

National Sheriffs’ Association Mandatory Body Armor Policy

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide law enforcement officers with mandatory instructions for the proper use and care of body armor.

The NSA supports mandatory wear policies conditioned on the following:

1. Failure to comply with the policy should not be used by any police agencies or governmental entities as a basis for denying death or disability benefits to officers or their families.

2. The language in some federal and state disability laws states that officers may be denied benefits if their deaths or injuries are caused by their intentional misconduct or gross negligence, or if their actions were a substantial contributing factor to the death or injury. We believe that this language should be amended to state that the failure to wear body armor does not constitute the type of intentional misconduct, gross negligence, or substantial contributing factor that would warrant denial of benefits.

3. Police executives should work closely with their employee associations and unions when developing mandatory wear policies, and officers should be involved in testing and selecting equipment.

4. Law enforcement agencies should provide their officers with up-to-date equipment that meets all applicable safety requirements.

5. Police executives and labor leaders should work together to develop strategies for increasing the use of body armor among officers. This includes: selecting body armor that is climate-appropriate, individually tailored, and meets gender-specific needs; and implementing educational campaigns on the importance of wearing body armor.

1. **Policy**

It is the policy of this law enforcement agency to maximize officer safety through the use of body armor in combination with prescribed safety procedures. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures.

1. **Definition**

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 capacities.

1. **Procedures**
2. Issuance of Body Armor
3. All body armor issued must comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current standards of the National Institute of Justice.
4. All officers will be issued agency-approved body armor.
5. Body armor that is worn or damaged will be replaced by the agency. Body armor that must be replaced due to misuse or abuse by the officer is to be paid for by the officer.
6. Use of Body Armor
7. Officers are to wear only agency-approved body armor.
8. Body armor is to be worn by recruit officers during both classroom and field training.
9. Officers that are assigned to a uniformed function and non-uniformed sworn officers are required to wear body armor while engaged in field activities both on duty and during off duty employment unless exempt as follows:
   1. When an agency-approved physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor;
   2. When the officer is involved in undercover or plain clothes work that his/her supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor; or
   3. When the department determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor.
10. Inspections of Body Armor
11. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn and maintained as required by this policy through routine observation and periodic documented inspections.
12. Annual inspections of body armor are to be conducted for fit, cleanliness, and signs of damage, abuse and wear.
13. Care, Maintenance and Replacement of Body Armor
14. Officers are to routinely inspect personal body armor for signs of damage and for general cleanliness.
15. As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer is responsible for cleaning personal body armor in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
16. Officers are responsible for the proper storage, maintenance and care of body armor in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.
17. Officers are responsible for reporting damage or excessive wear to the ballistic panels or cover to their supervisor and the individual responsible for the uniform supply function.
18. Body armor is to be replaced in accordance with guidelines and protocols established by the National Institute of Justice.
19. Training

The training officer is responsible for:

1. Monitoring technological advances in the body armor industry that may necessitate a change in body armor.
2. Working closely with police executives and labor leaders to develop strategies for increasing the use of body armor among officers. This includes: selecting body armor that is climate-appropriate, individually tailored, and meets gender-specific needs; and implementing educational campaigns on the importance of wearing body armor.
3. Assessing weapons and ammunition currently in use and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.
4. Provide training programs that demonstrate body armor’s stopping power under actual firing conditions and that emphasize its safe and proper use.
5. Maintaining statistics on incidents where armor has or has not protected officers from harm, including traffic accidents.