



**Santa Monica Police Department**  
333 Olympic Drive  
Santa Monica, California 90401

**January 12, 2021**

As of January 1, 2021, the Santa Monica Police Department ***revised*** its existing Use of Force Policy. This current language supersedes all preexisting language. Italicized text represents revised language.

***Use of Force - 300.2 - Revised SMPD Policy***

It is the policy of this Department that all members hold the highest regard for the *sanctity* of human life and the dignity and liberty of all persons. Each member of this Department is entrusted with being a guardian of public safety. The decision to use force, even at its lowest level, is a serious responsibility. When feasible, based on the totality of circumstances, members shall utilize de-escalation strategies and techniques to minimize, divert, or eliminate conflicts and uses of force. Decisions regarding use of force must be made in a manner that is fair and unbiased.

***Use of Force - Sworn Officers - 300.4 - Revised SMPD Policy***

Officers may use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary to accomplish an arrest or other legitimate law enforcement purpose given the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time. (See Penal Code § 835a.) Officers may only use a level of force that they reasonably believe is *proportional* to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance given the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time. (See Government Code § 7286(b)(2).)

The reasonableness of a determination that force is necessary and *proportional* will be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Any evaluation of reasonableness must allow for the fact that officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary in a particular situation, with limited information and in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving.

Given that no policy can realistically predict every possible situation an officer might encounter, officers are entrusted to use well-reasoned discretion in determining the appropriate force to use in each incident. It is recognized that circumstances may arise in which officers reasonably believe that it would be impractical or ineffective to use any of the approved tools, weapons, or methods provided by the Department. Officers may find

it more effective or reasonable to improvise their response to rapidly unfolding conditions that they are confronting. In such circumstances, the use of any improvised device or method must be objectively reasonable and used only to the degree that it reasonably appears necessary to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose and reasonably appears proportional to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance.

While the ultimate objective of every law enforcement encounter is to avoid or minimize injury, nothing in this policy requires a sworn officer to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable force. (See Penal Code § 835a.)

**Revised** SMPD Policy defines necessary, **proportionality** and totality of the circumstances as follows:

*Necessary* – Reasonably appears necessary to accomplish an arrest or other legitimate law enforcement purpose given the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time. See Penal Code § 835a.

*Proportional* – Reasonably believed to be proportional to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance based on the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time. See Government Code § 7286(a).

*Totality of the circumstances* - All facts known to the officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of force. See Penal Code § 835a.

The Santa Monica Police Department continues to evaluate the efficacy of all of its policies, particularly those which are of concern to our community. Currently, other policies are in various stages of revision. As those policies are finalized, they will be made publicly available.

In Your Service,

  
**JACQUELINE A. SEABROOKS**  
Interim Chief of Police