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TRAINING BULLETIN

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Use of Force Categorization and Reporting - Axon Standards

On September 30, 2025, the Sheriff's Office stopped using BlueTeam for use of force tracking and implemented Axon Standards as a replacement.

Since the Stipulated Judgment (SJ) was signed in December 2020, the Sheriff's Office has been required to categorize use of force incidents into levels, which are covered by SJ Paragraph 31:

"KCSO will categorize reportable uses of force into levels (i.e., Level 1, 2, and 3) based on seriousness and specify associated roles and responsibilities of involved deputies, supervisors, and investigative personnel at each level regarding reporting and review. Level 1 shall be the category of force at the lowest levels with Level 3 being the highest level of force. The specific levels of force and the types of force that constitute those categories will be defined by the monitor in consultation with the California Department of Justice (DOJ)."

As you may know, the Sheriff's Office has been working with the Monitoring Team and the DOJ for several years on revamping use of force policies. These policies are nearly finalized, with the addition of details to cover the categorization of use of force. Before the publication of this policy (KCSOPPM F-0200), Axon Standards was updated with new categorization levels that align more closely with Paragraph 31 of the SJ.

WHAT'S NEW?

1. Currently, KCSOPPM F-0100 describes the highest level of force as "Level 1" and the lowest as "Level 3." The unpublished KCSOPPM F-0200 will change the highest level of force to a "Category 3" and the lowest to a "Category 1."
- For Axon Standards, the following are options to select in the "Category" drop-down box under the "Force Used" card:
 - o Pointing a Firearm Only
 - o Category 1
 - o Category 2 (Restrained Person)
 - o Category 2 (All Other)
 - o Non-lethal Category 3
 - o Category 3
 - Please note that you can find a summarized definition of force and each category by clicking the "i" icon in the "Category" drop-down box.

Once KCSOPPM F-0200 is published and personnel are trained, the category requirements will dictate the type of supervisor and manager review required for each category.

2. Change in reportable use of force:

- The current KCSOPPM F-0100 defines (in part) a reportable use of force as:

“...any UOF whether or not it results in injury...”

- The new KCSOPPM F-0200 will define a reportable use of force as:

“Any force used by a department member to overcome a subject’s resistance that results in death, an injury, a complaint of injury in the presence of a deputy or other department member, or an allegation of employee misconduct. A reportable use of force also includes any use of force, regardless of injury or alleged misconduct, involving chemical agents, conducted energy weapons (CEW), personal weapons, impact weapons, extended range impact munitions, vehicle interventions, canines, firearms, intentional pointing of a firearm at a person, and any UOF that involves improvised techniques not taught, or equipment not issued by the Sheriff’s Office.”

Meaning if Sheriff’s Office personnel use force that results in death, injury, a complaint of injury in the presence of a deputy or other department member, or an allegation of employee misconduct, then that is a use of force that has to be documented in Axon Record Management System (RMS) and Axon Standards. If the use of force does not result in any of the conditions outlined above, then documentation in RMS and Standards is not required, with one exception. If a personnel member intentionally points a firearm at a subject during a law enforcement action, then a Standards entry is only needed if no RMS documentation is required for the law enforcement action. See the category definitions and use of force examples below:

Category & Definition of Force		Examples & Types of Force:
UOF-Pointing of Firearm Only	- The intentional pointing of a firearm at a subject during any law enforcement action. Exceptions: Unintentional pointing of a firearm during incidents, including, but not limited to, building clearances or having the firearm in a low-ready position, not pointed at any individuals.	Intentionally pointing a firearm at a subject other than the exceptions listed.
Category 1	- Any force used to overcome a subject's resistance that does not result in injury but involves a complaint of pain or allegation of misconduct. - Any UOF involving use of chemical agents, regardless of injury or allegations. Exception: Temporary discomfort associated with the application of control holds and/or restraints is not an injury for the purposes of determining if a use of force is reportable. If the pain persists beyond transitory discomfort, it is a reportable use of force.	- Control holds or takedowns are used against an actively resistant subject who complains of pain or alleges misconduct. <u>Types of Force</u> - Control Holds - Takedowns - Use of chemical agents (OC, CN/CS)
Category 2	- Any UOF that results in injury including but not limited to, bumps, bruises, scrapes, cuts, dog bites, digit or nasal bone fractures, or any other injuries that do not result in hospitalization. - Any UOF involving CEW, Personal Weapons, K9, Baton, or Impact Munitions, regardless of injury, unless UOF qualifies as a Category 3 injury or allegations. - Any UOF on restrained person. - Any UOF involving use of chemical agents in crowd control. - Any UOF that involves improvised techniques not taught, or equipment not issued by the Sheriff's Office.	- Control holds/Takedowns with injury, complaint of pain, or allegation of misconduct. - All CEW Deployment (Probe & Drive Stun). - Personal Weapons (punches, kicks, etc.) - Utilization of a canine to physically apprehend or bite a suspect. - Use of a Baton. - Use of Impact Munitions. - Improvised techniques or equipment
Category 3	- Any discharge of a firearm at a person. - Any UOF which has the potential to cause SBI or death, for example: - Head/neck strikes with impact weapons or objects (whether intentional or unintentional). - Personal weapon resulting in SBI or death. - Vehicle interventions. - Any UOF resulting in hospitalization, loss of consciousness, concussion, skeletal bone fractures, or a wound that requires extensive suturing. - Exception: Minor fractures of digit and nasal fractures not requiring hospitalization shall be considered a Category 2 response. <u>Detectives shall respond to all UOF that require hospitalization¹ and all investigation procedures in DPPM F-1100 shall be followed.</u>	<u>Types of Force</u> - Officer-involved shooting at a person. - Use of vehicle as force. - Use of improvised weapons resulting in SBI or death. - The intentional use of any impact weapon as a lethal force tool (e.g., intentionally striking the head area). - Accidental strikes to head/neck with an impact weapon resulting in SBI or death require a Detective's response. - Accidental strikes to head/neck with an impact weapon not resulting in SBI or death require a Detective's consultation. Note: For any prohibited uses of force, see current KCSOPPM F-0100.

¹ Hospitalization refers to any individual who is admitted to the hospital for treatment related to the use of force. It does not refer to any admission due to a pre-existing medical condition or injury prior to the use of force.

EXAMPLES:

1. Deputies receive intelligence that a suspect in illegal possession of a firearm is driving a specific vehicle. A vehicle matching the description is located near where the crime occurred. During a high-risk traffic stop, deputies ordered the sole occupant out of the vehicle, and the individual complied with the orders. Once this individual is detained, deputies learned this vehicle and individual are not related to the information they received.
 - According to the changes listed above, deputies are only required to complete one Axon Standards entry for the incident. No RMS reporting is necessary unless other factors require reporting (e.g., evidence of a crime being located, an arrest for open, unrelated charges, etc.). This would be categorized as “Pointing a Firearm Only.”
2. During a routine patrol, deputies are called to a disturbance at a local bar. Upon arrival, they find a highly agitated individual who is verbally aggressive and refuses to comply with orders to leave the premises. The suspect attempts to push the deputies past to re-enter the bar and refuses orders from deputies. One deputy applies a control hold to manage the suspect, preventing him from re-entering the bar. Simultaneously, another deputy decides to use OC spray to assist in controlling the suspect.
 - According to the changes listed above, deputies are required to complete an RMS report and one Axon Standards entry for the entire incident, which would be categorized as “Category 1.”
3. Deputies respond to a local bank for a suspect armed with a handgun demanding money from a bank teller. Once the bank teller gives the suspect the money, he walks out of the bank still armed. Deputies locate the suspect walking toward a parked vehicle near the local bank. Deputies give the suspect orders to surrender, but the suspect flees on foot toward a nearby neighborhood. The suspect was eventually found hiding in the backyard of a residence by a patrol canine. The suspect was bitten by the canine and taken into custody without further incident.
 - According to the changes listed above, deputies are required to complete an RMS report and one Axon Standards entry for the entire incident, which would be categorized as “Category 2 (All Other).”
4. A deputy responds to a residence for a suspect who is actively and violently resisting another deputy. The responding deputy attempts a baton strike to the suspect’s right upper arm area, but the suspect quickly moves to avoid the strike. Due to the suspect’s movement, the deputy struck the suspect on the right side of his head. The suspect was taken into custody, but had a skull fracture due to the baton strike. The suspect was admitted to the hospital for the fracture. Even though the head strike with the baton was unintentional, a response by detectives was required.
 - According to the changes listed above, deputies are required to complete an RMS report and one Axon Standards entry for the entire incident, which would be categorized as “Category 3.”
5. A deputy contacted an individual walking in a neighborhood in the middle of the night. During the conversation with the individual, the deputy confirms that this individual had an active felony warrant related to property crimes. Once the deputy attempts to make an arrest, the suspect attempts to pull away from the deputy. As the deputy struggles to get the suspect in custody, the deputy takes the suspect to the ground with a front takedown. Once the deputy places the suspect in handcuffs, the deputy learns the suspect has a deep cut caused by the use of force.

The suspect received medical treatment at a local hospital, which required extensive suturing of the cut on the arm. The suspect was not hospitalized, but consultation with the Investigations Division is needed.

- According to the changes listed above, deputies are required to complete an RMS report and one Axon Standards entry for the entire incident, which would be categorized as “Non-lethal Category 3.”

DIRECTIVE:

Effective immediately, Sheriff’s Office personnel involved in a use of force shall utilize the above-described categories when entering information into Axon Standards. The “UOF Matrix” described in the current KCSOPPM F-0100 (levels 1, 2, and 3) is no longer used in the categorization into Axon Standards. Sheriff’s Office personnel are also required to follow the reportable use of force definition list on this Training Bulletin until the new KCSOPPM F-0200 is fully implemented.

The use of force matrix and the reportable use of force definition from the current KCSOPPM F-0100 is no longer valid and should not be referenced in any documentation.

The existing KCSOPPM F-0100 procedures and definitions will remain in effect until all use of force policies are revised, published, and staff have received the necessary training. This includes the responsibility of canvassing the area for witnesses and gathering evidence, as well as obtaining statements from suspects. Enclosed with this training bulletin is a use of force interview card to aid personnel during administrative interviews with suspects. Those conducting the administrative interview must ensure that the admonition is provided and all relevant questions are addressed, though exact wording is not required.

By acknowledging this training bulletin, you indicate that you have read and understand the contents of this training bulletin. All personnel in the Deputy Sheriff (to include Reserves), Detentions Deputy, Park Ranger, and Coroner ranks are required to review and acknowledge this training bulletin by **Friday, November 21, 2025.**

Use of Force Interview Card:

The following admonishment and questions should be addressed in the interview, but do not have to be verbatim.

Utilize wording you feel appropriate to build a rapport with the suspect.

Admonishment: Hello, my name is _____. I am a (Rank/Title) for KCSO. This is a Use of Force interview being completed for administrative purposes and to ensure the actions taken in this incident are in compliance with department policy and all applicable laws. You are not required to provide a statement and your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. **This interview will be recorded.**

Remember to ask open-ended questions. Do not challenge or argue with the suspect. Let them talk

Questions:

- What is your name?
- Are you injured in anyway? Describe where? Do you need medical treatment?
- Did you have any injuries prior to this incident with the Sheriff's Office?
- Have you been drinking or using any drugs? If so, what?
- Can you tell me what happened between you and the deputy(ies)?
Remember to obtain enough details to ensure a thorough understanding of the incident. **Ask about:**
 - Location and actions of deputies, suspect and witnesses
 - Number of deputies
 - Identify which deputy(ies) they are referring to, either by name or description
- Was force used against you? If so, what force was used against you? Was there any other type of force used against you?
- Why do you think this happened?
- After you were handcuffed, was there any other force used against you?

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Ensure that overall photos are taken whether you see injuries or the LACK of injury. Take photos at the hospital, or jail, after the injuries have been cleaned. The purpose of photographs is to document the injury (or absence of), not all the blood, dirt, etc.



TURN CARD OVER AND REFER TO BACK IF A K - 9 WAS UTILIZED



Canine (K-9) Use of Force Supplemental Questions:

- Are you injured? If so, describe where.
- Did you know that KCSO uses K-9's to find people?
- Did you know a KCSO K-9 was being used to search for you?
- Did you hear any announcements from deputies?
- How many announcements did you hear? What did they say?
- What did you do when you first saw, or heard, the K-9?
- Were you hiding or running from deputies?
- If you were hiding, where were you hiding?
- What were you doing when the K-9 found you?
- Why did you not surrender (after the announcements, or seeing the deputies/K-9)?
- Describe what happened when the K-9 engaged you.
- What part of your body did the K-9 engage you?
- Estimate how long the engagement lasted.
- Did you try to get away from the K-9?
- After the K-9 engaged you, what did the deputy tell you to do?
- What did you do after hearing their command?
- Was there any other force used against you?
- Is there anything else you want to tell me about the K-9 engagement?

