



Town of Lexington

Police Department

Subject: Protective Vests/Body Armor

Reference: 41.3.5, 41.3.6

Effective Date:

November 1, 2010

Review Date:

Annually

By Order of: Mark J. Corr, Chief of Police

**Policy &
Procedure**

41Q

The Municipal Police Institute, Inc. (MPI) is a private, nonprofit charitable affiliate of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association. MPI provides training and model policies and procedures for police agencies. This policy is an edited version of MPI Policy 4.11, "Body Armor."

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Soft body armor is designed to protect police officers against projectiles fired by most handguns and shotguns and its effectiveness depends upon the protection rating or threat level assigned to a particular set of armor. Soft body armor is not designed to protect the wearer from medium to high power rifle projectiles.

Soft body armor may also protect against improvised weapons, like broken bottles, but is usually not effective against knives or ice picks. Sharp, pointed instruments used in a stabbing motion are likely to penetrate body armor and may deliver a fatal injury. Protection may be afforded from a slashing knife attack.

While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of standardized safety procedures. The purpose of this policy is to provide Lexington Police Officers with guidelines for the proper use and care of body armor.

It is the policy of the Lexington Police Department to:

1. Maximize officer safety through the use of body armor and observance of standardized safety procedures.
2. Issue body armor to each officer that is compliant with National Institute of Justice (NIJ) standards, with a minimum protection rating of threat level II.
3. Issue replacement vests as required by current standards set forth by NIJ.

PROCEDURES [41.3.5]

A. 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 rolls.

B. Issuance of Body Armor

All body armor used by Lexington Police Department personnel must be issued or approved by the Chief of Police or Designee and must comply with standards prescribed by the NIJ.

1. Body armor that is worn out or otherwise damaged shall be replaced by the agency with the understanding that life expectancy for protective armor is five years. Armor that is misused or abused will be replaced at the expense of the officer misusing the armor.
2. Regardless of whether or not body armor is worn regularly, each officer shall have body armor available for duty. [41.3.5]
3. Upon beginning employment and prior to working in the field, all full-time sworn officers shall be issued concealable, soft body armor.

C. Use of Body Armor

1. Recruit officers at any academy shall observe the guidelines as directed pertaining to body armor regulations.
2. Officers training at the range shall adhere to the regulations set forth by the Range Officer pertaining to the use of body armor.
3. The wearing of body armor in the performance of normal police duties is at the discretion of the officer. It is highly recommended that officers who are assigned to uniform functions, and non-uniformed sworn officers wear body armor while engaged in field activities both on duty and during paid details.
4. A supervisor may mandate the wearing of body armor during pre-planned, high risk situations such as high-risk search or arrest warrants or responding to an active shooter. [41.3.6]
5. The Detective Bureau has available a limited number of flak vests to enhance safety for officers initiating a pre-planned high-risk situation . [41.3.5]

41Q-Protective Vests/Body Armor

D. Inspections of Body Armor

1. Supervisors will document the use or nonuse of protective vests in the safety portion of evaluations.
2. Cleaning, maintenance and inspection of body armor are the responsibility of the officer to whom it is issued.

E. Care, Maintenance and Replacement of Body Armor

1. Officers shall routinely inspect personal body armor for signs of damage or wear. Unserviceable body armor shall be reported to the Quarter Master.
2. Dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels. Each officer shall be responsible for cleaning personal body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to ensure effectiveness of the armor and to maintain standards of good hygiene
3. Unserviceable body armor will be replaced in accordance with guidelines and protocols established by NIJ.