

Winooski Police Department

Statement on Current Policing Policies

June 10, 2020

On June 1, 2020 – Chief of Police Rick Hebert released [a statement regarding George Floyd](#). He stated: “*Once again, we find ourselves devastated by an appalling and heartbreaking use of force incident that has resulted in those we have sworn to protect and serve, fearing for their own safety at the hands of those whose duty it is to keep them safe ... To stand as a profession and condemn the actions of the officers involved in these many tragic events is a start, but we need to do so much more. Most importantly police executives need to take steps to ensure the officers under their command are provided a culture that values equality, respect, human dignity and above all the sanctity of all human life. Leadership needs to continuously support and promote these values and recognize officers that are positive examples in their agency.*”

Many of our residents have asked about our current policing policies, the work that we've done as a department and City, and the work we're dedicated to continue to do. We outline those below and also welcome the opportunity to engage with and talk with all members of our community about how Winooski can be a safe, healthy, and connected City into the future. The following is a review of WPD's initiatives that provide equitable services:

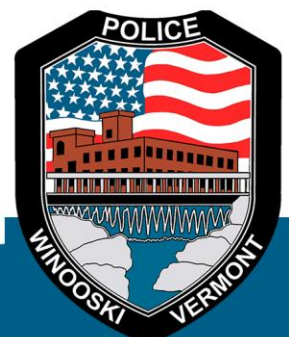
“8 Can't Wait” Policies

Our current [Use of Force Policy](#) (UOF) outlines several of these items. Currently, WPD addresses all 8 items through training, daily practice, and other documents. Chief Hebert is reviewing our Use of Force Policy and will be presenting a new draft to include all 8 elements.

1. Ban chokeholds and strangleholds – **YES**. WPD's UOF policy states: “Any neck restraint technique should be used under circumstances that warrant the use of lethal force. Neck restraints are only to be used by an officer who has been properly trained by a Ground Fighting Instructor, certified through the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council. Chokeholds/strangleholds are discussed and are strictly prohibited as part of the training.” A neck restraint when properly applied differs from a chokehold because it restricts pressure points that reduce blood flow to the brain causing unconsciousness and leaves the airway unobstructed. Moves like this take time and practice to perfect. Officers are introduced to this training because they may encounter a person on the street well versed in ground fighting and need to defeat this hold if they find themselves under attack. Because officers are not expert ground fighters, and real-life physical confrontations induce a tremendous amount of stress, fatigue, and variables the hold should only be applied in situations where deadly force is authorized. The move is trained as an officer is on their back in a position of disadvantage and officers are trained to both defeat or apply the hold in a life or death situation. Chokeholds and strangleholds that obstruct the airway by design are strictly prohibited.



2. Require de-escalation – **YES**. WPD implemented the Police Research Forum's Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics ([ICAT](#)) de-escalation program as part of the [UOF Continuum](#) and [annual training program](#). See below for details.
3. Require warning before shooting – **YES**. WPD's UOF policy states: "Officers should warn the subject prior to using deadly force where feasible."
4. Exhaust all other means before shooting – **YES**. The ICAT training is focused on de-escalation and teaching officers that creating space and time allows for alternate outcomes. All Winooski Police Officers have taken the annual ICAT training that included scenarios for them to practice these skills.
5. Duty to intervene – **YES**. The WPD UOF policy states: "Officers have a duty to prevent, stop, and report any illegal and inappropriate uses of force by other officers and/or supervisors. Any officer/supervisor who observes another using force that is illegal, excessive, or otherwise inconsistent with this general order must, absent extraordinary circumstances, do whatever he/she can to interrupt the flow of events and *stop* the use of force."
 - a. Officer must notify a supervisor as soon as possible; and
 - b. If a supervisor observes such a violation, the supervisor must issue a direct order to stop the violation."
6. Ban shooting at moving vehicles – **YES**. The WPD UOF policy states: "When a moving vehicle is involved, use of deadly force by discharging a firearm is dangerous, can be ineffective, and should not occur when there is an unreasonable risk to the safety of persons other than the subject. Whenever possible, officers should avoid placing themselves in a position where use of deadly force is the only alternative. Even when deadly force is justified, firearms shall not be discharged at a vehicle unless:
 1. The officer has a reasonable belief that an occupant of the vehicle poses an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to the officer or another person, or
 2. The officer has a reasonable belief that an occupant is using the vehicle in a manner that poses an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to the officer or another person, and there is no avenue of escape.
 3. Officers shall consider the potential threat to innocent third parties under such circumstances."
7. Require use of force continuum – **YES**. All annual UOF trainings (ICAT, firearms qualifications, TASER initial certification and recertification) involve the Use of Force Continuum.
8. Require comprehensive reporting – **YES**. The WPD UOF policy has two applicable sections. The first is for active resistance incidents. The second section covers physical use of force. The policy states: "Verbal commands, soft-empty hand control, and handcuffing do not require a separate reporting form for active resistance incidents. The following are reportable force options when used by an officer to compel compliance from a subject in conformance with the officer's official duties, whether on or off duty or while employed in an off duty paid detail, include:
 - a. OC Spray: Where subject exhibits some level of active resistance/active aggression, officers may use chemical spray to temporary incapacitate the subject.



- b. Conducted Electrical Weapon: Where subject exhibits some level of active resistance/active aggression an officer may use a Conducted Electrical Weapon to temporarily incapacitate the subject. (See additional documentation - (CEW section)
- c. Hard Hand Control: Physical strikes that have the possibility of creating mental stunning and/or motor dysfunction and anatomical control techniques with a greater risk of potential injury.
- d. Impact Weapons: Batons may be used to gain anatomical compliance during active resistance and may be used defensively and offensively when active aggression/assaultive actions are perceived. Immediate measures of defense are to be included in this category as well.
- e. Pointing of Firearms: Any time an officer points a firearm at an individual, notwithstanding the fact that deadly force is not ultimately deployed. This does not include drawing a firearm and maintaining at the low-ready position.
- f. Firearms discharges: Any discharge of a firearm other than at the range or during qualification whether unintentional, for animal dispatch, or whether a subject is hit or not will be reported in a separate manner consistent with these policies.
- g. Canine use: Use of a police canine will be reported on a special form to capture any form of use whether there is contact with a subject or not.
- h. Deadly Force: Force that creates a substantial likelihood of causing serious bodily harm or death."

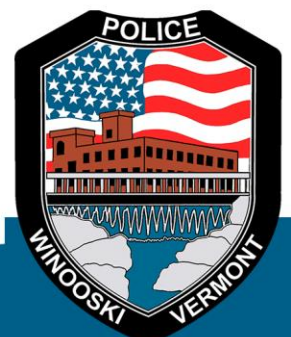
Reporting Use of Force

WPD's UOF contains the following directives on reporting the use of force:

- A. "Physical Force: Impact/control weapon, CEW, O.C., Firearms
 1. The officer should immediately notify a supervisor, if on duty, of any use of physical force.
 2. In addition to required arrest and incidents reports, the officer will complete a UOFR and forward it to their immediate supervisor. That supervisor will review the UOFR to ensure completeness. The UOFR will then either be returned to the officer for corrections or forwarded to the department's use of force (UOF) instructor.
 3. The UOF instructor will review any and all audio/video recordings along with the UOFR to ensure the compliance with department policy and training. The UOF instructor will then forward it to the Patrol Division Lieutenant (PDL).
 4. The PDL will conduct a full review of the incident and submit it to the Chief of Police.
 5. In case of death, the Chief of Police will notify the City Manager and the State's Attorney and the Medical Examiner, when appropriate."

Fair and Impartial Policing – WPD has one of the strongest Fair and Impartial Policing policies in Vermont. The purpose of this policy is to require that all WPD employees conduct policing in a fair and impartial manner and to reinforce procedures that enable us to provide services and enforce laws in an equitable and impartial way.

- [View the City's policy](#)
- [View the WPD's FIP page](#)
- Read WPD's [Race Data Statement](#)



Body Cameras – WPD has used body cameras for over 12 years and will continue to rely on this important resource in support of transparency and the safety of our residents and officers.

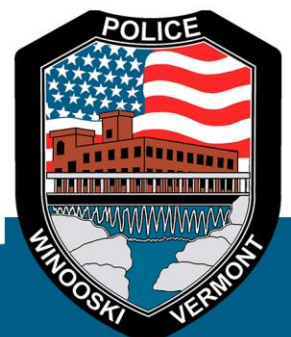
Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics Training Model

The Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) model is designed especially for situations involving persons who are unarmed or are armed with weapons other than firearms, and who may be experiencing a mental health or other crisis. The training program is anchored by the Critical Decision-Making Model that helps officers assess situations, make safe and effective decisions, and document and learn from their actions. WPD has 2 instructors on staff and trains annually in this program, allowing officers to take time developing alternate responses. WPD utilizes the critical decision making model seen here: [ICAT Training Model](#)

Community Development Work

Other efforts that inform WPD's actions and policing culture are:

- [Safe, Healthy, Connected People Commission](#) – This commission, established by the City Council and advising the City Council on policy, focuses on the City's Strategic Vision area of working to "Foster relationships across generations and cultures by providing a safe and healthy environment and providing opportunities to connect and engage with other residents of the City."
- [Howard Center Community Outreach Team](#) – WPD helps fund this initiative and is a proud regional partner in this program, working directly with community members who have mental health, substance use, homelessness, and unmet social service needs. The Howard Center Community Outreach Program in the communities of South Burlington, Colchester, Williston, Winooski, Essex, Richmond and Shelburne was inspired by Burlington's Street Outreach model. In these participating towns, Outreach Specialists work in partnership with local and regional law enforcement to respond to individuals with unmet social service needs, often due to mental health or substance use issues. Often, the best approach to a community challenge requires this kind of service.
- [Community Justice Center](#) – Historically, the Winooski Community Justice Center (CJC) was a WPD function and offered a restorative approach to conflict and crime by assisting community members with information, referrals, and access to other community resources. The Community Justice Center actively engaged clients in resolving conflict, preventing crime, and providing support to individuals affected by crime. For FY21, the Department of Corrections (the primary funder of community justice



in Vermont) has redirected Winooski's CJC grant to the communities of Burlington and Essex. Those communities will now provide these services locally in Winooski.

- [Partnership with Dismas House](#) – WPD is a proud partner with Dismas of Vermont, whose mission is to reconcile former prisoners with society and society with former prisoners. Community is fundamentally about relationship and it is precisely the relationship between the person who has committed a crime and their community that is broken, first by the real harm done by the crime committed and subsequently by the alienation that results from incarceration. In reconciliation, wholeness is restored to the former prisoner and to society.
- [School Resource Officer](#) – Our School Resource Officer (SRO) serves Winooski's schools by identifying the needs of youth within a diverse community and to work in partnership with students, parents, teachers, city and state officials in meeting those needs. Specifically, our SRO serves to:
 - preserve the peace
 - identify and apprehend offenders
 - provide emergency and social service referrals to youth at risk
 - offer substance abuse and crime prevention programs targeted toward youth safety within the school system, creating a safe and tranquil environment in which the educational process can take place
 - help students develop a positive attitude toward their community and the law through constructive, non-authoritarian engagement
 - encourage early intervention techniques that can divert delinquent-prone and pre-delinquent youth from the criminal justice system
 - encourage youth to develop non-violent conflict resolution skills
 - act as an outlet for referrals to social service or other agencies for families in crisis
 - have police resources readily available within the school community
- [Public Safety Camp](#) – Last year, WPD partnered with the Winooski School District to provide a new, week-long series of Law Enforcement, EMS, and Fire Safety courses to students. Each day, students were exposed to a number of different training scenarios, learning First Aid/CPR, about crime scene investigation, and equipment used by first responders. Additionally, this Camp allowed important relationships to be built between our younger constituents, WPD, and the Winooski Fire Department.
- Mindful Mentors – Our partnership with the Winooski School District connects Police Officers and students to practice mindfulness and a recreational activity. For more information, please email our School Resource Officer, Jason Ziter: jziter@winooskipolice.com

Community Policing Strategic Plan

Our [Community Policing Strategic Plan](#) was developed with the assistance of various community members and designed around embracing Community Policing and the 6 pillars located in [President Obama's Task Force Report on 21st Century Policing](#). Feedback via community outreach events, surveys, and employee input played a critical role in creating this document. The goals and actions in the plan will serve as a blueprint for



our daily activities and be delivered to you with the qualities that we hold most dear - Integrity, Fairness, Honesty, Excellence, Transparency and Compassion. Important areas of this plan are:

- Building better relationships with the community we serve. We must particularly build relationships with the communities that may not have direct access to our agency. An explicit focus will go toward relationship development with our youth and new American families.
- Increased visibility to include daily foot patrols and planned community outreach events. Both areas allow officers and residents to interact in a relaxed atmosphere and build sustainable relationships.
- Building into our [Police Officer job description](#) the core characteristics and responsibilities we feel are vital to support the guardian mentality.

Closing Statement

WPD will continue to invest in the community and ourselves through these policies and our ongoing dedication to the City's equity and inclusion initiatives. We will continue to host block parties, BBQ's, educational opportunities, coffee sessions, and discussions. We always welcome any and all community feedback – feel free to reach out any time:

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