



ACTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT MANUAL; P&P: Administration		
POLICY & PROCEDURE # 4.07	DATE OF ISSUE: 1/30/2024	EFFECTIVE DATE: 2/9/2024
SUBJECT: BODY ARMOR	ISSUING AUTHORITY: Chief James Cogan	
REFERENCE(S): Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission # 41.3.5; 41.3.6	<input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AMENDS <input type="checkbox"/> RESCINDS	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers with guidelines for the proper use and care of department-issued body armor.

Soft, concealable body armor is designed to protect the wearer against projectiles fired by most handguns and shotguns. Its effectiveness depends upon the protection rating. Soft body armor is not designed to protect the wearer from medium to high-power rifle projectiles.

Heavier body armor made of ceramic plates may protect against multiple impacts from rifle fire, but it is generally too heavy and inflexible to be worn during normal patrol duties and is generally relegated to special operations.

Soft body armor may protect against improvised weapons, such as broken bottles, but is usually not effective against knives or ice picks unless it is designed, manufactured, and rated as such. Sharp, pointed instruments used in a stabbing motion may penetrate body armor and could deliver a fatal injury. Slashing knife attacks may be resisted.

While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures and sound tactics.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Acton Police Department that all sworn employees, full and part-time, while on-duty engaged in patrol or field activities shall wear body armor. Officers shall have body armor readily accessible for wear during extra-duty employment. **[41.3.5(1)]**

III. DEFINITIONS

Routine Patrol / Field Activities: Duty assignments and/or tasks that place or could reasonably be expected to place an officer in a situation where an officer would be

required to act in an enforcement capacity rather than an administrative or support role.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Authorized Body Armor

1. Officers shall wear only department-issued or approved body armor.
2. The body armor must comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current standards of the National Institute of Justice or its successor agency.

B. Issuance of Body Armor

1. **AVAILABILITY OF BODY ARMOR:** Regardless of whether or not body armor is worn regularly, each sworn employee shall have body armor available for wear.
2. **INITIAL ISSUE:** All sworn employees, both full and part-time, shall be issued soft body armor upon beginning employment. **[41.3.5(2)(6)]**
3. **REPLACEMENT ISSUE:**
 - a. The life expectancy of soft body armor is approximately four to five years.
 - b. Body armor that is no longer serviceable due to wear or service-connected damage shall be replaced by the Department.
 - c. Six months before the expiration date of the issued body armor, or upon damage to the armor, officers shall contact the sergeant in charge of issuing body armor.
4. Officers shall surrender their soft body armor upon separation from service unless authorized to retain it by the Chief of Police.

C. Guidelines for Wearing Body Armor [41.3.5(3)]

1. **Uniformed Officers:** Officers who are assigned to patrol duties shall wear their issued body armor while on duty engaged in field activities and during specified paid details, unless exempt as follows: **[41.3.5(4)]**
 - a. When a supervisor determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor; or
 - b. When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor.
2. Uniformed Acton police officers working a paid detail, shall wear their individually issued body armor or have it in a readily accessible place. A

readily accessible place is in the police cruiser assigned to them for the detail or their own personal motor vehicle at the detail site. **[41.3.5(5)]**

3. **Plain Clothed Officers:** Officers who are assigned to a non-uniformed function are strongly recommended to wear body armor while engaged in field activities while on duty and during specified paid details, unless exempt as follows:
 - a. When the officer is involved in undercover or plain clothes work that his/her supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor;
 - b. When the supervisor determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor; or
 - c. When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor.
4. **Administrative Officers:**
 - a. Officers assigned to administrative duties within the police facility are generally not required to wear body armor while performing those administrative duties.
 - b. When administrative officers perform uniformed or non-uniformed field activities, they must comply with body armor wear requirements for officers involved in field activities.

D. Storage

1. When not being worn, body armor must be readily available to the officer. Body armor may be stored in the officer's work area, the officer's locker, or the officer's vehicle.
2. In such instances when body armor is not worn while the officer is engaged in field activities, the body armor must be immediately available to the officer, generally carried in the officer's vehicle with other equipment. **[41.3.5(5)]**

E. Firearms Training

Officers shall wear their body armor during firearms training.

F. Pre-Planned / High-Risk Situations **[41.3.6]**

Officers shall wear their body armor during any pre-planned, high-risk incidents, such as the execution of a search and/or arrest warrant or responding to an active threat.

G. Inspections of Body Armor

1. Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn as required by this policy through routine observation and periodic inspections.
2. Cleaning, maintenance, and inspection of the body armor are the responsibility of the wearer.

H. Care and Maintenance of Body Armor

1. Officers shall routinely inspect personal body armor for signs of damage or wear and for general cleanliness. Unserviceable body armor shall be reported to the wearer's supervisor.
2. 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.
3. Officers are responsible for the proper storage, maintenance, and care of body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

BODY ARMOR INFORMATION

History: General Order 2011-1: Body Armor Wear Policy