



*Kern County Sheriff's Office*  
**Policies and Procedures**

<b>TITLE: FIREARMS – AUTOMATIC WEAPONS</b>		<b>NO: G-800</b>	
<b>APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner</b>			
<b>EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990</b>	<b>REVIEWED: 11/10/2017</b>	<b>REVISED: 04/20/2005</b>	<b>UPDATED: 11/10/2017</b>

**POLICY**

The Kern County Sheriff's Office maintains automatic weapons for use by special units to ensure at least a firepower equality with the criminal element of society. The use of automatic weapons is limited primarily to the Sheriff's Office Tactical Unit but other special units within the Sheriff's Office may utilize automatic weapons with the approval of the Chief Deputy.

To maintain uniformity of use on automatic weapons within the Sheriff's Office, all certification training will be conducted through the Tactical Team Operations Commander (S.W.A.T.). Qualifications will be conducted by the Sheriff's Office Rangemaster utilizing the same shooting course required of tactical team members.

Automatic weapons can be used for both offensive and defensive law enforcement operations where suspects are reasonably believed to be armed. Because automatic weapons have different mode of firing (single action, three-round burst, full automatic), the following procedures are adopted.

Nothing in this section shall prevent the deployment of automatic weapons by tactical team members. Automatic weapons are considered standard operations weapons for the Sheriff's Office tactical team.

**Automatic Weapons Offensive Use**

An automatic weapon has a tactical use in offensive law enforcement situations to counter heavily armed suspects during warrant service, arrests, and other law enforcement activities where conventional law enforcement weapons would create serious officer safety issues.

The deployment and use of automatic weapons by units with authorization from a Chief Deputy, will follow the "escalation of force rule." This rule provides that when aggression or weapons are used against an officer, the officer may go to the next higher level of force to counter the aggression or weapon. For example, if guns are encountered, an officer may go to the next higher level of force and use automatic weapons.

When used in an offensive mode, the automatic weapons will be used in the single action capability. This includes officer movement.

**Exceptions:**

- When the suspect or suspects is known to be armed with semi-automatic or full automatic weapons;
- Multiple suspects who are known to be heavily armed.

The exceptions to single action in offensive operations will allow deputies to use the three-round burst mode. In older automatic weapons that do not have the three-round burst selector, an on/off trigger method in full automatic that simulates the three-round burst mode will be used.

**Defensive Use of Automatic Weapons:**

The use of automatic weapons in defensive operations for the Kern County Sheriff’s Office is a support function for the purpose of covering and supplementing deputies involved in high risk law enforcement activities. Also, when deputies are maintaining defensive positions against armed suspects.

The fire selection mode for automatic weapons in defensive operations or defensive positions of offensive operations is as follows:

- While moving to or from defensive positions and in a zone where gun fire could be received, the automatic weapons will be on the single action mode;
- In maintaining defensive positions an automatic weapon will be maintained in the single action mode;
- When confronting a suspect or suspects who are armed with semi-automatic or fully automatic weapons, the Sheriff’s Office automatic weapons may be kept in the single action or three-round burst mode. (In older Sheriff’s Office guns, the three-round burst is activated in the full automatic mode). What mode to use will depend on the tactical considerations at the time and the decision will rest with the individual deputy.

**Full Automatic Firing:**

Full automatic gun fire from Sheriff’s Office guns is authorized in the following circumstances:

- Full automatic may be used in defensive situations where gun fire is being received, and in order to reach safety a deputy or deputies are required to shoot their way out of the life-threatening incident. This is a tactical decision that rests with the individual deputy involved in the gun fight.
- For the purpose of full automatic use, an offensive operation could immediately become a defensive operation if superior fire power is encountered during an offensive operation. If gun fire is being received, a deputy armed with an automatic weapon has the authority to decide which fire mode to use in order to get himself, fellow officers, or civilians to a safe location or defend himself or others in a fixed location.
- The principles of counterattacks require surprise and aggressiveness to be successful. In a gunfight where a counterattack is chosen as the course of action, deputies may use automatic weapons in the full automatic mode.

G-800-2

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