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MANAGEMENT

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Subject: MS9260 Law Enforcement General Order 14- Use of Force

FOIA
Designation **P**
Letter:

1. Updates, supersedes, or rescinds:

Updates General Order (GO) 14- Use of Force, Release 9-432. This version of GO-14 will be made available externally.

2. Explanation of Materials Transmitted:

This GO will provide external entities with the policy and procedures for law enforcement use of force within the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) law enforcement program.

3. Reports Required:

None

4. Delegations of Authority Updated:

None

5. Filing Instructions: File as directed below.

REMOVE

All of GO 14 (Rel. 9-432)
(Total: 25 Pages)

INSERT

All of MS-9260 -14, (Rel. 9-451)
GO 14-Use of Force
(Total: 6 Pages)

ERIC KRILEY Digitally signed by ERIC KRILEY
Date: 2026.06.15 10:27:49
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Eric A. Kriley
Director
Office of Law Enforcement and Security



USE OF FORCE

Order Number

14

Dated

06/15/2026

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6

Issued by

Director, Bureau of Land Management Office of Law Enforcement and Security

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set standards for uses of force, incident reporting requirements, and investigations following deaths and serious bodily injuries stemming from uses of force for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs). It ensures that any use of force by BLM LEOs is in accordance with the United States Constitution, as well as applicable federal statutes, regulations, and policies.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all BLM LEOs and their supervisors. This policy applies to all activities, processes, and practices related to uses of force. Nothing in this policy is intended to supersede applicable law, regulation, and/or Department of the Interior (DOI) policy. In the event of any discrepancies, the applicable laws, regulations, and policies of DOI shall govern.

3. AUTHORITY

- a. U.S. Const. Amend. IV.
- b. 43 U.S.C. § 1733
- c. 446 DM Chapter 20

4. DEFINITIONS

Carotid Restraint: A physical maneuver or restraint technique that restricts blood flow to the brain and may cause unconsciousness or death.

Chokehold: A physical maneuver or technique that applies pressure to the throat or windpipe that restricts an individual's ability to breathe and may cause unconsciousness or death.

Control Tactics: Physical techniques used by law enforcement officers to establish and maintain control or compliance during interactions with individuals. These techniques are employed to safely detain individuals, manage crisis situations, and ensure officer safety in various scenarios, including those involving compliant, non-compliant, and physically confrontational subjects.

Deadly Force: Any use of force that carries a substantial risk of causing death or serious bodily injury. Deadly force does not include force that is not likely to cause death or serious bodily injury but unexpectedly results in such death or injury.

De-escalation: The use of communication or other techniques during an encounter to stabilize, slow, or reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation without using physical force, or with a reduction in force.

Excessive Force: Force greater than which an objectively reasonable LEO would use under the totality of the circumstances faced by the officer. Force greater than that which an objectively reasonable LEO, faced with the same facts and circumstances, would use.

Less Lethal Devices: An instrument, device, or weapon designed or intended to be used in a manner not likely to cause death or serious bodily injury. Less-lethal devices may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Baton.
- b. Electronic Control Device (e.g., TASER™).
- c. Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) (e.g., pepper spray).
- d. Less Lethal projectile (e.g., PepperBall®).

Less Lethal Force: Any use of force that is neither likely nor intended to cause death or serious bodily injury.

Serious Bodily Injury: Any bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death, unconsciousness, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty.

Use of Force: The intentional application by law enforcement of any weapon, instrument, device, or physical power in order to control, restrain, overcome the resistance of, or gain compliance or custody of another.

Warning Shot: Discharge of a firearm for the purpose of compelling compliance from an individual but not intended to cause physical injury.

5. FILE AND RECORDS MAINTENANCE

Law enforcement records will be maintained in accordance with the Law Enforcement General Orders and Handbooks, and the Bureau Records Retention Catalog.

6. POLICY

LEOs are authorized to use force in compliance with standards established in the Constitution, laws, Departmental policies, and the use of force standards outlined below.

6.1 LEGAL STANDARD

While the courts recognize that LEOs may be authorized to use force as a proper exercise of the government's police powers, an LEO's use of force in a specific circumstance must be balanced with an individual's constitutional right under the Fourth Amendment to be secure in their "persons, houses, papers, and effects, from unreasonable searches and seizures." U. S. CONST. amend. IV. The Supreme Court, in the governing case *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), has determined that the Fourth Amendment requires that an LEO's use of force — deadly or not — during the course of an arrest, investigatory stop, or other seizure must be "objectively reasonable." Failure to meet this standard in the use of force results in a violation of the subject's constitutional rights.

Under *Graham v. Connor*, "objective reasonableness" is a standard that is "not capable of precise definition or mechanical application," but nonetheless requires courts to apply the same general principles during the evaluation of the facts and circumstances of each case. *Id.* at 396. For example, at a minimum, a reviewing court must consider what is "'objectively reasonable' in light of the facts and circumstances confronting" the LEO at the time force is used, and thus the officer's "underlying intent or motivation" is irrelevant. *Id.* at 397. These facts may include the severity of the crime at issue, whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others, and whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight. A court will likewise consider whether an individual is forcibly assaulting, resisting, impeding, or intimidating an LEO while the LEO is engaged in official duties. Additionally, courts will consider that LEOs are often forced to make split-second judgments in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving. Finally, reasonableness is judged "from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight." *Id.* at 396.

In sum, every use of force case is fact-specific and involves a totality-of-the-circumstances inquiry based on the facts at the time of the incident at issue. *See Cty. of Los Angeles, Calif. v. Mendez*, 137 S. Ct. 1539, 1547 (2017) (affirming that *Graham*, and a totality of the circumstances inquiry, remains "[t]he framework for analyzing excessive force claims").

6.2 USE OF FORCE WARNINGS

When feasible, prior to the use of force, BLM LEOs must attempt to identify themselves and issue a verbal warning to comply with the LEO's instructions. Warning shots from a firearm are prohibited.

6.3 DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation is a desired outcome. When reasonable, LEOs shall seek to employ tactics and techniques that effectively bring an incident under control while promoting the safety of LEOs and the public and that minimize the risk of unintended injury or serious property damage.

6.4 USE OF LESS-LETHAL FORCE

The LEO is authorized to use agency-approved, less-lethal force techniques and issued equipment.

- a. LEOs are authorized to use only those less-than-lethal devices that are approved for use by the DOI Office of Law Enforcement and Security (OLES) and in accordance with BLM OLES policies.
- b. LEOs may use less-than-lethal force only in situations where objectively reasonable force, based upon the totality of the circumstances at the time of the incident, is necessary to:
 - 1. Protect themselves or others from immediate physical harm;
 - 2. Restrain or subdue an individual who is actively resisting or evading arrest;
 - 3. Prevent a prisoner from escaping;
 - 4. Obtain lawful compliance from a subject; or
 - 5. To bring unlawful situations safely under control.

6.5 DEADLY FORCE

Deadly force is any use of force that creates a substantial risk of causing death or serious bodily injury. Deadly force does not include force that is not likely to cause death or serious bodily injury but unexpectedly results in such death or injury.

Deadly force is evaluated in *Graham v. Connor* under the “objective reasonableness” standard and thus must be reasonable in light of the facts and circumstances confronting the LEO when such force is used. *See Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985). LEOs may use deadly force only when necessary, that is, when the LEO has a reasonable belief that the subject of such force poses an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the LEO or to another person.

Deadly force may not be used solely to prevent the escape of a fleeing suspect. However, deadly force is authorized to prevent the escape of a fleeing suspect where the LEO has an objectively reasonable belief that the fleeing suspect poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical harm to the LEO or others and such force is necessary to prevent escape. *Garner*, 471 U.S. at 12-13 (1985).

6.5.1 WHEN USING DEADLY FORCE, THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL STANDARDS APPLY:

- a. Deadly force should not be used against persons whose actions are a threat solely to themselves or property unless an individual poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the officer or others.
- b. Discharging a firearm against a person constitutes the use of deadly force and must be done only with the intent of preventing or stopping the threatening behavior that justifies the use of deadly force.

6.5.2 THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS ARE PROHIBITED UNLESS THE STANDARD FOR USE OF DEADLY FORCE IS SATISFIED:

- a. Use of carotid restraint techniques and chokeholds;
- b. Use of a baton to apply choke or "come-along" holds to the neck area; and
- c. Use of a baton to intentionally strike the head.

6.5.3 DISCHARGE OF FIREARM:

Discharging a firearm against a person constitutes the use of deadly force and shall be done only with the intent of preventing or stopping the threatening behavior that justifies the use of deadly force. Firearms shall not be discharged solely as a warning or signal. The act of establishing a grip, unholstering, or pointing a firearm does not constitute a use of deadly force.

6.5.4 DISCHARGE OF FIREARM AT A MOVING VEHICLE, VESSEL, AIRCRAFT, or OTHER CONVEYANCE:

LEOs are prohibited from discharging firearms at a moving vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other conveyance solely to disable it.

Discharging of firearm at a moving vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other conveyance are permitted only under the following circumstances:

- a. The person in the vehicle is threatening the officer or other people with deadly force by means other than the vehicle;
- b. The vehicle is operated in a manner that threatens to cause death or serious physical injury to the officer or others, and no other objectively reasonable means of defense appear to exist, including the ability to move out of the path of the vehicle; and
- c. Exigent circumstances exist justifying the use of deadly force.

6.6 USE OF FORCE ON ANIMALS

When the animal poses an imminent danger to the LEOs or others, force may be directed against the animal(s), up to and including the discharge of a firearm. The dispatching of animals as part of an authorized wildlife resource management plan, or to humanely dispatch to an injured animal, is not considered a use of force.

6.7 DUTY TO RENDER MEDICAL AID

As soon as reasonable, following a use of force and when the scene is secure, LEOs shall obtain appropriate medical assistance for any subject who has visible or apparent injuries, complaints of being injured, or requests medical attention. This may include rendering first aid up to the LEO's level of training, requesting emergency medical services, and/or arranging transportation to an appropriate medical facility.

6.8 DUTY TO INTERVENE

The BLM is committed to carrying out its mission with honor and integrity, and to fostering a culture of accountability. All LEOs have the responsibility to intervene or stop the use of excessive force and/or improper use of force. Under this principle, the following applies:

- a. LEOs have a duty to intervene to prevent or stop, as appropriate, any LEO from engaging in excessive force or any other use of force that violates the Constitution, other federal laws, or the DOI use-of-force policy.
- b. LEOs with actual knowledge of an LEO's improper use of force shall, without unreasonable delay, report the incident to their chain of command, internal affairs, and/or the DOI Office of Inspector General or other reporting mechanism identified by the BLM policy or procedure.
- c. Any LEO who observes another LEO using prohibited or excessive force (i.e., including applying force when it is no longer required), must attempt to safely intervene by verbal and/or physical means when feasible.

6.9 USE OF FORCE REPORTING

All use of force incidents by an LEO will be documented, reported, and reviewed by an LE supervisor in the approved Law Enforcement Records Management System.

6.10 INVESTIGATIONS

All uses of force resulting in death or serious bodily injury will be investigated by the authoritative entity and/or jurisdiction. The BLM's Office of Professional Responsibility will investigate all allegations of excessive use of force by BLM LEOs.