

## 8.000 - Use of Force Core Principles

Effective Date: ~~12021119~~20 Draft

This section outlines the Seattle Police Department's core principles relating to the use of force. These general core principles provide the foundation for the more specific policies governing the application, reporting, investigation and review of force. The Department recognizes that officers will face unique and challenging circumstances not specifically addressed in this policy. Officers are expected to apply these core principles reasonably in unanticipated situations.

### **1. Every Member of the Seattle Police Department is Committed to Upholding the Constitution, Laws of the United States, Laws of the State of Washington, and Defending the Civil Rights and Dignity of All Individuals, While Protecting All Human Life and Property and Maintaining Civil Order**

It is the policy of the Seattle Police Department to accomplish the police mission with the cooperation of the public and as effectively as possible, and with minimal reliance upon the use of physical force.

The community expects and the Seattle Police Department requires that officers use only the force necessary to perform their duties and that such force be proportional to the threat or resistance of the subject under the circumstances.

An officer's commitment to public safety includes the welfare of members of the public, the officer, and fellow officers, with an emphasis on respect, professionalism, and protection of human life, even when force is necessary.

Officers who violate those values by using objectively unreasonable force degrade the confidence of the community, violate the rights of individuals upon whom unreasonable force is used, and may expose the Department and fellow officers to legal and physical hazards.

Conversely, officers who fail to use timely and adequate force when it is necessary may endanger themselves, the community and fellow officers.

## **2. When Safe, Under the Totality of the Circumstances, and Time and Circumstances Permit, Officers Will Use De-Escalation Tactics to Reduce the Need for Force**

Additional guidance on how to reduce the need to use force may be found in 8.100.

## **3. Sometimes the Use of Force Is Unavoidable, and an Officer Must Exercise Physical Control of a Violent, Assaultive, or Resistive Individual to Make an Arrest, or to Protect Members of the Public and Officers from Risk of Harm**

In doing so:

- Officers will recognize that their conduct prior to the use of force, including the display of a weapon, may be a factor which can influence the level of force necessary in a given situation.

Additional guidance on how to reduce the need to use force may be found in 8.100.

- Officers will take reasonable care that their actions do not precipitate an unnecessary, unreasonable, or disproportionate use of force, by placing themselves or others in jeopardy.
- Officers will continually assess the situation and changing circumstances and modulate the use- of-force appropriately.

## **4. An Officer Will Use Only Force That Is Objectively Reasonable, Necessary, and Proportional to the Threat or Resistance of a Subject**

Definitions of objectively reasonable, necessary and proportional may be found in [8.050](#).

Guidance on when force is authorized may be found in [8.200](#).

## **5. Each Officer Is Responsible for Explaining and Articulating the Specific Facts, and Reasonable Inferences From Those Facts, Which Justify the Officer's Use Of Force**

The officer's justification will be reviewed to determine whether or not the force used was in or out of policy.

Failure to adequately document and explain the facts, circumstances, and inferences when reporting force may lead to the conclusion that the force used was out of policy.

Additional guidance on reporting force may be found in [8.400](#).

## **6. The Department Is Committed to Upholding Lawful, Professional, and Ethical Standards Through Assertive Leadership and Supervision Before, During, and After Every Force Incident**

The Seattle Police Department recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility that comes with the constitutional authority to use force. This responsibility includes maintaining vigorous standards and transparent oversight systems to ensure accountability to the community in order to maintain their trust. This includes:

- Force prevention efforts,
- Effective tactics, and
- Objective review and analysis of all incidents of reportable force

Additional guidance on the Department's review of force may be found in [8.500](#).

## **7. A Strong Partnership Between the Department and the Community Is Essential for Effective Law Enforcement and Public Safety**

Uses of force, even if lawful and proper, can have a damaging effect on the public's perception of the Department and the Department's relationship with the community.

Both the Department and individual officers need to be aware of the negative effects of use-of-force incidents and be empowered to take appropriate action to mitigate these effects, such as:

- Explaining actions to subjects or members of the public, when feasible
- Offering reasonable aid to those affected by a use-of-force
- Treating subjects, witnesses, and bystanders with professionalism and courtesy

- Department follow-up with neighbors or family to explain police actions and hear concerns and feedback
- Department follow-up with the involved officer(s) and support, as needed, throughout the process

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