


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Body Armor		AOM: P-103
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [41.3.5], [41.3.6]		Issuing Authority <hr/> Jody Kasper Chief of Police
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I. Policy

Minimizing the risk for serious injury or death to police officers is of paramount concern to the department. The utilization of body armor is one proven means of enhancing officer safety by affording them a reasonable level of protection. Therefore, it is the policy of this department to provide its full-time personnel with body armor.

II. Procedures

Issuance of Body Armor

- A. All body armor shall meet department specified threat levels and current NIJ standards when purchased
- B. All full-time police officers, as well as special police officers who perform patrol duties, shall be issued body armor.
- C. No personally owned body armor shall be worn on duty, unless approved in advance by the Chief of Police or designee and it must meet minimum department threat levels and applicable NIJ standards.

- D. The department will replace body armor according to the manufacturer's recommended replacement schedule
- E. The department's Supply Sergeant shall be responsible for the issuance/return of body armor vests and maintaining a record of the manufacturer, model and serial number(s) of each vest, to whom it is issued, the date of issue, the date of return and the date of disposal.

Use of Body Armor

All police officers on duty, while engaged in patrol or field operations, shall wear their body armor. For the purpose of this policy, "*field operations*" shall refer to those activities which substantially expose a police officer to the risk of serious injury or death by the means of a firearm, knife or other weapon. This shall also apply when an officer is on the firing range or otherwise engaged in firearms training or training involving the use of firearms. Exceptions to the mandated wearing of body armor are as follows:

- A. When a department-approved physician determines and certifies that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude the wearing of body armor.
- B. When an officer is involved in an undercover or plainclothes assignment that would be compromised by the use of body armor.
- C. When an officer is assigned to perform a primarily administrative function, or when working an outside traffic detail.

Detectives and other non-uniform police officer shall wear their body armor when involved in the service of a search or arrest warrant, or a tactical field situation [41.3.6], including but not limited to:

- A. Violent crimes in progress;
- B. Barricade and/or hostage incidents
- C. Other situations where there is a potential for serious bodily injury or death, such as an armed robbery in progress

Body armor, whether department issued or authorized for use, must be immediately available for every officer on duty in any assignment. "*Immediately available*" shall mean as in close proximity to an officer so that it can be put on immediately. "*Close proximity*" may be defined in a readily assessable area in their assigned department vehicle or work area in the police station. [41.3.5]

The wearing of body armor vests shall be mandatory in any situation where a police supervisor deems it to be necessary. [41.3.6]

The on-duty supervisors shall be responsible for insuring compliance with the wearing of body armor as stated in this policy.

Care and Maintenance

Each officer is responsible for the proper storage, daily inspection, care, and cleanliness of their body armor.

- A. Since dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer is responsible for cleaning and maintaining their bulletproof vest in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- B. An officer shall be responsible for the replacement or repair of their body armor under the following circumstances:
 - 1. Weight gain that makes the body armor unwearable
 - 2. Damage caused by negligence
 - 3. Wear caused by faulty maintenance
 - 4. Loss or theft due to negligence

Inspections

The Shift and Detective Bureau Commanders shall cause an inspection to be conducted at least once annually, of the body armor of all the police personnel assigned to their respective shift or bureau. The inspection shall be for fit, cleanliness, damage, and wear. Additionally, body armor will be randomly inspected as part of the department's random inspection process.