



Jeffrey R. Gahler,  
Sheriff

# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONAL POLICY

## Use of Batons / Impact Weapons

<b>Distribution:</b>	<b>All Personnel</b>		<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>OPS 0504</b>
<b>Responsible Unit:</b>	<b>Administrative Services Division</b>		<b>Rescinds:</b>	<i>OPS 0504 (06/15/18)</i>
<b>Original Issued Date:</b>	<b>09/07/22</b>	<b>Revision #:</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Latest Revision Date:</b> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Required 3-Year Review Completed:</b>	<b>10/07/25</b>		<b>Next Review Due:</b>	<b>10/31/28</b>

### 1. Purpose

To provide Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) employees with guidance on proper procedures regarding situations when batons or impact weapons are used.

### 2. Policy

Deputies have been given the responsibility to protect and serve all citizens while balancing the need for officer safety and are granted the authority to use force when necessary to accomplish lawful ends. This authority is grounded in the laws of the State of Maryland, the United States Constitution, Court rulings and the provisions of this policy. Recognition of, and respect for the dignity of all persons and the value of human life shall guide all training, leadership, and procedures, as well as guide deputies in the use of force.

### 3. Definitions

**ACTIVE AGGRESSION:** overt, hostile, attacking movements or actions by a subject, which may cause injury to the deputy. This aggression may manifest itself through actions including, but not limited to, punching, kicking, biting, or pushing.

**BATON:** an instrument designed for blocking, jabbing, striking, or to apply control holds while engaged in a police action.

**CROWD CONTROL STRAIGHT BATON:** a wooden or synthetic composite baton generally 42 inches in length to be used in crowd control situations.

**EXPANDABLE BATON (ASP):** metal friction-lock baton; generally, 26 inches in length.

**IMPACT WEAPON:** refers collectively to batons, less-lethal impact projectiles (e.g., bean bag, etc.) and any other tool or item used as a striking implement (e.g., radio, flashlight, or any other hard object that when used would interrupt or incapacitate an aggressive subject, etc.).

**LESS LETHAL PHILOSOPHY:** a concept of planning and applying force that meets operational objectives that is neither likely nor intended to cause death or serious physical injury.

**MECHANICAL FORCE:** the use of a device or object, other than a firearm, shotgun, or rifle, to overcome a subject's resistance to the exertion of the deputy's authority.

#### 4. References

[OPS 0501](#) Use of Force

#### 5. Procedures

- A. Members shall use only the force objectively reasonable to effectively and safely resolve an incident, while protecting the lives of the member or others. When practical, members should announce that force will be utilized prior to the application of such force.
- B. Members may only use agency approved batons or less-lethal impact projectiles (i.e., bean bag) upon successful completion of required instruction and demonstrative proficiency provided by the HCSO Training Academy.
- C. The baton or other impact weapon/tool should be used only in accordance with policy and agency approved training (e.g., striking, blocking, jabbing, to apply control holds, passive/active escort techniques, etc.).
- D. Batons should not be used as an impact weapon to strike passive resistors. The use of a baton to facilitate approved “come-a-long” or “pressure point” techniques are permitted.
- E. Members shall use reasonable care to avoid striking suspects on the head, neck, sternum, spine, groin, or kidneys, as these strikes may cause life-threatening injuries, unless deadly force is justified.
- F. Modifications shall not be made to batons without the approval of an agency ASP instructor.
- G. While in uniform, the expandable baton shall be carried on the duty belt during all shifts by law enforcement deputies of the rank of sergeant and below.
- H. A member is required to immediately notify their supervisor or the on-duty supervisor whenever a baton or other impact weapon is used.
- I. Whenever there is an obvious injury, complaint of injury, or medical attention is requested by any individual, after the use of a baton, members shall immediately render aid consistent with their training and experience and request the response of a medic unit.
- J. Reporting Requirements
  - 1. The member is required to immediately notify his supervisor or the on-duty supervisor whenever force is applied through the use of an impact weapon.
  - 2. Members will document the event in an Incident Report for the original call for service or a Supplemental Report prior to the end of that deputy’s tour of duty.
- K. Supervisory Responsibilities
  - 1. Any supervisor who is notified of a use of chemical agents must follow the guidelines established in [OPS 0501](#) Use of Force.

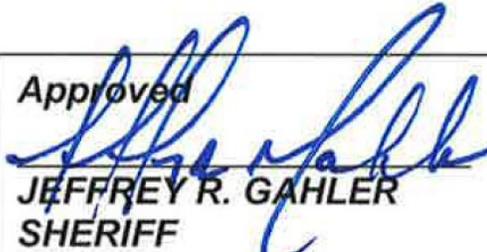
2. The supervisor completing the Use of Force Report in the RMS will verify that the member made the appropriate entry on an Incident Report or Supplement Report as required above.
3. The supervisor will complete a Use of Force Report in the RMS before the end of the supervisor's tour of duty and forward it through the chain of command.
4. Deployments during a tactical incident by the SRT will be documented in the Tactical Report by the SRT Commander.

L. Chain of Command Review

1. Shift Lieutenants, Duty Officers and Division Commanders will ensure the use of force reporting requirements, training, investigations, review process and distribution of the Use of Force Reports in the RMS are conducted in accordance with the procedures established in [OPS 0501](#) Use of Force.

**6. Summary of Changes**

- A. On 10/07/25 the 3-year Agency review was conducted, and no changes or edits were made to this policy.

Approved  
  
JEFFREY R. GAHLER  
SHERIFF  
DATE 10/7/25