



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

TITLE: Body Armor		NO: K-401	
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: June 4, 2018	REVIEWED: 05/29/2025	REVISED: 05/29/2025	UPDATED: 05/29/2025

POLICY

It is the policy of the Kern County Sheriff's Office to maximize officer safety through the use of body armor in combination with prescribed safety procedures. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the observance of officer safety procedures.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide law enforcement officers with guidelines for the proper use of body armor.

USE OF SOFT BODY ARMOR

The Sheriff's Office encourages all on-duty deputy sheriffs, detentions deputy sheriffs, community service technicians (CST), and park rangers to wear soft body armor at all times. Their use in some instances is required. Body armor must be either agency-issued or agency-approved.

ISSUANCE OF BODY ARMOR

The Support Services Division Commander or designee shall ensure that body armor is issued to all deputy sheriffs, detentions deputy sheriffs, CSTs, and park rangers when service begins with the Kern County Sheriff's Office and, when issued, the body armor meets or exceeds the standards of the National Institute of Justice.

The Support Services Division Commander or designee shall establish a body armor replacement schedule based upon the manufacturer's replacement recommendations and shall replace body armor pursuant to that schedule. Additionally, replacement body armor shall be issued whenever the body armor becomes worn or damaged to the point that its effectiveness or functionality has been compromised.

USE OF SOFT BODY ARMOR

Generally, the use of body armor is required subject to the following:

- Deputies, detentions deputies, CSTs, and park rangers shall only wear agency-approved body armor.
- Deputies, detentions deputies, CSTs, and park rangers shall wear body armor anytime they are in a situation where they could reasonably be expected to take enforcement action.

- Deputies, detentions deputies, CSTs, and park rangers may be excused from wearing body armor when they are functioning primarily in an administrative or support capacity and could not reasonably be expected to take enforcement action.
- Body armor shall be worn when a deputy, detentions deputy, CST, or park ranger is taking part in Sheriff's Office range training.
- A deputy may be excused from wearing body armor when he/she is involved in undercover or plainclothes work that his/her supervisor determines could be compromised by wearing body armor, or when a supervisor determines that other circumstances make it inappropriate to mandate wearing body armor.
- Deputies, detentions deputies, CSTs, and park rangers may be excused from wearing body armor when they are engaging in specific assignments where the wearing of body armor could pose a health risk due to heat exposure or environmental conditions.

INSPECTIONS OF BODY ARMOR

Supervisors should ensure that body armor is worn in accordance with this policy through routine observation. If, at any time, an employee finds their body armor has any signs of damage, abuse, wear, or no longer fits properly, the employee shall report to the Property Room for inspection and potential replacement at the discretion of the Property Room sergeant.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF SOFT BODY ARMOR

Soft body armor should never be stored for any period of time in an area where environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, light, humidity) are not reasonably controlled (e.g., normal ambient room temperature/humidity conditions), such as in automobiles or automobile trunks.

Soft body armor should be cared for and cleaned pursuant to the manufacturer's care instructions provided with the soft body armor. The instructions can be found on labels located on the external surface of each ballistic panel. The carrier should also have a label that contains care instructions. Failure to follow these instructions may damage the ballistic performance capabilities of the armor. If care instructions for the soft body armor cannot be located, contact the manufacturer to request care instructions.

Soft body armor should not be exposed to any cleaning agents or methods not specifically recommended by the manufacturer, as noted on the armor panel label.

Soft body armor should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended replacement schedule.

RANGEMASTER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Rangemaster should:

- Monitor technological advances in the body armor industry for any appropriate changes to Sheriff's Office approved body armor.

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- Assess weapons and ammunition currently in use and the suitability of approved body armor to protect against those threats.
- Provide training that educates staff about the safety benefits of wearing body armor.

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