

Body Armor

1012.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the proper issuance, use, care and maintenance of body armor.

1012.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office 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.

1012.3 ISSUANCE

The Administrative Commander shall ensure that body armor is issued to all deputies and that, when issued, the body armor meets or exceeds the standards of the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

Body armor shall be issued when a deputy begins service at the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office and shall be replaced when it becomes expired, worn or damaged to the point that its effectiveness or functionality has been compromised.

The Sheriff may authorize issuance of body armor to uniformed and professional staff members whose jobs may make wearing of body armor advisable.

1012.3.1 USE

Generally, the required use of body armor is subject to the following:

- (a) Members shall only wear office-approved body armor.
- (b) Members shall wear body armor any time they are in a situation where they could reasonably be expected to take enforcement action.
- (c) Members shall wear body armor when working in uniform or taking part in office range training.
- (d) Members are not required to wear body armor when they are functioning primarily in an administrative or support capacity and would not reasonably be expected to take enforcement action. However, when that duty transitions to a field responsibility, the wearing of the body armor is required.
- (e) Deputies may be excused from wearing body armor when they are involved in undercover or plainclothes work that a supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor, or when a supervisor determines that other circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor.
 - 1. Under certain circumstances, (potential high-risk situations, etc.), a commander and/or supervisor can order the wearing of body armor. Consequently, body armor shall be immediately available for INSTANT USE to all personnel within the agency who have received initial issue.

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Personnel wearing the class B, C, or D uniform are permitted to wear their agency-issued body armor in the Guardian Molle Carrier. When wearing the Guardian Molle Carrier, the rank insignia will be positioned in the middle chest panel of the carrier and not on the shirt collar.

1012.3.2 INSPECTION

Supervisors should ensure through routine observation and periodic documented inspections that body armor is worn and maintained in accordance with this policy.

Annual inspections of body armor should be conducted by a person trained to perform the inspection for fit, cleanliness and signs of damage, abuse and wear.

1012.3.3 CARE AND MAINTENANCE

The required care and maintenance of body armor is subject to the following:

- (a) Members are responsible for inspecting their body armor for signs of damage, wear and cleanliness at the start of each shift. Unserviceable body armor shall be reported to the supervisor.
- (b) Members are responsible for the proper storage of their body armor. Body armor should not be stored for an extended period of time in an area where environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, light, humidity) could potentially degrade its effectiveness.
- (c) Members are responsible for the care and cleaning of their body armor pursuant to the manufacturer's care instructions.
 - 1. Body armor should not be exposed to any cleaning agents or methods not specifically recommended by the manufacturer.
 - 2. Failure to follow manufacturer's care instructions may damage the ballistic performance capabilities of the body armor. If care instructions for the body armor cannot be located, the manufacturer should be contacted to request the instructions.
- (d) Body armor should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended replacement schedule, or when its effectiveness or functionality has been compromised.

1012.4 ARMORER RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the Armorer include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Monitoring technological advances in the body armor industry for any appropriate changes to office-approved body armor.
- (b) Assessing the current level of weapons and ammunition utilized by the public and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.
- (c) Educating deputies about the safety benefits of wearing body armor.