistic Panels:

- 1) do not immerse in liquid;

- 2) gently hand wash with a sponge or wash cloth using mild detergent;
- 3) wipe off any excess detergent with clean water;
- 4) wipe dry;
- 5) do not dry clean, machine wash or bleach; and
- 6) do not dry outdoors.

4. Storage of Body Armor

a. Improper storage of body armor may contribute to premature wear, as well as reduce the protective capabilities of the ballistic system itself. When not wearing body armor, it should be stored under normal environmental conditions.

b. Care should be taken to store body armor flat, either on a shelf or other flat surface. When this is not practical, suspended on a clothes hanger is the next best method. Body armor should never be folded or stood on its edge. This improper storage will create 'set wrinkles' in the body armor and may cause curling at the edges.

c. Body armor should never be stored in the trunk of a vehicle where it may be exposed to extremely high temperatures. High temperatures may affect the strength of some fibers that could diminish the performance of body armor.

5. Replacement

a. Body armor will be replaced in accordance with guidelines and protocols established by the NIJ and the vest manufacturer.

G. EVALUATION

The Quartermaster, in consultation with the Armorer and the Firearms Section of the Laboratory, will be responsible for:

1. Monitoring technological advances in the body armor industry that may necessitate a change in body armor.
2. Assessing weapons and ammunition currently in use and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.