



Scarborough Fire Department

Scarborough, Maine



Standard Operating Guidelines

Book:	Organization
Chapter:	Personnel, Policies & Procedures
Subject:	1343 – Use & Care of Ballistic PPE
Revision Date:	7/5/2018
Approved by:	<i>B. Michael Thurlow</i>

PURPOSE

To establish a procedure which defines certain unstable response environments where personnel shall use ballistic personal protective equipment (PPE) to provide added personal protection to maximize the strategic and tactical value of our resources while responding to victims of violent scenes.

POLICY

All personnel shall wear ballistic PPE as outlined in the Procedure section of this SOP. Personnel without access to ballistic PPE must stay in staging until the scene is secured. When ballistic PPE is required, personnel shall don the PPE prior to arriving on scene whenever possible.

SCOPE

Due to an increase in violence against 1st responders as well as our changing role at violent scenes (which may require personnel to enter hostile environments), ballistic PPE is provided by the department. It is still the department's intent to allow law enforcement to secure scenes prior to fire personnel arrival or entry into the warm zone.

DEFINITIONS

- **Ballistic helmet:** armor plated protection for the head. The minimum helmet standard shall be NIJ level IIIA.
- **Ballistic vest:** a vest capable of resisting the impact of a bullet, strike, slash or stab. The minimum standard for the ballistic vest shall be NIJ level IIIA protection and NIJ Level 1 spike protection.
- **Clear and/or Secure** – Term(s) often used by Law Enforcement (LE) to indicate a certain area has been searched and absent of immediately apparent threats. These terms do not mean the area is safe for fire department operations and shall be considered warm zones subject to appropriate active threat PPE use.
- **Rescue Task Force (RTF)** - is a team (made up of both fire/EMS and LE personnel) deployed to provide wound care to victims in a warm zone and removing the injured in a rapid manner to the Casualty Collection Point (CCP) all while wearing Ballistic Protective Equipment (BPE) and under the protection of LE personnel.

PROCEDURE

- A. Ballistic vests, helmets and chest plates shall be worn on the following types of incidents:
 - a. When operating as part of a Rescue Task Force (RTF)
 - b. Any other incident where a member is in a warm zone
 - c. When directed to do so by the IC
- B. Ballistic vests shall be worn on the following types of incidents:
 - a. Any incident when “stage for police” is transmitted by dispatch or when directed to do so by police or the IC.
 - b. Any situation that personnel deem necessary for their own protection.
- C. Once ballistic PPE is donned, members shall continue to wear the equipment until the IC determines it is appropriate to remove it. This determination should only be made after communication from LE that assures the IC there is a complete level of comfort that the vest can be removed. This includes assuring a patient has been thoroughly searched for weapons. If there is any doubt as to if it’s reasonable to doff the PPE, personnel will continue to wear the PPE until they clear the scene or transfer patient care to the hospital.
- D. Any member responding direct (not on apparatus) to an incident when dispatch announces “stage for Police”, must don all appropriate PPE for this situation before leaving the staging area(s) and only after being requested by the IC.
- E. Care, maintenance, cleaning, and replacement of department issued ballistic vests and helmets:
 - a. Inspect ballistic PPE after each use.
 - b. When the annual gear check is conducted, we will also inspect the ballistic PPE. This will be done by a member(s) who have been trained to do so.
 - c. Ballistic PPE has an expiration date and shall be removed from service on that date. Expired ballistic PPE will be replaced on a scheduled basis per manufacturer’s guidelines and as the department deems necessary.
 - d. If ballistic PPE is compromised or destroyed by either penetrating or blunt force trauma, it will be evaluated per the manufacturer’s guidelines and either repaired or replaced by the department.
 - e. Ballistic vests must be cleaned after extended usage and or being contaminated
 - i. Do not machine wash or dry clean ballistic panel inserts.
 - ii. Remove ballistic panels from outer carrier.
 - iii. Wipe ballistic panels using a mild soap and water. Set aside to air dry.
 - iv. Close all Velcro fasteners on carrier.
 - v. Dry clean, hand wash, or machine wash carrier on a delicate cycle using medium water temperature. **DO NOT BLEACH.**
 - vi. Tumble dry on a low heat setting or air dry. Iron on a low setting as needed.
 - vii. Reinsert ballistic panels. **BE SURE THE BALLISTIC PANELS AND OUTER CARRIER ARE DRIED COMPLETELY.**
 - f. Ballistic PPE shall be stored flat at room temperature and away from direct sunlight, liquids and chemicals when not on duty. While on duty, body armor can be stored in a vertical position.

REFERENCES

- A. Castle Rock Fire and Rescue
- B. International Association of Fire Chiefs
- C. Yarmouth Fire Department