

**New Rochelle Police Department  
Manual of Procedure**

Subject: **Use of Force**

Chapter: Five

Article: 5.29

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Date Effective: 01 Mar 92

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**POLICY:** The federal and state standards by which use of force is measured are both founded in the basic premise of objective reasonableness.<sup>1</sup> The amount of force that is used by the officers shall be the amount of force that is objectively reasonable under the circumstances for the officer involved to effect an arrest, prevent an escape, or in defense of themselves or others. The standard of objective reasonableness, established by the United States Supreme Court in *Graham v. Connor*, is used in this policy and is intended to provide officers with guidelines for the use of force, including deadly physical force. Agency personnel must always consider the totality of the circumstances when applying the guidelines. In certain situations, exigent circumstances may outweigh the recommendation of a specific guideline. Personnel should always be able to articulate the justification for going beyond agency policy or training.

As the Supreme Court has recognized, this reasonableness inquiry embodies “allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation.”<sup>2</sup>

This policy is written in recognition of the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice to anyone. Vesting officers with the authority to use reasonable force and to protect the public welfare requires a careful balancing of all interests.

**PURPOSE:** Law enforcement officers are authorized to use reasonable and legitimate force in specific circumstances. Federal constitutional and state statutory standards dictate when and how much force can be used. This policy is founded in these standards, but is not intended to be an exhaustive recitation of state and/or federal legal framework governing use of force. The policy is designed in accordance with Executive Law §840(4)(d)(3).

## **DEFINITIONS**

Objectively Reasonable: An objective standard used to judge an officer’s actions. Under this standard, a particular application of force must be judged through the perspective of a reasonable officer facing the same set of circumstances, without the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, and be based on the totality of the facts that are known to that officer at the time that the force was used.<sup>3</sup>

Deadly Physical Force: Physical force which, under the circumstances in which it is used, is readily capable of causing death or other serious physical injury.<sup>4</sup>

Physical Injury: Impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.<sup>5</sup>

Serious Physical Injury: Physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Force which is objectively reasonable is insulated from criminal liability through Article 35 of the NYS Penal Law and civil liability by the 4th Amendment standard of objective reasonableness.

<sup>2</sup> *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 at 396 (1989).

<sup>3</sup> *Graham*, 490 U.S. 396 (1989)

<sup>4</sup> NY Penal Law §10(11) (McKinney 2013)

<sup>5</sup> NY Penal Law §10(9) (McKinney 2013)

<sup>6</sup> NY Penal Law §10(10) (McKinney 2013)

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**PROCEDURE:**

1. Use of Force

- 1.1 In general terms, force is authorized to be used when reasonably believed to be necessary to effect a lawful arrest or detention, prevent the escape of a person from custody, or in defense of one's self or another.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.2 Under the 4th Amendment of the United States Constitution, a police officer may use only such force as is "objectively reasonable" under the circumstances. The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene.<sup>8</sup>

2. Determining the Objective Reasonableness of Force

- 2.1 When used, force should be only that which is objectively reasonable given the circumstances perceived by the officer at the time of the event.
- 2.2 Factors that may be used in determining the reasonableness of force include, but are not limited to:
  - The severity of the crime or circumstance;<sup>9</sup>
  - The level and immediacy of threat or resistance posed by the suspect;<sup>10</sup>
  - The potential for injury to citizens, officers, and suspects;<sup>11</sup>
  - The risk or attempt of the suspect to escape;<sup>12</sup>
  - The knowledge, training, and experience of the officer;<sup>13</sup>
  - Officer/subject considerations such as age, size, relative strength, skill level, injury or exhaustion, and the number of officers or subjects;<sup>14</sup>
  - Other environmental conditions or exigent circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

3. Duty to Intervene

- 3.1 Any officer present and observing another officer using force that he/she reasonably believes to be clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force, if and when the officer has a realistic opportunity to prevent harm.
- 3.2 An officer who observes another officer use force that exceeds the degree of force as described in subdivision 3.1 of this section should promptly report these observations to a supervisor.

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<sup>7</sup> NY Penal Law § 35.30(1) (McKinney 2013)

<sup>8</sup> *Graham*, 490 U.S. at 396 (1989)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Scott v. Harris*, 550 U.S. 372 (2007)

<sup>12</sup> *Graham*, 490 U.S. at 396 (1989)

<sup>13</sup> Analysis of cases under the 4th Amendment requires the focus to be on the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene which includes the training and experience of the officer. *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (1968)

<sup>14</sup> *Sharrar v. Felsing*, 128 F. 3d 810 (3rd Cir. 1997) (numbers of officers or subjects)

<sup>15</sup> Courts have repeatedly declined to provide an exhaustive listing of factors. *Chew v. Gates*, 27 F. 3d 1432, 1475 n.5 9th Cir. (1994)

#### 4. Use of Deadly Physical Force

4.1 Deadly physical force may be used by an officer to protect him/her or another person from what the officer reasonably believes is an imminent threat of serious physical injury or death.<sup>16</sup>

4.2 Deadly physical force may be used to stop a fleeing suspect where:

- The officer has probable cause to believe the suspect has committed a felony involving the infliction or threat of serious physical injury or death; and,
- The officer reasonably believes that the suspect poses an imminent threat of serious physical injury to the officer or to others.
- Where feasible, some warning should be given prior to the use of deadly physical force.<sup>17</sup>

4.3 Chokeholds and Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation

- Any application of pressure to the throat, windpipe, neck, or blocking the mouth or nose of a person in a manner that may hinder breathing, reduce intake of air or obstruct blood circulation, is prohibited unless deadly physical force is authorized.<sup>18</sup>

#### 5. Prohibited Uses of Force

5.1 Force shall not be used by an officer for the following reasons:

- To extract an item from the anus or vagina of a subject without a warrant, except where exigent circumstances are present;
- To coerce a confession from a subject in custody;
- To obtain blood, saliva, urine, or other bodily fluid or cells, from an individual for the purposes of scientific testing in lieu of a court order where required;
- Against persons who are handcuffed or restrained unless it is used to prevent injury, escape, or otherwise overcome active or passive resistance posed by the subject.

#### 6. Reporting and Reviewing the Use of Force

6.1 A member of this department who has custody of a person must provide attention to the medical and mental health needs of that person in their custody and obtain assistance and treatment of such needs, which are reasonable and provided in good faith.<sup>19</sup> (See further in Section 1.01 Subdivision 12, of this Manual.)

- This includes appropriate and timely medical attention being provided to a party injured as a result of a use of force incident.

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<sup>16</sup> NY Penal Law and § 35.30(1)(c) (McKinney 2013)

<sup>17</sup> NY Penal Law and § 35.30(1), as restricted by *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985) (restricting the use of deadly physical force as it relates to fleeing felons) In *Garner*, the Supreme Court uses "significant threat of serious physical harm, either to the officer or others" in describing the limited circumstances under which deadly force can be used to prevent the escape of a felon.

<sup>18</sup> NY Penal Law § 121.13-a establishes the crime of Aggravated Strangulation.

<sup>19</sup> NY Civil Rights Law § 28

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- The immediate mental health needs of a person shall be based upon the reasonable cause to believe that a person, who appears to be mentally ill, is conducting themselves in a manner which is likely to result in a serious harm to themselves or others.<sup>20</sup>
- 6.2 Members involved in use of force incidents as described below shall notify their supervisor as soon as practical and shall complete a departmental Use of Force Report (PD 119).
- Use of force that results in a physical injury.
  - Use of force incidents that a reasonable person would believe is likely to cause an injury.
  - Incidents that result in a complaint of pain from the suspect except complaints of minor discomfort from compliant handcuffing.
  - Incidents where a Taser was intentionally discharged or accidentally discharged after being displayed.
  - Incidents where a firearm was discharged at a subject. Any discharge of a weapon, while either on duty or off duty, in the direction of a person must be verbally reported to the involved officer's supervisor within six hours and a written report prepared within forty-eight hours of occurrence.<sup>21</sup>
- 6.3 The Use of Force Report (PD 119) will be filed to document any reportable use of force incident.<sup>22</sup> This form shall be filed for incidents described in 6.2 of this Article and when:
- An officer engages in conduct which results in the death or serious bodily injury of another person.
  - One of the following is initiated by an officer:
    - Brandishes, uses or discharges a firearm at or in the direction of another person;
    - Uses a chokehold or similar restraint that applies pressure to the throat or windpipe of a person in a manner that may hinder breathing or reduce intake of air;
    - Displays, uses or deploys a chemical agent, including, but not limited to, oleoresin capsicum, pepper spray or tear gas at a subject;
    - Brandishes, uses or deploys an impact weapon, including, but not limited to, an ASP or baton at a person or persons;
    - Brandishes, uses or deploys an electronic control weapon, including, but not limited to, an electronic stun gun, flash bomb, or long-range acoustic device at a person or persons.
- 6.4 The completed PD 119 will be forwarded to the Records Unit and the Staff Services Division will submit all required information to New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (NYS DCJS) in the manner NYS DCJS authorizes.
- 6.5 Officers will document any requests for necessary medical or mental health treatment as well as efforts of police to arrange for such treatment.
- 6.6 Consistent with Executive Law Section 70-b, the New York Attorney General's Office of Special Investigation will investigate every incident in which a police officer caused or may reasonably have caused the death of a person, by an act or omission, whether the person is armed or unarmed, and whether the officer is on duty or not.

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<sup>20</sup> NY Mental Hygiene Law § 9.41

<sup>21</sup> NY EXC § 837-v

<sup>22</sup> The PD 119 will be filed to ensure compliance with the administrative reporting requirement of NY Executive Law § 837-t.

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7. Procedures for Investigating Use of Force Incidents

- 7.1 Where practical, a supervisor should respond to the scene to begin the preliminary force investigation.
- 7.2 A supervisor that is made aware of a force incident shall ensure the completion of a Use of Force Report (PD 119) by all officers engaging in reportable use of force and, to the extent practical, make a record of all officers present.
- 7.3 Photographs should be taken which sufficiently document any injuries or lack thereof to officers or suspects.
- 7.4 The Tour supervisor or Unit supervisor of the officer engaged in the use of force incident will conduct an investigation for all matters referenced in 6.2 of this Article.
- 7.5 Failure to adhere to use of force guidelines will be handled consistent with Discipline Procedures of this Manual of Procedure, Chapter Six, Article 6.01.<sup>23</sup>

8. Training

- 8.1 All officers should receive training and demonstrate their understanding on the proper application of force.
- 8.2 Training topics will include use of force, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and negotiation, and de-escalation techniques and strategies, including, but not limited to, interacting with persons presenting in an agitated condition as well as duty to intervene and prohibited conduct.<sup>24</sup>
- 8.3 This policy is not intended to be a substitute for proper training in the use of force. Comprehensive training is the key to the real-world application of the concepts discussed within this policy.

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<sup>23</sup> NY Executive Law § 840(4)(d)(2)(vi)

<sup>24</sup> NY Executive Law § 840(4)(d)(2)(vii)