



DEFENSIVE TACTICS TRAINING ESSENTIAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Defensive tactics training is crucial for preparing officers to handle various situations they may encounter. Proper training can significantly reduce the risk of injury and improve the effectiveness of law enforcement operations. This bulletin outlines critical safety considerations for the Chief of Police regarding defensive tactics training, which may be new to some agencies.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

- Thoroughly read the Defensive Tactics In-Service Training Manual issued by the New Jersey Police Training Commission.

Equipment and Facility Considerations:

- Ensure the agency has adequate equipment and, as necessary, include needed equipment or supplies in the agency budget request.
- Mouthguards: The PTC recommends mouthguards. Discuss this with agency instructors and agree that attendees must wear mouthguards for designated training evolutions. Determine how officers will obtain mouthguards, such as whether the agency provides them or if officers are expected to bring their own. Ensure that any requirements established by the Chief of Police concerning equipment usage are provided to attendees in advance.
- Discuss with the agency instructor if other protective equipment, such as ear-covering headgear, is necessary.
- The PTC indicates that floor mats rated for defensive tactics training must be utilized. Discuss with the instructor the types of floor mats that will be used, their rating, and whether acquiring additional floor mats is necessary.
- Discuss with the instructor any other equipment needs, such as knee and striking pads. Ensure that the Chief of Police has authorized the use of any equipment utilized.
- Determine the location of the training to ensure it is free from hazards, has sufficient space for all participants, and has adequate lighting and ventilation.
- Direct that a first aid kit, including oxygen and a defibrillator, be present at the training location.
- Ensure procedures are established to sanitize all mats and equipment before and after training to help prevent skin infections, such as staph, ringworm, and herpes. Advise officers to shower before and after training, using antibacterial soap, and wash all clothing worn after training to prevent further skin infections.
- Ensure that if the training occurs at a location such as a school, non-profit venue, or private establishment, appropriate steps concerning insurance have been taken.

Training Curriculum:

- Ensure the instructor has attended an appropriate instructor course, is committed to the subject, has ample time to regularly instruct the course, and stays up-to-date on current issues concerning this critical topic.
- Discuss with the instructor that following the PTC Defensive Tactics Manual is required.
- Direct the instructor on how lesson plans, training logs, participant sign-in sheets, and other materials will be retained. A Sample Departmental Training Policy is available in the [Law Enforcement Accreditation Plus Sample Policy Portal](#).
- Discuss with the instructor any additional training they might wish to include to enhance the training program.
- Ensure the instructor has fully read and thoroughly understands the agency's Use of Force policy.
- Conduct a debrief specifically with officers assigned to internal affairs and supervisors responsible for reviewing the use of force, including body-worn cameras, to ensure mutual understanding of the tactics trained and the New Jersey Use of Force Policy. It is essential that those responsible for reviewing the use of force are familiar with the appropriate defensive techniques, ensuring there is no confusion about what is permitted and what is not.

Participant Safety:

- Direct the instructor to advise officers to report any injuries or discomfort before the start of the training, immediately during the training, and to review the agency's injury reporting process.
- Discuss with the instructor how situations involving officers wearing knee or elbow compression bands or other medical devices should be handled, and whether such devices will interfere with training or pose a potential risk to others. The use of such devices must be handled consistently by officers and by different instructors.
- Discuss with the instructor the risks associated with certain types of clothing that may increase the potential for injury, such as shorts, loose-fitting clothing, tank tops, and specific types of footwear. Determine the appropriate attire for the training, including any clothing restrictions that may apply. Ensure that attire requirements are communicated to participants in advance.
- Review with the instructor the risks associated with the Officer wearing specific equipment during training, such as duty belts, batons, or other items. It is also essential to understand that, depending on the nature of the instruction, having such items might be necessary for some training evolutions to simulate the use of force or options, or weapon retention techniques safely and effectively.
- Review the agency's policy regarding the wearing of jewelry and discuss with the instructor whether additional restrictions are necessary when officers participate in the training program to prevent injury to themselves or others. Ensure any restrictions are communicated to participants in advance.
- Discuss with the instructor the potential need for officers to secure their cell phones in a safe location and not carry them on their person to prevent damage to the phone or potential injury to others.
- Determine what other essentials might be necessary for the attendees, such as towels, food, and notebooks, and provide this information in advance.
- Discuss with the instructor the appropriate length of fingernails for officers participating in the training. Evaluate the agency rules and regulations concerning personal grooming and discuss the issue with the Municipal Attorney to determine if any changes are necessary.
- Ensure that adequate water is available at the training site, or direct attendees to bring their own water or other suitable liquids to help stay hydrated.

Fatigue Considerations:

- Determine, as best as possible, the appropriate assignment of personnel to the training class. For example, requiring an officer to attend at the end of a long shift might increase the risk of injury due to fatigue.

Furthermore, consider the impact the training might have on some officers if they are required to attend the training before the start of a shift.

- Discuss with the instructor some guidance that can be issued concerning appropriate sleep and rest, food intake, avoiding alcohol, and light stretching sometime before the training class.
- A Sample Fatigue Management Policy is available in the [Law Enforcement Accreditation Plus Sample Policy Portal](#).

Review and Feedback:

- Direct the instructor to conduct a debrief to discuss what went well and areas for improvement after each session, and to provide any feedback to the Chief of Police.

Physical Fitness and Competence:

- Evaluate the feasibility and any present or future options of motivating officers to advance the skills they've learned in the training. The four-hour training requirement is a significant step, but the skills learned might easily be diminished if officers do not regularly practice or participate in further training.
- Encourage officers to remain physically fit to reduce the risk of injury. Review the MEL Safety Institute Bulletin, [Fitness Room Best Practices](#).

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.