



Somerville Police Department 		TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		POLICY NUMBER: 130		
		Subject: Ballistic Vests				
		Issuing Authority: David Fallon Chief of Police		Signature: 	Effective Date: August 01, 2017	
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide sworn members of the Somerville Police Department with guidelines for the proper use and care of ballistic vests. Employees who are members of the Somerville Police Employees Association (SPEA) bargaining unit shall wear ballistic vests as determined by the Chief of Police in his/her sole discretion. [41.3.5]

Policy

It is the policy of the Somerville Police Department to maximize officer safety through the use of ballistic vests in combination with prescribed safety procedures. While ballistic vests provide a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures. [41.3.5]

Definitions

Field Activities: Duty assignments and/or tasks that place or could reasonably be expected to place officers in situations where they would be required to act in enforcement rather than administrative or support capacities.

Officers: All sworn Police Officers of the Somerville Police Department who are issued a ballistic vest.

Procedures

1. Issuance of Ballistic Vests

- A. All ballistic vests issued must comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current standards of the National Institute of Justice (DOJ) or its' successor agency.

- B. All officers shall be issued agency-approved ballistic vests.
- C. Ballistic vests that are worn or damaged shall be replaced by the Department **at no cost to the officer.**

2. Use of Ballistic Vests [41.3.5] [41.3.6]

- A. Officers shall wear agency-approved ballistic vests. To the extent available, they **may wear them in standard carriers or external carriers at the choice of each officer.**
- B. Officers that are assigned to the uniformed function are required to wear ballistic vests during their shift while engaged in field activities. In addition, all officers must wear protective vests during high risk and/or tactical situations. Examples of “high risk” or “tactical” situations include but are not limited to, search warrant executions, drug raids, initial crime scene response, and serving felony warrants.
- C. It is highly recommended that all officers assigned to the Detective Division or while working ‘road jobs’, as defined in the respective labor contracts, wear ballistic vests during their tour of duty. However, those officers in the Detective Division and/or working ‘road jobs’, where traffic control and direction is the primary responsibility, who choose not to wear their ballistic vests must have it immediately available at all times during their shift and ‘road job’. Immediately available means easily accessible.
- D. Those uniformed officers assigned to administrative duties shall wear ballistic vests when outside the confines of the Police Station, **except as may be otherwise stated in this Policy.**
- E. However, there are Departmental exemptions as follows:
 - 1. When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing a ballistic vest.
 - 2. When the officer is involved in undercover or plain clothes work that his supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing a ballistic vest; or
 - 3. When the Department determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing a ballistic vest.
- F. All sworn officers, regardless of their present position, while on duty, shall have a ballistic vest immediately available.

3. Inspection of Ballistic Vest

- A. Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that ballistic vests are worn and maintained as required by this policy through routine observation and periodic documented inspections at roll call and spot checks in the field.

- B. Annual inspections of ballistic vests shall be conducted for fit, cleanliness, and signs of damage, abuse and wear. This may be accomplished as part of annual firearms training.

4. Care, Maintenance and Replacement of Ballistic Vest

- A. Officers shall routinely inspect personal ballistic vests for signs of damage and for general cleanliness.
- B. As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer shall be responsible for cleaning their personal ballistic vest in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The Department shall make those instructions readily available to all officers.
- C. Officers are responsible for the proper storage, maintenance and care of ballistic vests in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The Department shall make those instructions readily available to all officers.
- D. Officers are responsible for reporting damage or excessive wear to the ballistic panels or cover to their immediate supervisor and Academy Director.
- E. Ballistic vests will be replaced by the Department in accordance with guidelines and protocols established by the National Institute of Justice. The Department shall make those guidelines and protocols readily available to all officers.

5. Training

- A. The Academy Director shall be responsible for:
 - 1. Monitoring technological advances in the ballistic vest industry that may necessitate a change in ballistic vests.
 - 2. Assessing weapons and ammunition currently in use and the suitability of approved ballistic vests to protect against those threats.
 - 3. Providing training programs that emphasize a ballistic vest's safe and proper use.
 - 4. Maintaining statistics on incidents where armor has or has not protected officers from harm, including traffic crashes.