



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

<b>TITLE: Use of Force – Handcuffs and Restraints</b>		<b>NO: F-0350</b>	
<b>APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner</b>			
<b>REFERENCE: DPPM F-0100, F-0400, P-0600, and DBPPM C-400</b>			
<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026

## **APPLICABILITY**

When used in this policy, the terms “officer,” “deputy,” or “peace officer” shall include Sheriff’s Deputies, Detentions Deputies, Detentions Officers, Deputy Coroners, and Park Rangers.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

In all uses of force, deputies shall adhere to the provisions and Guiding Principles outlined in DPPM F-0100 Use of Force – General and Deadly Force. This policy provides further guidelines regarding approved methods and devices available for the application of force.

## **POLICY**

This policy provides guidelines for handling situations involving handcuffing during detentions and arrests, and the use of other restraints.

## **DISCRETION IN HANDCUFFING**

Consistent with the Sheriff’s Office de-escalation and use of force policies, deputies shall utilize appropriate care when dealing with subjects either known or perceived to be from vulnerable populations, including but not limited to children, the elderly, pregnant females, and people with physical, mental, and developmental disabilities and/or impairments.

The principal reason for handcuffing is to establish and maintain control of a person and reduce the risk of a detention escalating to a point necessitating a higher level of restraint or force. Handcuffing is not based on rigid criteria. Rather, it is determined by the unique nature of each situation, the deputy’s evaluation of the incident, and a concern for the wellbeing of all involved persons. Even though a person is handcuffed, a high degree of alertness is required. While felony arrestees shall generally be handcuffed, the handcuffing of other detainees and misdemeanants is discretionary. The decision to handcuff a subject must be determined by the circumstances associated with each situation as reasonably perceived by the involved deputy, who should evaluate all available facts and circumstances, including, but not limited to:

- The circumstances leading to the arrest or detention;
- Knowledge of the subject’s previous encounters with law enforcement;
- The attitude and behavior of the subject;

- Whether the subject exhibits indicia of impending escape or assault;
- The age, sex, and apparent health of the subject (e.g. whether they are injured, elderly, or a juvenile);
- The size, relative strength, and skill level of the Department member versus the subject;
- Whether the subject has any apparent disability, that may be aggravated by restraints.

In most situations, handcuffs should be applied with the hands behind the person unless the person is in custody at a jail facility, and the waist chain is appropriate to handcuff the hands to the front of the prisoner during transport. If the subject has a hearing or speech disability, deputy safety permitting, consideration may be given to handcuffing to the front to allow the person to sign or write notes. Handcuffs should be removed as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

Handcuffs are temporary restraints and are not escape-proof. Deputies should always remain alert for an attempted escape. It is not uncommon for a person to conceal a handcuff key or other tools to assist in escaping from custody. Handcuffs can be defeated and removed by the subject(s) they are applied to. Subject(s) can slip their handcuffs from behind their back to the front of the body. Deputies should keep a handcuffed subject under control and constant observation. Proper observation and control of a subject will help limit the possibility of the subject escaping, assaulting another, injuring themselves, or destroying evidence.

When handcuffing, a deputy should use a proper handcuffing technique, and maintain balance and control of the subject. Once the person is handcuffed, deputies shall immediately search their waistband area. Once applied, handcuffs shall be properly adjusted and double-locked as soon as practical. Double locking the handcuffs makes them more difficult to pick and prevents them from tightening on the subject's wrist. Excessively tight or forceful handcuffing can be objectively unreasonable force, and can cause considerable trauma to the structures around the wrist, including fractures, lacerations, and injuries to the radial, ulnar, and median nerves.

Deputies should not dismiss the subject's complaints of pain, sensory symptoms, or weakness after use of handcuffs. If the subject makes such a complaint or appears to be in pain due to the handcuffs, the deputy must evaluate, as soon as it safe to do so, and adjust the handcuffs if needed. Deputies should also support the person in handcuffs and help them balance when moving.

Deputies should continue to monitor a handcuffed person after handcuffing, including during transportation, while at a hospital for medical treatment, and while an arrestee is in a holding tank prior to booking. Deputies in control of a restrained person shall be alert to the physical position of the person in order to eliminate the possibility of positional asphyxia.

**FLEXCUFFS**

The Flexcuff is a disposable restraining device provided to deputies for use as an alternate or reserve restraint device. This allows for the control and transportation of arrestees when there are not enough steel handcuffs available. The person's hands should be placed behind the back, palms

F-0350-2

<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

out, with the thumbs up. The Flexcuff is placed over hands and tightened to secure the wrists. The one-way locking action in the head of the plastic handcuff prevents the restraint from being loosened once applied. Therefore, care should be taken to not tighten a Flexcuff more than is necessary. Flexcuffs can only be removed by using Department approved cutters.

When feasible, Flexcuffs should not be used as a primary restraint to restrain assaultive and/or combative persons or persons with mental illness. The plastic handcuff can also assist deputies in controlling an already handcuffed person by preventing them from slipping the handcuffs underneath their legs. The person's handcuffed hands can be secured to the belt by utilizing a plastic handcuff looped around the handcuffs' linking handcuff chain and their belt. Temporarily using plastic handcuffs may become necessary during an unusual occurrence, such as large-scale crowd control tactics.

**REMOVAL OF HANDCUFFS FROM PERSONS AT THE REQUEST OF KERN COUNTY FIRE OR OTHER MEDICAL PERSONNEL**

Situations may arise where a deputy has had to use force to control a person, up to and including deadly force, resulting in the need for emergency medical treatment of that person. In such instances, the responding employees from the Kern County Fire Department, or other medical personnel, may request the removal of handcuffs from the injured subject to provide immediate medical treatment. Deputies should use good judgment and discretion, and if safe to do so, remove handcuffs from an injured person to allow for emergency medical treatment. Prior to the removal of handcuffs, deputies should ensure that the person does not have access to weapons, including improvised weapons. This can be achieved by a thorough search of the suspect and the immediate area. Once the handcuffs are removed, deputies shall remain alert and maintain a position of tactical advantage that will allow them to visually observe the person and intervene, if necessary, to prevent injury to all involved parties.

**DIRECTIVE A – IMPROPER USE OF HANDCUFFS**

When handcuffing a subject, deputies shall do so in an appropriate manner consistent with Sheriff's Office training. Handcuffing a subject is never intended to punish a subject. Improper use of handcuffs includes, but is not limited to:

- Applying the handcuffs too tight;
- Failing to evaluate, as soon as it is safe to do so, and adjust the handcuffs, if needed, if the subject complains of or appears to be in pain due to the handcuffs;
- Applying handcuffs to an individual for the sole purpose of humiliation;
- Applying handcuffs for the sole purpose of displaying authority, absent any justification to handcuff a subject.

Unless exigent circumstances do not permit, such as severity of the crime, potential for escape, potential for injury to self or others, or destruction of evidence, deputies shall make objectively

F-0350-3

<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

reasonable modifications to standard cuffing and restraint practices in order to provide necessary, reasonable accommodations based on a person’s known or apparent disability, advanced age, injury, or other circumstances where persons may be incapable of placing their hands behind their back but circumstances warrant restraint. For example, the deputy may:

- (a) Use plastic flex cuffs.
- (b) Apply two sets of handcuffs linked together.
- (c) Apply handcuffs with the hands to the front.
- (d) Choose not to use a restraining device. If an arrested person is not restrained and requires transport, two deputies should be used to transport the arrested person as safely as possible.

### **DIRECTIVE B – JUVENILES**

The Sheriff’s Office recognizes that youth are psychologically, emotionally, and physically different than adults. These differences require deputies to be aware of the unique circumstances and needs of youth when interacting with them during the scope of their duties. Deputies should be aware of the typical developmental tendencies of youth to react anxiously, distrustfully, or defiantly to unfamiliar individuals, particularly those in positions of power and authority. When feasible, deputies should ask individuals their age and not make assumptions about how old they are. Deputies should also clearly explain what action they are taking (including what the action will entail), why they are taking such action, as well as the consequences if the youth does not follow instructions. Youth may require significantly more explanation than adults about what is happening and why.

All reasonable alternatives, including verbal counseling, shall be attempted before resorting to the use of handcuffs. Youth shall not be restrained with mechanical restraints other than handcuffs or plastic flex cuffs. Handcuffs shall only be used so long as it reasonably appears necessary for the youth's protection or the protection of others.

Juveniles (14 years of age or older) may be handcuffed when the act committed is felonious or where the deputy has a reasonable suspicion the suspect may have a desire to escape, injure themselves, injure the deputy, or destroy property or evidence.

Juveniles (under 14 years of age) will generally not be handcuffed unless their acts have amounted to a dangerous felony or when the nature of the crime or their apparent state of mind is such that it suggests a reasonable probability of a desire to escape, injure themselves, the deputy, or to destroy property or evidence.

Considerations that may be taken into account in determining if a juvenile may be restrained include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Size and weight ratio between the investigating deputy and the juvenile;
- Suspicion by the investigating deputy that the juvenile may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs;

F-0350-4

<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

- The number of juvenile subjects, or the number of companions of the juvenile subject, at the scene;
- The presence of weapons, or items which could be used as a weapon, against the investigating deputy;
- During the investigation of a juvenile suspected of weapons violations;
- Situations where the deputy reasonably believes that there is an articulable safety concern requiring the juvenile to be restrained;
- Any indicia of suicidal ideations.

Unless a youth is being arrested and taken into custody or presents a danger to themselves or others, deputies shall not handcuff a youth during transport.

Whenever a youth is arrested or taken into custody, deputies shall provide medical care as outlined in DPPM P-0600. Additionally, deputies shall immediately notify parents/legal guardians, that the youth is in custody, the youth’s location (including any future destination if the youth is to be transported), and the reason the youth is in custody. Finally, deputies shall explain to the youth the procedure for retrieving any property that may have been seized during the arrest, to the extent that it may be eligible for retrieval (i.e., non-evidentiary contraband).

**DIRECTIVE C – HANDCUFFING OF PREGNANT ARRESTEES**

Department members who have identified an arrestee as pregnant or in recovery after delivery shall not restrain her using leg irons, waist chains, or handcuffs behind the body. A pregnant arrestee in labor, during delivery, or in recovery after delivery, shall not be restrained by the wrists, ankles, or both, unless deemed necessary for the safety and security of the arrestee, the staff, or the public. If the use of restraints on a pregnant arrestee is required, they shall be removed when a professional who is currently responsible for the medical care of the pregnant arrestee during a medical emergency, labor, delivery, or recovery after delivery determines that the removal of the restraints is medically necessary. Deputies shall advise a pregnant arrestee, orally or in writing, of the policy pertaining to pregnant arrestees.<sup>1</sup>

**DIRECTIVE D – HANDCUFFING OF DETAINEES**

Situations arise where it may be reasonable to handcuff a person who, after subsequent investigation, will be released without being arrested. Such a situation is considered a detention rather than an actual arrest. Examples of when a deputy may handcuff a detained individual , include but are not limited to:

- The subject is uncooperative
- The subject is unsearched, hiding object(s), making furtive movements, or running from scene.
- Knowledge of a subject’s history (e.g. propensity for violence or criminal history)

---

<sup>1</sup> State of California, Board of State and Community Corrections, Title 15, Section 1058.5

<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

- When necessary to conduct a search or attend to other evolving circumstances.
- Articulable facts that a subject’s actions at the scene may present physical danger to themselves or others if not restrained.
- A reasonable possibility of flight based on the actions of the subject or other information known to the deputy.
- Have a factual basis to suspect that a person is carrying a weapon, dangerous instrument, or an object that can be used as a weapon, or if the person poses a danger to the safety of the officers or others. Information that the subject is currently armed
- Articulable facts that a crime of violence is about to occur or stop closely follows a violent crime and the subject matches specific parts of a description
- The individual is suicidal or a threat to others.
- When a deputy has reasonable suspicion or probable cause that the detainee was involved in a crime.

When handcuffing a detainee, the deputy shall inform the detainee that they are temporarily detained and that the handcuffs are only a temporary measure for everyone’s safety. Unless arrested, handcuffs on detainees should continue only if reasonably necessary to assure the safety of deputies and others, and may not be unreasonably prolonged, unless the deputy can articulate specific facts necessitating a longer detention. Deputies should continuously weigh the safety interests against the intrusion upon the detainee when deciding to remove handcuffs from a detainee.

When an individual is handcuffed and released without an arrest, written documentation of the incident shall be made to document the details of the detention and the need for handcuffs. Such documentation may include a Crime/Incident Report or a notation within the Mobile CAD system articulating the reasoning for handcuffing.

**DIRECTIVE E – INCARCERATED PERSONS**

Sheriff’s Office personnel caring for, guarding, or transporting any incarcerated person confined to any detentions facility will comply with Detentions Bureau Policy C-400.

**DIRECTIVE F – APPLICATION OF SPIT HOODS**

Spit hoods are temporary protective devices designed to prevent the wearer from biting and/or transferring or transmitting bodily fluids (e.g. saliva, mucous, blood) to others. They are generally used during application of a physical restraint, while the person is restrained, or during or after transport. Spit hoods may be placed upon subjects in custody when the deputy reasonably believes, based upon articulable facts, the person will bite or spit at, either a person or in an inappropriate place (e.g. hospital). The following criteria shall be adhered to when applying a spit hood:

- Deputies shall ensure that the spit hood is fastened properly to allow for adequate ventilation and so that the restrained person can breathe normally.

F-0350-6

<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

- Deputies shall provide assistance during the movement of a restrained person, due to the potential for impairing or distorting that person's vision and to mitigate the risk of falls.
- Deputies shall not use and shall remove the spit hood in situations where the restrained person is bleeding from the area around the mouth or nose, unless the subject is actively spitting in violation of battery and/or gassing laws. In such cases, prompt medical care shall be obtained.
- Persons who have been sprayed with oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray shall be decontaminated, as outlined in DPPM F-400, prior to application of a spit hood, unless the subject is actively resisting to prevent such efforts and/or spitting in violation of battery and/or gassing laws.
- Deputies shall monitor for indications that the person has a medical condition, such as difficulty breathing or vomiting. If the person vomits or shows signs of impaired breathing, while wearing a spit hood, the spit hood should be promptly removed.
- Those who have been placed in a spit hood shall be continually monitored and shall not be left unattended, until the spit hood is removed.
- When possible, deputies should avoid comingling those wearing spit hoods with other detainees.
- Spit hoods shall be discarded after each use.
- Report of Use: All applications of a spit hood shall be documented in the related Incident Report. Deputies shall thoroughly document the circumstances that led to the need for a spit mask, which will be thoroughly assessed in the approval process by supervisors and/or management.

Note: People in a mental health crisis can experience high distress when in a spit hood.

F-0350-7

<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 20, 2013	<b>REVIEWED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>REVISED:</b> January 26, 2026	<b>UPDATED:</b> January 26, 2026
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------