



SPOKANE POLICE DIVISION
CHIEF OF POLICE
CRAIG N. MEIDL

January 23, 2020

Mr. Bart Logue
Office of Police Ombudsman
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd
Spokane, WA 99201

RE: R19-03 Reportable Uses of Force

Dear Mr. Logue,

Thank you for forwarding your recommendation regarding the Spokane Police Department's current policies and practices related to reportable uses of force. A component of this recommendation is to "count use of physical force the same as other agencies in the Police Strategies LLC network, and other policing agencies around the country." Additionally the recommendation noted "updating the tracking of these uses of force would make for a more accurate comparison of force across agencies. More importantly, SPD would be more accurately reporting back to the community the actual uses of force which are occurring."

Use of force by law enforcement is of critical concern to communities across the country, including the Spokane community and SPD. SPD has taken this responsibility very seriously, and made many improvements to our policies, practices and training, including: the DOJ COPS Collaborative Reform which extensively overhauled the method and manner of reporting use of force, annual mandatory use of force refresher training through in-services, including annual use of force policy review for all officers, mandatory Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for all commissioned officers (including annual refreshers provided by the Washington State Training Commission), de-escalation training, procedural justice training, implicit bias training, mandatory rendering of first aid after a force incident, body camera implementation allowing the incident to be reviewed for performance and compliance with policy, modification of our values to incorporate "professionalism, compassion and integrity" into expected behavior for all of our staff, on-going monthly use of force review boards consisting of a committee that reviews every use of force for training and / or policy improvements, an Early Intervention System (EIS) that allows an additional review of those officers whose uses of force exceed a set threshold, an annual review of policy to ensure we are staying current with practices related to use of force, and accreditation of our agency through the Washington Sheriff's and Police Chief's Association (WASPC).





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Additionally with the passage of the Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act (LETCSA) last year, the Washington State Training Commission is developing training to cover a broad category of topics related to use of force and community interaction. The passage of this act mandates a total of 40 hours of training every three years on topics such as Civil Rights and Color of Law, Patrol De-escalation, Use of Force, Tactical Communication, Verbal Skills, Understanding Perception and Bias, History of Policing, History of Race and Policing, to name just a few of the covered topics. This statewide mandated training will enhance and expand the training SPD has conducted on its own over the past several years, and will have a direct correlation related to use of force and communication skills (designed to reduce the necessity for use of force).

SPD staff conducted a review of current practices and policies in Washington State as related to use of force and reporting requirements. Thirteen agencies were contacted, including SCSO/SVPD, Tacoma, Seattle, King County Sheriff's Office, Richland, Everett, Pasco, Bellevue, Bellingham, Auburn, Kennewick, Kirkland and Snohomish County Sheriff's Office. In comparison to these agencies, what we learned is:

- Routine handcuffing—no agencies require a UOF report
- Control holds—5 of 13 agencies require a UOF report, 8 only require if there is a complaint of pain (like SPD)
- Takedowns—7 out of 13 agencies require a UOF report, 6 only require if there is a complaint of pain (like SPD)
- Pointing a firearm: 8 out of 13 agencies require a UOF report (like SPD)
- Displaying a less lethal device: Bellingham, Kirkland, King County SO require a UOF report; the others, like SPD, do not require a use of force unless the device is used
- Universally, agencies require a UOF report for neck restraints, Level II strikes, TASER, OC, baton, 40mm, K9, etc. like SPD
- Universally, agencies require a UOF report for a complaint of injury or obvious injury like SPD
- Agencies are all over the board on how they handle animal discharges. Generally, they are investigated and reported but not as a use of force, SPD requires a police report.

The community expects SPD to enforce laws, including apprehending those who resist or attempt to avoid arrest. A use of force report filed through BlueTeam takes significant time and resources, and SPD mirrors the practices of many other agencies in Washington State (as indicated above). The packet that must be assembled takes significant resources from many different levels, requires multiple levels of review, and is very staff and time intensive.





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Those tools and tactics that mandate a use of force report through BlueTeam, including any contact by SPD that results in injury or complaint of injury, were chosen to find a balance between reasonable possibility of injury occurring and/or degree of government intrusion, versus significant resources necessary to provide oversight for uses of force.

SPD is exploring the ability to track those types of incidents measured in the Police Strategies LLC network with significantly less resources required. We currently use Tyler Technologies' New World software for CAD, LERMS and writing police reports. If successful, this would allow officers to identify various tactics used when arresting someone, without the significant time and resource commitment that a separate BlueTeam report requires. This process would still allow the incidents to be flagged without the requisite labor a BlueTeam requires. We will ensure we keep you posted on the progress of this proposal, but my sense is this would satisfy the information you are looking for.

In the meantime, we encourage anyone who believes officers used excessive force to contact your office or Internal Affairs to file a formal complaint.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Meidl'.

Craig Meidl
Chief of Police
Spokane P.D.

