

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 1 of 7

1. Purpose

To provide guidance for the members of the Fire Department to follow in the event they are subjected to a violent patient/subject and they are unable to make a safe escape.

2. Scope

The Fire Department authorizes its members to use force in response to threats and to the extent, it is objectively reasonable.

It is the policy of the Fire Department that its members will use that force or threat of force that is objectively reasonable to effect their own personal safety, patient/subject safety, and scene safety, in preventing or assisting in preventing a crime, or assisting in preventing escape after arrest or detention, and/or to stop the violent behavior of an individual. Use of excessive force in any situation is prohibited.

While it is the ultimate objective of every member to minimize injury to themselves and/or another, nothing in this policy requires a member to actually sustain physical injury before applying force.

A member's use of force will be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable member on the scene. The inquiry into every use of force incident will be based upon the member's training and experience, and the member's reasonable belief that the amount of force used was necessary considering the circumstances confronting the member at the time and not through the 20/20 vision of hindsight.

The Fire Department recognizes that this policy is a guideline. It is understood that no set of policies or procedures can effectively cover every possible scenario a member may encounter. The Fire Department also recognizes that the judgment and discretion of the individual member involved govern much of the decision-making utilized in use of force incidents.

However, to the extent the member use of force deviates from these guidelines, the member must have a sound and articulable reason for doing so as determined by the totality of the circumstances. These reasons must be clearly articulated by the member. Any deviations from these guidelines for reasons that are not sound or articulable may subject the member involved to disciplinary action by the Fire Department.

DRAFT

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 2 of 7

The Fire Department recognizes that State and Federal law provide direction for the use of force. The policy of the Fire Department is purposefully more restrictive and specific than current State or Federal law. It should be understood that compliance with State and/or Federal law does not imply conformance with this policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

Deadly Force – That force that under the circumstances in which it is used is readily capable of causing death or serious physical injury.

Member – For purposes of the application of the use of force and Fire Department policies, member means all sworn and civilian fire service members.

Excessive Force – That force used during a fire or EMS action which is greater than that which is objectively reasonable to obtain lawful objectives under the circumstances presented for each situation.

Force – Force shall be defined as the use of any weapon, instrument, device, or physical power used to control or restrain a person, or to overcome resistance. It includes gaining control of a subject or overcoming resistance through the use of physical strength, weaponless defense techniques, control techniques (to include defensive weapons), or a combination thereof. Any time force is used, the member should apply a use of force option that is reasonable for the situation.

Reasonable Belief – The facts and/or circumstances the member knows, perceives, or should know, at the time that the decision to use force is made and are such as to cause an ordinary and prudent member to act and think in a similar manner under similar circumstances. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Graham v. Conner*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), has written that it is necessary to evaluate the facts and circumstances confronting the member at the time force was used, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight.

Response Options – Control and Escort techniques available to fire members to counter and/or control a resistive patient/subject.

Serious Physical Injury – Physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of health, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.

DRAFT

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 3 of 7

4. PHILOSOPHY

A. The Fire Department recognizes that the value of human life is immeasurable in our society. This policy recognizes that the member's responsibility for protecting life must also include his/her own. The Fire Department recognizes and respects the value of life and dignity without prejudice.

B. The use of force by fire department personnel is a matter of critical concern both to the public and the fire service community. The Fire Department recognizes and authorizes its members to use appropriate force; however, there is an expectation that members will use only that force that is objectively reasonable to resolve a situation. Members must understand and appreciate the limitations on the authority granted to them – particularly with respect to overcoming resistance.

C. The use of excessive force will result in appropriate corrective action and/or discipline. It is expected that all members will intervene to stop unreasonable use of force.

6. PROCEDURES

Firefighter safety is of utmost importance. When responding to a known violent incident members should follow *established violent incident response procedures*. There are times when what would appear to be a routine call suddenly turns violent. Every effort should be made to escape the threat and retreat to a safe location and call for assistance from the police department.

In the event that escape is not practical, in order to protect the safety of the member, the patient, and bystanders the use of physical force, less-lethal weapons and equipment, and deadly force will be set forth in this policy.

Each member will be issued a copy of these policies, instructed in these policies, and demonstrate proficiency before employing any of these weapons and/or tactics as trained.

Members may use force only when they reasonably believe it is necessary to:

1. Prevent or terminate the commission or attempted commission of a felony.
2. Prevent the commission of suicide or self-inflicted serious physical injury.

DRAFT

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 4 of 7

3. Defend self or a third party from what is reasonably believed to be the use or imminent use of physical force.

4. To protect family members and bystanders

The use of force by a member can be viewed as an option selected in response to a patient/subject's actions and behavior. The option selected is determined by the relationship between a patient/subject's actions and the member's response. It must be understood that as the selected option moves from lesser to greater force, the risk of injury to the subject and/or member also increases. Based upon a firefighter's training and experience, if a lesser force option will not likely lead to control of the subject, then a reasonable and greater force may be used.

Patient/subject resistance levels are:

1. Psychological Intimidation
2. Verbal Non-compliance
3. Passive Resistance
4. Defensive Resistance
5. Active Aggression

Members who are not readily identifiable as fire members, whether on- or off-duty, shall identify themselves as fire members, unless identification would jeopardize the safety of the member or others.

The Fire Department trains its members on non-lethal force defensive response options. Depending on assignment, some members may receive specialized training in response options that others have not. The response options are based on the concept that as the resistive patient/subject increases their degree of resistance or threat to the member, the member may use any reasonable and necessary response options to overcome that resistance. Conversely, it is expected that the member will decrease the use of force response option as compliance is attained.

Response options include:

1. Presence
2. Verbal Direction
3. Soft Empty Hand Control Techniques

DRAFT

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 5 of 7

- a. Wrist Locks
- b. Joint Locks
- c. Pressure Points

7. Deadly Force

Members do not receive training in the application of the *carotid neck restraint or other types of neck restraints*.

In situations where the member must overcome an attack that the member reasonably believes would produce serious physical injury or death to the member or another person, the member may resort to any method necessary to overcome the attack.

Once the situation has stabilized and the threat of serious injury or death is past, the member must once again immediately resort to approved non-lethal force tactics.

8. REPORTING

- A. The Fire Department will incorporate a Use of Force Response Option Form to document all reportable incidents involving the use of force by Fire Department members as defined in section E. The Use of Force Response Option Form will be submitted to a supervisor no later than the end of the member's duty day and forwarded through the chain of command. The Use of Force Response Option Form, along with the Incident Report attached, will be forwarded to the Fire Chief through the chain of command.
- B. Each individual member shall provide justification on the narrative portion of the Incident Report or Supplement. The narrative will annotate who, what, where, when, how, and why.
 - a. The incident report shall include the following information at a minimum: Reason for the use of force an/or applying restraint.
 - b. Subject's behavior prior to the use of force including statements made by the subject, family members, or bystanders.
 - c. What level of force was used (i.e. mid-center facial lock; 3-sectional finger lock; full circle lock, open hand technique, etc).

DRAFT

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 6 of 7

- d. Subject's condition following the use of force.
 - i. If subject requires medical attention subject's physical condition will be assessed and documented on the EMS Encounter Form.
- C. It is the responsibility of the reviewing supervisor to ensure that the member has satisfactorily explained the subject's actions, the type of force deployed, and the manner in which it was applied.
- D. Only one Use of Force Response Option Form will be completed for each incident, regardless of the number of members involved or the type(s) of force used. It will be the responsibility of the assigned/case officer to ensure that the names of each involved member and force option utilized has been documented.
- E. Use of Force Response Option Form File. The Operations Division shall maintain the original form, and the Training Chief and EMS Chief will address any training issues as they arise.
- F. Annual Analysis of the Use of Force Response Option. The Assistant Fire Chief and shall prepare an annual analysis for the Fire Chief on all Use of Force reporting.
- G. Use of Force Types. Types of incidents (there may be others as designated by a supervisor) which must be recorded on a Use of Force Response Option Form include, unless performed within a training environment.
 - 1. Patient Restraints being applied.
 - 2. Member's use of force resulting in an injury to the member.
 - 3. Member's use of force resulting in an injury/alleged injury to another.
 - 4. Member's use of force resulting in the death of another.

VII. Use of Restraints

The use of restraints in the prehospital setting is authorized to ensure the patient's, bystanders', and member's safety within the guidelines of the Prehospital Standing Orders for Paramedics.

In situations where the use of restraints is not immediately indicated but is

DRAFT

Standard Operating Guideline	Any Where FIRE DEPARTMENT
Use of Defensive Techniques	06/29/26 Page 7 of 7

anticipated, the member shall contact medical control for direction and the law enforcement for assistance.

When restraining a patient the member must:

1. Restrain the patient in a manner that allows the member immediate access to assess and treat the patient.
2. Not restrain the patient in the prone position.
3. Apply a cardiac monitor to the patient.
4. Be in continuous attendance with the patient.
5. Continually assess the airway, breathing, and circulation.
6. Contact medical control as soon as safe to do so.
7. Two ALS providers must accompany the patient in the rear of the ambulance.

DRAFT