

Virginia Beach Department of Emergency Medical Services

Standard Operating Guideline - Operations

Body Armor Use and Care

PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for the use of body armor as a practical and necessary safety measure and outline the proper care and storage of body armor.

SCOPE

This applies to all operational members of the Department of Emergency Medical Services.

DEFINITIONS

- **Ballistic Plates:** Steel ballistic plates that are inserted into the plate carrier. The ballistic plates serve as the actual protection to the wearer from certain penetrating trauma projectiles including certain caliber bullets.
- **Plate Carrier:** The vest part of the body armor. The vest without the steel plate is not body armor.
- **Level III Body Armor:** Made of AR500 steel, the steel plates are capable of withstanding penetration from high velocity rifle rounds and small arms rounds. DO NOT REMOVE THE WARRANTY STICKER FROM THE PLATES.

GUIDELINE

It is the policy of the Department to allow law enforcement personnel to stabilize a situation/scene to the greatest extent possible prior to our personnel entering the area. As an added level of protection, Level III body armor (exterior wear) has been deployed on ambulances, zone medic vehicles and supervisor vehicles throughout the department. Each ambulance will have three (3) sets of armor in a duffel bag. Each zone medic vehicle and the EMS 1/2/3 vehicles will have two (2) sets of armor. All chief officer staff cars will have one set of armor.

It is not the intent of the Department to have members utilize body armor on a routine basis, but rather to have body armor available to personnel for incidents with potentially active threats (violent, potentially violent) or otherwise a risk to safety that the use of body armor could reduce or eliminate. A supervisor may mandate use of the body armor in any situation or circumstance that he/she feels may warrant its use.

USE CONSIDERATIONS

Body armor offers a higher level of protection during higher risk operations. Unless ordered to do so, wearing of the body armor is optional. Body armor shall NOT be donned solely because of a call location unless directed by an EMS supervisor. In certain situations, members of the department shall wear body armor.

Wearing body armor is mandatory for the following:

1. When assigned to a Rescue Task Force (RTF)
2. Any "Active Threat" situation
3. Any event deemed appropriate by the Incident Commander

Wearing body armor should be considered for the following:

1. Police/SWAT standbys or situations involving violence (shooting or stabbing incident)
2. Incidents involving domestic violence, family dispute, or an address that has been flagged for known violence against public safety personnel
3. Any civil disturbance area
4. Any incident that may be interpreted as explosive device (suspicious box, bomb threat, etc.).
5. Any call deemed necessary by the Attendant in charge of the crew.
NOTIFY THE EMS SUPERVISOR when decision is made to don armor.

As feasible, personnel dispatched to the above types of incidents should don their armor prior to arriving on scene. Body armor will remain in-place until the Incident Commander or Supervisor in Charge has determined the threat has been cleared.

Members assigned to special event standbys are NOT authorized to don body armor unless directed by the Incident Commander or in the event of a known threat.

Remember the body armor is bullet resistant, not bullet proof. It is designed to protect specific body organs and defeat certain types of ammunition rounds but will not protect you against all threats. Wearing the plate carrier without the plates will not provide you protection.

Department issued body armor is intended to be used for emergency response only. Do not use department issued body armor for PT or any other activities not related to emergency response or special events.

Individuals participating in the VBEMS ride along program shall remain inside the vehicle at all incidents where body armor is being utilized by VBEMS personnel.

USER RESPONSIBILITY

All members shall be responsible upon coming on duty to ensure the body armor is appropriately fitted for each crew member. The vests are adjustable to allow for different sizes. Please follow the sizing directions listed in this policy.

SIZING OF BODY ARMOR

The body armor is designed to be worn over your clothing. The entire ensemble weighs approximately 20lbs. The body armor should not be worn while wearing extrication PPE.

To appropriately don the body armor the user should be standing up straight:

1. Inspect the body armor in its entirety for damage. If it's damaged, do not use it.
2. Unclip the side straps and place your head through the shoulder straps. The carry handle (NOT A DRAG STRAP) should be on your back.
3. Adjust the Velcro shoulder straps so that the top, center edge of the front panel is square with the clavicle. The bottom edge should be no lower than 2 inches above the top of the belt.
4. Adjust the side straps to allow the front and back panels come together and allow for movement and comfort (you may have to remove the vest several times to get the adjustment right). The vest should not ride up and down on your torso while you are moving or working.
5. If you are donning the body armor with a partner, buddy check each other prior to entering your scene!

STORING AND INSPECTING BODY ARMOR

Proper storage and inspections of body armor can help maintain the life of the body armor. The body armor will be kept in the Department issued duffle bag. Body armor is Personal Protective Equipment. Store body armor flat, not on an edge, and never bunched. Additionally, store it in a clean, dry compartment out of the sunlight. Do not place anything on top of the body armor.

Personnel should inspect the body armor as part of the ambulance check-off.

1. Inspect the body armor in its entirety for damage.
 - a. Any damage noted should be reported to an EMS Supervisor as soon as possible.
 - b. Any damaged body armor shall be removed from service until repaired or replaced.
2. There are two (2) different ballistic steel plates in the body armor. The shooter's plate (the smaller of the 2 plates) goes in the front pouch and the larger (square looking plate) goes in the back pouch (the one with the carry strap on it).
3. Immediately notify the EMS Supervisor if any body armor is missing.

CLEANING OF BODY ARMOR

To ensure the body armor is in top condition it must be kept clean.

1. To clean the carrier, remove all ballistic plates.
2. The preferred method of washing the front and back carriers is to hand wash. However, in instances where decontamination from a medical incident are required, notify an EMS Supervisor. (Use the decontamination washer at a fire station on a gentle cycle with a mild detergent.)
 - a. To hand wash take a damp cloth or sponge and gently wipe to remove dirt or stains. If necessary, you may choose to use a mild detergent.
 - b. When complete, lay flat to air dry or tumble dry using the lowest temperature setting on the dryer.
 - c. Remove any debris from the Velcro attachment system.
3. To clean the ballistic plates, begin by laying them on a flat surface. Take a damp cloth or sponge and gently wipe the ballistic plates to remove dirt or stains. If necessary, you may use a mild detergent.
4. **DO NOT:**
 - a. **DO NOT USE** bleach, iron, or fabric softener on the body armor.
 - b. **DO NOT USE** deodorizing spray such as Febreze or Lysol
 - These can damage or compromise the material.

USE OF PERSONALLY OWNED BODY ARMOR

The use of personally owned, external body armor is not permitted.

ORDERED:



EMS Deputy Chief

8/1/2019

Date

Effective Date: August 1, 2019

Revised: