



VALENCIA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS STANDARDS

Effective Date: 04/01/2020

Article #: 4.5

Revised Date:

BALLISTIC PROTECTION
 POLICY GUIDELINE DIRECTIVE

A. PURPOSE

To provide information and guidance on the donning, cleaning, and storage of ballistic vest armor. This policy will address operational use and apparatus carrying this type of personal protective equipment for use in high threat environments involving firearms and/or explosives.

B. DEFINITIONS

- **Ballistic Panels:** Constructed of steel or partial steel core, has a ceramic or metallic component to the hard armor plate. These panels are designed for specific locations that are marked on each panel and designed to protect the vital regions of the body. Ballistic Panels have a 5-year expiration from the date of issue.
- **Ballistic Vest Armor:** The ballistic vest procured is a Type IV ballistic body armor, as defined by the National Institute of Justice. Type IV ballistic panels provide ballistic protection for most standard handgun and shotgun ammunition. Type IV panels are tested to stop .30cal steel core armor-piercing rifle ammunition.
- **Carrier:** A vest-like garment that contains interior inserts for ballistic panels with shoulder and waist adjustment points. The vest uses a Modular Lightweight Load-Carrying Equipment System (MOLLE), which allows the attachment of various MOLLE-compatible pouches and accessories. This carrier has high-visibility striping and geographic identifiers. The carrier by itself has no ballistic protection.
- **Carry Bag:** A large, lightweight bag used to protect the vest while in storage.
- **Extraction Team:** A group(s) of responding law enforcement officers and designated EMS personnel who enter the warm zone to initiate the removal of victims from the warm-zone.
- **Rescue Task Force:** A group(s) of responding law enforcement officers and designated EMS personnel who enter the warm zone to initiate the lifesaving treatment of injured victims.
- **Warm Zone:** Any operational area with a potential threat to personal safety or health, TECC will be performed in this area by a Rescue Task Force Team. The warm zone typically lies between the hot and cold zones.



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C. POLICY

Assigned Apparatus: All Fire and EMS units specified below will be required to carry a minimum quantity of Ballistic protection, if available, to protect the health and safety of responding personnel in certain high-risk emergency events that may involve firearms or explosives. The equipment cache will also contain Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC.)

- Rescues
 - At least two Ballistic Vests, one TECC Bag, and two Mega-Mover patient transport devices.
- Career Units
 - At least two Ballistic Vests, one TECC Bag, and two Mega-Mover patient transport devices, and Helmets.
- Command Staff
 - At least one Ballistic Vest, one TECC Bag, and two Mega-Mover patient transport devices, and Helmet

Incident Utilization: Ballistic vest protection is available to emergency personnel who may respond to events involving a high potential for violent threats, actions, and/or explosions. Ballistic protection will not be authorized for routine emergency incidents.

- High Treat Response Events
 - Fire Department members will be expected to function in one of three HTR operational modes, including Rescue Task Force, Protected Corridor, or Protected Island. Protected responders will only operate in the Warm Zone with an accompanying Law Enforcement escort.
- Law Enforcement-SWAT Standbys
 - When operating alongside Law Enforcement personnel during LE and/or SWAT stand-by operations, Fire Department personnel will don ballistic protection and be prepared to enter the Warm Zone to support operations, provide medical assistance, and/or to remove potential patients.
- Potentially Violent Events
 - During incidents involving shooting, stabbings, or domestic violence, Fire Department personnel may don ballistic protection as personal protective equipment. The decision to don ballistic protection should be dependent upon the dispatched information transmitted to responding units.



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- Incident Commander, Unit Officer Discretion
 - The Incident Commander/ Unit Officer should always exercise keen situational awareness when engaged in emergency incidents. If the emergency scene is potentially unstable, or there is a concern for the safety of personnel, ballistic protection should be utilized by emergency response personnel. Incident Commanders/ Unit Officers should continually assess the situation to determine if emergency responders should be removed from the scene and wait for Police assistance.

Equipment Complements: The Ballistic Carrier is equipment with a Modular Lightweight Load-Carrying Equipment System (MOLLE). The TECC Bag can be attached to this system if preferred by the user. Trauma Shears and other applicable equipment can be attached utilizing this MOLLE system. The carrier should not be penetrated with other attachment devices or altered in any way.

- Patient Removal Devices
 - Fire Department personnel should utilize safe, readily available patient movement devices to remove patients and victims from unsafe, high threat violence incidents, to include, but not limited to, Reeves, Bariatric Transfer Devices, and/or MegaMovers. Mega-Mover Patient Transfer Devices will be stored in the Carry Bag. Prompt patient extraction to a Casualty Collection Area, waiting for an ambulance, or MCI treatment area is essential to save victims who have sustained serious injuries resulting from gunshots and/or explosive mechanisms.

D. PROCEDURE

- Donning
 - Remove excessive or bulky clothing; do not wear body armor over or under your structural PPE. Using a technique similar to the Over-the-Head SCBA application, lower the carrier down over the head and onto the shoulders.
 - Ensure the top of the carrier is positioned one inch below the clavicle notch or the indentation in the center of the neck. Adjust the Velcro adjustments on the shoulder to raise or lower the carrier to the proper fit.
 - Grasp the front of the carrier cover (under the pouch) and lift upward separating the Velcro. Hold the carrier cover toward the chest as you stretch and attach a side panel to the front of the carrier.



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- Switch hands, stretch and attach the opposite side panel to the front of the carrier. The wearer should ensure the side panels are even with the bottom border of the front of the carrier and not too high so that the wearer can inhale and exhale forcefully.
- Lower the carrier cover to secure the sides to the front of the carrier.
- **Cleaning**
 - The body armor may become soiled due to body perspiration and possible bloodborne pathogens. The body armor shall be cleaned using the following guidelines.
 - **Carrier and Ballistic Panel Cleaning**
 - Lay the carrier flat and remove all ballistic panels and supplies. Use micro wipes, a damp cloth, or sponge with mild antimicrobial soap or mild laundry detergent. Wipe off excessive soap with clean water and a damp sponge wipe dry. Do not hang, line dry, or dry in the sun - allow the carrier to air dry. More substantial contamination will require the carrier to be cleaned with a soft bristle brush with mild laundry detergent and running water.
- **Storage**
 - The Type IV Ballistic Vest will be stored in a carry bag to protect the vest while in storage. The carry bag and vest will be stored in a flat position and an area free from abrasion, sun or moisture. Do not place heavy items on top of the storage bag; compression of the ballistic panels will decrease optimal performance. Heat, moisture, and ultraviolet light will cause the body armor to degrade.
- **Other Considerations**
 - To ensure proper optimal performance, effective utilization, and standardization of the use of your body armor, the body armor should not be altered, or its contents changed.
 - Inspection and accountability for the body armor should be performed weekly.