

Town of LEESBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT

News Release

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Leesburg Police Department Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The death of George Floyd at the hands of those who swore an oath to protect and serve has understandably sparked outrage throughout the Nation. The lack of compassion and disregard shown for Mr. Floyd is disturbing and leaves everyone, to include police officers across this nation, in a state of disbelief and disgust. The death of Mr. Floyd is an unfortunate and painful reminder to those striving for equity in the administration of justice that we still have more important work to do.

As a result of incidents of this nature law enforcement policy and procedures have continued to evolve over the last few decades, and I suspect will continue to do so in light of current events. During my time in this profession my colleagues and I have worked diligently to identify how law enforcement can better serve the public and eliminate the occurrence of tragedies such as these. As progressive law enforcement officials we have partnered with legislators, academia and private/public entities to develop policies, training and technology designed with a focus on the preservation of life, increased operational efficiency and to establish accountability and transparency.

The Leesburg Police Department offers many opportunities for public engagement so the community we serve can better understanding the dynamics of policing and encourages positive interactions with our community and embraces the spirit of transparency and accountability. As such, we believe it is important to share the below information about the Leesburg Police Department, including answers to frequently asked questions with the public. This information will additionally be shared on our website (<https://www.leesburgva.gov/government/departments/police-department>). *It is important to note that the web version of this document may change over time as new policies are put into place and existing policies are updated.*

The Leesburg Police Department is an accredited agency with the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC). We are extremely proud of our Community Policing style of policing that has helped us to maintain positive relationships with our community members. All employees of the Leesburg Police Department share in the responsibility of attaining and maintaining good community relations. The Leesburg Police Department has an active community policing program which involves the assignment of officers to specific sectors of the Town. Officers assigned to these sectors are encouraged to meet with residents and business persons, and to volunteer their time and expertise in addressing concerns and problems. We have

found this Community Policing model to be a positive and successful method to foster great relationships with our community. We have additionally taken the liberty to provide a brief, but comprehensive overview of our policies governing community policing programs, use of force, and police interactions.

COMMUNITY POLICING INITIATIVES

The Leesburg Police Department is proud to participate in many community events, including but not limited to, National Night Out, Fiesta Latina (LPD soccer tournament and community event), meetings with Loudoun NAACP, LCSO Child Safety Day, and as well as a multitude of other community and school events.

RESPONSE TO THREATS/RESISTANCE (RTTR)

The Department's guiding value when using force shall be reverence for human life. Every member of the Leesburg Police Department is committed to upholding the Constitution and laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia, and defending the civil rights and dignity of all individuals, while protecting human life and property and maintaining civil order.

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states:

“It is the goal of the Leesburg Police Department to accomplish the police mission with the cooperation of the public as effectively as possible, with minimal reliance upon the use of force. It is recognized however that some individuals will not comply with the law or submit to control unless compelled to do so by the use of force; therefore, law enforcement officers are sometimes called upon to use force in the performance of their duties. It is also recognized that members of law enforcement derive their authority from the public and therefore must be ever mindful that they are not only the guardians, but also the servants of the public. The community expects, and the Leesburg Police Department requires, that officers use only the force necessary to affect lawful objectives and that such force be objectively reasonable to overcome the threat or resistance of the subject under the circumstances.

An officer's commitment to public safety includes the welfare of all members of the public, the officer, and fellow officers, with an emphasis on respect, professionalism, and the preservation of human life, even when force is necessary.

Therefore, **it is the policy of this Department that personnel will use only that amount of force which is objectively reasonable, and necessary to overcome the imminent threat or resistance they are facing in carrying out their desired legal objective.**”

Subsequent to **ALL** incidents resulting in a response to threats/resistance, a supervisor will evaluate the application, necessity, and reasonableness of the response to threats/resistance while conducting a thorough and objective review of the incident. RTTR incidents are documented and reviewed by the members of the Leesburg Police Department's leadership and executive teams. Statistics related to annual RTTR incidents are captured in the Leesburg Police Department's Annual Report which is located on our website.

BODY WORN CAMERAS (BWC)

All Leesburg Police patrol officers are equipped with Body Worn Cameras. Additionally, we are currently in the installation and implementation phase of our In-Car Camera program for our patrol fleet.

When reasonable, practical, and safe to do so, officers shall activate their BWC upon arrival at the scene of a dispatched call for service and/or during enforcement encounters where there is a reasonable suspicion or probable cause to believe that the subject of the law enforcement encounter is involved in criminal activity or a violation of law.

Examples of circumstances requiring activation include, but are not limited to:

- a. Traffic and pedestrian stops;
- b. Vehicle and foot pursuits;
- c. Arrests and in-custody transports;
- d. Warrant service or searches;
- e. Response to threats/resistance;
- f. Any other situation where an officer or supervisor determines that the use of the BWC is appropriate and in accordance with policy.
- Any audio-visual recording will be made with the safety of the officer, the suspect(s), and any citizen as a primary consideration.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Please describe what training Leesburg Police officers receive. Are Leesburg Police Officers trained to de-escalate encounters by using peaceful conflict resolution strategies?**

The Leesburg Police Department believes in the importance of training, education, and support services for all staff. Subsequent to the completion of the six month Police Academy, officers receive approximately three months of field training prior to being released on their own to the Patrol Division.

As a recruit in the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy, our officers receive training in a multitude of topics through a combination of lecture and practical exercises, to include but not limited to:

Use of Force: (Total of 116+ hours)

Specific Use of Force – 37+ hours

General Defensive Tactics – 62+ hours

Crowd Control – 8 hours

Active Shooter – 8 hours

Bias Training: (Total of 21 hours)

Implicit Bias – 4 hours

Fair and Impartial Policing – 4 hours

Community Policing – 8 hours

Critical Incident Tactics (CIT) – 3 hours

Communication-Specific Groups (Total of 9 hours)

Autism Awareness – 2 hours

Communicating with the deaf – 2 hours

Emotionally Disturbed Persons – 4 hours

Handicapped Persons – 1 hour

Interpersonal Communication Training: (Total of 12 hours)

Interpersonal Communication – 5 hours

Active Listening – 1 hour

Ethics and Leadership

Ethics – 4 hours

Leadership – 2 hours

De-escalation is specifically covered during Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), however, de-escalation and ethics are also woven into the legal topics, practical scenarios, and use of force training throughout each academy session and In-service training.

Additional training initiatives include:

- Officers and staff are provided with availability to in-service training on a number of topics to include, but not limited to: Serving a Diverse Society (**taught by Leesburg Police Department Chief Brown to ALL new Police Academy classes**), Fair and Impartial Policing, Implicit Bias & Policing in a Diverse Environment, Unconscious Bias, Cultural Diversity, Understanding Conflict, Conflict Resolution, and Decision Making.
- All Leesburg Police Department patrol officers and a majority of our staff have received Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. This team is designed to protect the safety, dignity, and rights of persons suffering from mental health issues and protect the community from potentially dangerous behavior. CIT trained officers have specialized training in recognizing signs and symptoms of persons experiencing a behavioral crisis while maintaining officer and public safety.
- Formation of a Peer Support Team which assists members of the department with connecting to services such as the Employees Assistance Program, Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program, Loudoun First Responders Foundation, Boulder Crest Retreat, etc.

- **Are Leesburg Police officers forbidden from using carotid restraints (chokeholds, strangleholds, etc.)?**

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states:

“The method of placing a knee or any other appendage or object on an individual’s neck, which could result in asphyxiation is strictly prohibited and is not a sanctioned use of force application of the Leesburg Police Department; however the only time such a technique could be authorized is if the situation amounts to a deadly force encounter.”

- **Are Leesburg Police officers forbidden from transporting civilians in a face down position in a vehicle?**

Leesburg Police Department General Order 214 – Prisoner Transportation states:

“At no time should a prisoner be restrained and placed on his or her stomach in the police cruiser. Such practices have been shown to cause “positional asphyxia”, which is death from lack of oxygen.”

- **Are Leesburg Police officers required to intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force? Will officers be reprimanded if they fail to intervene?**

All Leesburg Police officers shall intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force. This intervention is in line with the ethics training that all of our officers received in the police academy.

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states:

“Officers have an affirmative duty to act if they observe another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances, and shall safely intercede to prevent the use of excessive force. Officers shall promptly report any such incident to a supervisor.”

Leesburg Police Department General Order Regulation A-5 – Reporting Violations states:

Any employee who has knowledge of other employees, individually or collectively, who are knowingly or unintentionally violating any laws, statutes, ordinances, rules, regulations of the Department, or general orders of the Department, or who disobey orders, shall bring any and all facts pertaining to the matter to the attention of a superior. The superior contacted shall then take appropriate action. An employee may directly advise the Chief of Police of the violation(s).

Additionally, all allegations of excessive force are fully investigated by Internal Affairs and reported to the Chief of Police.

- **Are Leesburg Police Officers forbidden from shooting at moving vehicles?**

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states:

“An officer shall not shoot at a moving vehicle unless a person in the vehicle is immediately threatening the officer or another person with deadly force by means other than the vehicle, or due to exigent circumstances such as an active violence incident when the vehicle is being used as a weapon and the officer or other intended targets are not able to move out of the vehicle’s path and there is imminent threat to the officer, other people, or the community. The moving vehicle itself shall not presumptively constitute a threat that justifies an officer’s use of deadly force. An officer threatened by an oncoming vehicle shall whenever possible move out of its path instead of discharging a firearm at it or any of its occupants.”

• Is there a clear and enforced use-of-force continuum that details what force is acceptable in a wide variety of civilian-police interactions?

The Leesburg Police Department’s guiding value when using force shall be reverence for human life. Every member of the Leesburg Police Department is committed to upholding the Constitution and laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia, and defending the civil rights and dignity of all individuals, while protecting human life and property and maintaining civil order.

The following are excerpts from Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance:

“It is the goal of the Leesburg Police Department to accomplish the police mission with the cooperation of the public as effectively as possible, with minimal reliance upon the use of force. It is recognized however that some individuals will not comply with the law or submit to control unless compelled to do so by the use of force; therefore, law enforcement officers are sometimes called upon to use force in the performance of their duties. It is also recognized that members of law enforcement derive their authority from the public and therefore must be ever mindful that they are not only the guardians, but also the servants of the public. The community expects, and the Leesburg Police Department requires, that officers use only the force necessary to affect lawful objectives and that such force be objectively reasonable to overcome the threat or resistance of the subject under the circumstances.

An officer’s commitment to public safety includes the welfare of all members of the public, the officer, and fellow officers, with an emphasis on respect, professionalism, and the preservation of human life, even when force is necessary.

Therefore, **it is the policy of this Department that personnel will use only that amount of force which is objectively reasonable, and necessary to overcome the imminent threat or resistance they are facing in carrying out their desired legal objective.**”

• Are Leesburg Police officers required to exhaust every other possible option before using deadly force?

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states:

“Deadly force may be used by an officer when the officer reasonably believes that their action is in defense of human life, including the officer’s own life, or in defense of any person in imminent

danger of death or significant bodily harm, and only after all other means have been exhausted or where lesser applications of verbal or less-lethal force have been or would be ineffective or inappropriate.”

• Are Leesburg Police officers required to give a verbal warning before drawing their weapon or using deadly force?

Leesburg Police officers are not required to give a verbal warning to civilians before drawing their weapon.

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states: “Deadly force must be used as a last resort, and whenever feasible, the suspect should be given a verbal warning before deadly force is used.”

• Are Leesburg Police officers required to report each time they threaten to use force or each time that they use force on civilians?

Subsequent to ALL incidents resulting in a response to threats/resistance, a supervisor will evaluate the application, necessity, and reasonableness of the response to threats/resistance while conducting a thorough and objective review of the incident. RTTR incidents are documented and reviewed by the members of the Leesburg Police Department’s leadership and executive teams, to include the Chief of Police. Statistics related to annual RTTR incidents are captured in the Leesburg Police Department’s Annual Report which is located on our website.

• Are Leesburg Police officers thoroughly vetted to ensure that they do not have a history with abuse, racism, xenophobia, homophobia / transphobia, or discrimination?

All Leesburg Police Officers go through a complete and thorough background investigation prior to an employment offer. This investigation includes, but is not limited to: physical abilities assessment (push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, 1.5 miles run), written exercise, panel interview, multiple character references, evaluation of social media usage, polygraph examination, psychological evaluation pre-employment medical/fitness for duty evaluation, and an interview with the Chief of Police.

The Town of Leesburg is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), parental status, national origin, age, disability, family medical history or genetic information, political affiliation, military service, or other factors not substantially related to successful performance of the duties of the position.

The Town of Leesburg supports the American with Disabilities Act by making reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, so that they may participate in job interviews,

services or employment offered by the Town. Call (703)777-2420 or Virginia Relay Center (TDD 1-800-828-1120/Voice 1-800-828-1140).

• Are Leesburg Police officers trained to perform and seek necessary medical action after using force?

Leesburg Police Department General Order 104 – Response to Threats/Resistance states:

“Officers must ensure that appropriate medical aid is summoned and provided as quickly as possible after the use of less-lethal or deadly force. Where it has been necessary to employ force through the use of any weapon, officers shall, when it has become safe to do so, provide medical aid as they would for any injured person, and summon emergency medical assistance as necessary and appropriate.”

• Is there an intervention system enforced to correct officers who use excessive force? Additionally, how many complaints does an officer have to receive before they are reprimanded / terminated?

All allegations of excessive force are fully investigated by Internal Affairs. Leesburg Police Department General Order 115 – Internal Affairs states:

- “A. Internal Affairs is established to ensure the integrity of the Leesburg Police is maintained through an internal system where objectivity, fairness, and justice are assured by impartial investigations. These investigations are to clear the innocent, confirm guilt, and facilitate fair, suitable, and consistent disciplinary action.
- B. All complaints made against the Department or any of its employees will be appropriately investigated / reviewed. Complaints may originate internally or from the public.
- C. Supervisors have the responsibility and authority to investigate complaints of minor employee misconduct. Supervisory or command personnel will initiate investigations into observed infractions or complaints received which fall into the scope of their authority.
- D. All complaints shall be reviewed by the appropriate Division commander and if warranted shall forward the results to the Chief of Police.
- E. Complaints alleging serious misconduct or criminal activity shall be investigated by the Internal Affairs function. Prior to instituting any administrative investigation into criminal or potential criminal activity, consideration must be given to preserving the opportunity to proceed with a criminal prosecution. If a criminal prosecution is anticipated then the criminal case shall take precedent.”

There is no set number of complaints that would result in a specific action as each complaint or incident varies. Each complaint is investigated with the intent to clear the innocent, confirm guilt, and facilitate fair, suitable, and consistent disciplinary action.

- **Does the Leesburg Police Department report statistics related to calls for service, use of force, and citizen complaints?**

The Leesburg Police Department's Annual Reports are available at <https://www.leesburgva.gov/government/departments/police-department/office-of-the-chief/annual-reports>. Our 2019 Annual Report is in final review and will be published to our website in the coming days. The report highlights how LPD serves our community each and every day. It also includes crime, traffic, and workload trends, as well as accomplishments by year.

- **What can I do, as a concerned citizen?**

We encourage positive interactions with our community and we encourage transparency of the Leesburg Police Department. As a concerned citizen, you may always inquire with us about our policies and procedures. We recommend that you follow our social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor, and YouTube) for up to date information about our department and our community outreach programs. You can reach my Public Information Officer, Officer Michael Drogin at mdrogin@leesburgva.gov.

The Leesburg Police Department strongly believes in the philosophies of Community Policing and strives regularly to establish and maintain positive and fruitful relationships with **ALL** members of our community. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Greg Brown
Chief of Police
Leesburg Police Department

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