

Stowe Police Department

General Order: 1.14	Related General Orders:
Body Armor	
This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.	
Applicable Vermont Statutes:	
Issued By: Donald B. Hull, Chief of Police	
Date Implemented: 06/11/2012	Date Revised: 06/08/2020

I. PURPOSE:

1. The purpose of this policy is to provide Stowe Police Officers with guidelines for the proper use and care of body armor.

II. POLICY:

1. It is the policy of this Department 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.

III. PROCEDURES:

1. Issuance of Body Armor
 - A. All body armor issued must comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current standards of the National Institute of Justice.
 - B. All officers shall be issued Department-approved body armor.
 - a. Protective vests used by officers of the Stowe Police Department shall be of the type worn under the shirt or in a uniform type carrier over the shirt.
 - b. The vest shall be properly fitted to the officer and replaced as recommended by the manufacturer.

- C. Body armor that is worn or damaged shall be replaced by this Department. Body armor that must be replaced due to misuse or abuse by the officer shall be paid for by the officer.
- D. Officers may purchase their own protective vest at their option, providing it meets Department standards and is approved by the Chief of Police.

2. Use of Body Armor

- A. Officers shall wear only Department-approved body armor.
- B. Body armor shall be worn by recruit officers as instructed while at the police academy and at all times during field training.
- C. Uniformed Officers **are required** to wear their protective vest whenever on duty, in uniform, and regularly performing patrol functions in the field.
- D. Sworn officers that do not regularly perform patrol functions or are not acting as first responders to incidents are not be required to wear soft body armor, but should have soft body armor **immediately** available to them in the event that they are needed.
- E. Investigative and plain clothes officers should have soft body armor **immediately** available to them in the event that they are needed.
- F. Officers will be required to wear soft body armor in certain planned instances such as, but not limited to:
 - a. Arrests of particularly dangerous or armed suspects.
 - b. Search warrant execution.
 - c. Serving felony warrants.
 - d. For all Firearms Range Training Sessions
 - e. Other situations which pose an obviously increased threat to the wellbeing of the involved officers.
 - f. All officers working in police-related secondary employment positions/paid details, arranged through the agency, must wear protective vests.
- G. Officers are exempt from wearing body armor as follows:
 - a. When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor.
 - b. When the officer is involved in undercover or plain clothes work that his/her supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor; or

- c. When the department determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor.

3. Inspections of Body Armor

- A. Officers shall be responsible for ensuring that body armor is maintained and in serviceable condition.
- B. The Chief of Police or his/her designee may inspect body armor for fit, cleanliness, signs of damage, abuse and wear.

4. Care, Maintenance and Replacement of Body Armor

- A. Officers shall routinely inspect personal body armor for signs of damage and for general cleanliness.
- B. As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer shall be responsible for cleaning personal body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- C. Officers are responsible for the proper storage, maintenance and care of body armor in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- D. Officers are responsible for reporting damage or excessive wear to the ballistic panels or cover to their supervisor.
- E. Body armor will be replaced in accordance with guidelines and protocols established by the National Institute of Justice and the manufacturer.

5. Training

The Training Sergeant and Firearms Instructors:

- A. Monitoring technological advances in the body armor industry that may necessitate a change in body armor.
- B. Assessing weapons and ammunition currently in use and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.
- C. Providing any training programs that demonstrate body armor's stopping power under actual firing conditions and that emphasize its safe and proper use.

IV. DISCIPLINE:

Any violation of this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreement, statute, Department policy or Town policy.