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## **Purpose**

The Bemidji Police Department seeks to provide the highest degree of safety to all officers of this department. This policy is established to define guidelines and procedures for the proper use and care of body armor.

## **Policy**

It is the policy of the Bemidji Police Department 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.

## **Definitions**

**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.

## **Procedures**

### **a. Issuance of body armor**

- i. All body armor issued must comply with protective and related requirements prescribed under current standards of National Institute of Justice.
- ii. All Officers shall be issued agency-approved body armor.
- iii. Body armor that is worn or damaged shall be replaced by the agency.
- iv. Body armor that must be replaced due to misuse or abuse by the officer shall be paid for by the officer.

### **b. Use of body armor**

- i. Officers shall wear only agency-approved body armor and external carriers.
- ii. Officers that are assigned to uniformed or non-uniform duties are required to wear body armor while engaged in field activities unless;
  1. A physician determines that an officer has a medical condition that would preclude wearing body armor.
  2. The officer is involved in undercover or plains clothes work that his/her supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor; or
  3. A supervisor determines that circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor.

- iii. Uniformed patrol officers utilizing external body armor carriers may only remove their body armor while inside the law enforcement center. External carriers may not be kept at the ready inside patrol vehicles.

**c. Inspection of body armor**

- i. Supervisors should ensure that body armor is worn and maintained in accordance with this policy through routine observation and periodic documented inspections.
- ii. Officer will visually inspect their body armor for fit, cleanliness and signs of damage, abuse and wear.
- iii. Body armor or designated carriers showing damage caused by wear must be replaced at the expense of the officer.

**d. Care, maintenance and replacement of body armor**

- i. As dirt and perspiration may erode ballistic panels, each officer shall be responsible for cleaning personal body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- ii. Officers are responsible for the property storage, maintenance and care of body armor in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- iii. Officers are responsible for reporting damage or excessive wear to the ballistic panels or cover to their supervisor.
- iv. Body armor will be replaced in accordance with guidelines and protocols established by the National Institute of Justice.

**Reference or Revision Date(s):**

- A. REFERENCE;
- B. REVISION DATE(S):