

Firearms

306.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for issuing firearms, the safe and legal carrying of firearms, firearms maintenance and firearms training.

This policy does not apply to issues related to the use of firearms that are addressed in the Use of Force or Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths policies.

This policy only applies to those members who are authorized to carry firearms.

306.2 POLICY

The Elkton Police Department will equip its members with firearms to address the risks posed to the public and department members by violent and sometimes well-armed persons. The Department will ensure firearms are appropriate and in good working order and that relevant training is provided as resources allow.

306.3 AUTHORIZED FIREARMS, AMMUNITION AND OTHER WEAPONS

Members shall only use firearms that are issued or approved by the Department and have been thoroughly inspected by a Firearms Armorer. Except in an emergency or as directed by a supervisor, no firearm shall be carried by a member who has not qualified with that firearm at an authorized department range (COMAR 12.04.02.03).

All other weapons not provided by the Department, including, but not limited to, edged weapons, chemical or electronic weapons, impact weapons, or any weapon prohibited or restricted by law or that is not covered elsewhere by department policy, may not be carried by members in the performance of their official duties without the express written authorization of the Chief of Police. This exclusion does not apply to the carrying of a knife that is not otherwise prohibited by law.

306.3.1 HANDGUNS

The authorized department-issued handgun is the Sig Sauer P320 RXP X Carry 9mm.

306.3.2 SHOTGUNS

The authorized department-issued shotgun is the Remington 870 12-gauge.

When not deployed, the shotgun shall be properly secured consistent with department training.

306.3.3 PATROL RIFLES

The authorized department-issued patrol rifle is the Sig Sauer M400. Members shall have at least two 30 round magazines for a department issued patrol rifle. Rifles shall have a sling attached to the weapon.

Members may deploy the patrol rifle in any circumstance where the member can articulate a reasonable expectation that the rifle may be needed.

When not deployed, the patrol rifle shall be properly secured consistent with department training.

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306.3.4 PERSONALLY OWNED DUTY HANDGUNS AND RIFLES

Based on their duty assignment, members desiring to carry an authorized but personally owned duty handgun or rifle must receive written approval from the Chief of Police or the authorized designee. Once approved, personally owned duty firearms are subject to the following restrictions:

- (a) The firearm shall be in good working order.
- (b) The firearm shall be inspected by a Firearms Armorer prior to being carried and thereafter shall be subject to inspection whenever it is deemed necessary.
- (c) Prior to carrying the firearm, members shall qualify under range supervision and thereafter shall qualify in accordance with the department qualification schedule. Members must demonstrate proficiency and safe handling, and that the firearm functions properly.
- (d) Members shall provide written notice of the make, model, serial number, and caliber of the firearm to the Firearms Unit, who will maintain a list of the information. Approval of personally owned duty rifles will be limited to two rifles per member at any one time.
- (e) Personally owned rifles must be of an AR-style platform. The rifles must be chambered in either 5.56/.223 or .300 blackout.
- (f) Personally owned rifles may be equipped with a personally owned suppressor. The suppressor must be from a commercial manufacturer and inspected by a Firearms Armorer prior to equipping a rifle with a suppressor. The member must include a copy of the Federal Tax stamp assigned to that suppressor with the request/approval form to carry a personally owned rifle. Personally owned suppressors shall not be mounted to department-owned firearms.

306.3.5 AUTHORIZED SECONDARY HANDGUN

Members desiring to carry department or personally owned secondary handguns are subject to the following restrictions:

- (a) The handgun shall be in good working order.
- (b) Approval shall be limited to two secondary handguns per member at any one time. Members will not carry more than one secondary handgun at one time.
- (c) The purchase of the handgun and ammunition shall be the responsibility of the member unless the handgun and ammunition are provided by the Department.
- (d) When carried by a member in uniform, the handgun shall be carried concealed at all times. If carried by a non-uniformed member, the handgun may be carried in a non-concealed fashion. All members shall carry a secondary handgun in such a manner as to prevent unintentional cocking, discharge, or loss of physical control.
- (e) The handgun shall be inspected by a Firearms Armorer prior to being carried and thereafter shall be subject to inspection whenever it is deemed necessary.
- (f) If the caliber of the handgun is other than department issue, the Chief of Police or the authorized designee shall approve the ammunition.
- (g) Prior to carrying the secondary handgun, members shall qualify under range supervision and thereafter shall qualify in accordance with the department qualification

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schedule. Members must demonstrate proficiency and safe handling, maintenance, and cleaning, and that the handgun functions properly (COMAR 12.04.02.03). In order to qualify with the secondary handgun, the member shall have at least two magazines for that weapon.

- (h) Members shall provide written notice of the make, model, serial number, and caliber of a secondary handgun to the Firearms Unit, who will maintain a list of the information.

306.3.6 AUTHORIZED OFF-DUTY FIREARMS

The carrying of firearms by members while off-duty is permitted by the Chief of Police but may be rescinded should circumstances dictate (e.g., administrative leave). Members who choose to carry a firearm while off-duty, based on their authority as peace officers, will be required to meet the following guidelines:

- (a) A personally owned firearm shall be used, carried, and inspected in accordance with the Personally Owned Duty Firearms requirements in this policy.
 - 1. The purchase of the personally owned firearm and ammunition shall be the responsibility of the member.
- (b) The firearm shall be carried concealed at all times and in such a manner as to prevent unintentional cocking, discharge, or loss of physical control.
- (c) It will be the responsibility of the member to submit the firearm to a Firearms Armorer for inspection prior to being personally carried. Thereafter the firearm shall be subject to periodic inspection by a Firearms Armorer.
- (d) Prior to carrying any off-duty firearm, the member shall demonstrate to a Firearms Instructor that he/she is proficient in handling and firing the firearm, as well as maintaining and cleaning the firearm, and that it will be carried in a safe manner.
- (e) The member will successfully qualify with the firearm prior to it being carried. In order to qualify with the secondary handgun, the member shall have at least two magazines for that weapon.
- (f) Members shall provide written notice of the make, model, serial number, and caliber of the firearm to the Firearms Unit, who will maintain a list of the information.
- (g) If a member desires to use more than one firearm while off-duty, he/she may do so, as long as all requirements set forth in this policy for each firearm are met.
- (h) Members shall only carry department-authorized ammunition.
- (i) When armed, officers shall carry their badges and Elkton Police Department identification cards under circumstances requiring possession of such identification.

306.3.7 AMMUNITION

Members shall carry only department-authorized ammunition. Members shall be issued fresh duty ammunition in the specified quantity for all department-issued firearms during the member's firearms qualification. Replacements for unserviceable or depleted ammunition issued by the Department shall be dispensed by a Firearms Instructor when needed, in accordance with established policy.

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Members carrying personally owned authorized firearms shall be responsible for obtaining fresh duty ammunition in accordance with the above, at their own expense.

306.3.8 FIREARMS CONVERSION

An officer shall successfully complete firearms conversion requirements before being authorized to use or carry a different type of firearm than the officer is currently authorized to use or carry (COMAR 12.04.02.09).

306.4 EQUIPMENT

Firearms carried on- or off-duty shall be maintained in a clean, serviceable condition. Maintenance and repair of authorized personally owned firearms are the responsibility of the individual member.

306.4.1 REPAIRS OR MODIFICATIONS

Each member shall be responsible for promptly reporting any damage or malfunction of an assigned firearm to a supervisor, armorer, or a Firearms Instructor.

Firearms that are the property of the Department or personally owned firearms that are approved for department use may be repaired or modified only by a person who is department-approved and certified as an armorer in the repair of the specific firearm. Such modification or repair must be authorized in advance by a Firearms Instructor or armorer.

Any repairs or modifications to the member's personally owned firearm shall be done at his/her expense and must be approved by a Firearms Armorer.

306.4.2 HOLSTERS

Only department-approved holsters shall be used and worn by members. Members shall periodically inspect their holsters to make sure they are serviceable and provide the proper security and retention of the handgun.

306.4.3 TACTICAL LIGHTS

Tactical lights shall be installed on a firearm carried on-duty unless approved otherwise based on the members duty assignment. The tactical lights will be examined and approved by a Firearms Armorer. Once the tactical lights have been properly installed on any firearm, the member shall qualify with the firearm to ensure proper functionality and sighting of the firearm prior to carrying it.

306.4.4 OPTICS

Optics may only be installed on a firearm carried on- or off-duty after they have been examined and approved by a Firearms Armorer. Any approved sight shall only be installed in strict accordance with manufacturer specifications. Once approved sights have been properly installed on any firearm, the member shall qualify with the firearm to ensure proper functionality and sighting of the firearm prior to carrying it. A member may not remove the department-issued optic without prior approval from a Firearms Armorer.

All optics must comply with any applicable COMAR requirements for the type of weapon it is mounted to.

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Except in an approved training situation, a member may only sight in on a target when the member would otherwise be justified in pointing a firearm at the target.

306.5 SAFE HANDLING, INSPECTION AND STORAGE

Members shall maintain the highest level of safety when handling firearms and shall consider the following:

- (a) Members shall not unnecessarily display or handle any firearm.
- (b) Members shall be governed by all rules and regulations pertaining to the use of the range and shall obey all orders issued by a Firearms Instructor. Members shall not dry fire or practice quick draws except as instructed by a Firearms Instructor or other firearms training staff.
- (c) Members shall not clean, repair, load or unload a firearm anywhere in the Department, except where clearing barrels are present unless one is unavailable. If no clearing barrel is available, members shall handle the firearm in accordance with established safety practices.
- (d) Members shall not place or store any firearm or other weapon on department premises except where the place of storage is locked. No one shall carry firearms into the booking section or any part thereof when securing or processing an arrestee, but shall place all firearms in a secured location. Members providing access to the booking section to persons from outside agencies are responsible for ensuring firearms are not brought into the booking section.
- (e) Members shall not use any automatic firearm, heavy-caliber rifle, or firearm from the armory, except with approval of a supervisor.
- (f) Any firearm authorized by the Department to be carried on- or off-duty that is determined by a member to be malfunctioning or in need of service or repair shall not be carried.

306.5.1 INSPECTION AND STORAGE

Handguns, shotguns, and rifles shall be inspected at the beginning of the shift by the member to whom the weapon is issued. The member shall ensure that the firearm is carried in the proper condition and loaded with approved ammunition.

306.5.2 STORAGE AT HOME

Members shall ensure that all firearms and ammunition are locked and secured while in their homes, vehicles or any other area under their control, and in a manner that will keep them inaccessible to children and others who should not have access. Members shall not permit department-issued firearms to be handled by anyone not authorized by the Department to do so. Members should be aware that negligent storage of a firearm could result in civil liability. Members shall not store department owned weapons in their department vehicles while off duty.

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306.5.3 ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Firearms shall not be carried by any member, either on- or off-duty, who has consumed an amount of an alcoholic beverage, taken any drugs or medication, or has taken any combination thereof that would tend to adversely affect the member's senses or judgment.

306.6 FIREARMS TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

All members who carry a firearm will qualify at least annually with their duty firearms. Members will qualify with off-duty and secondary firearms annually. Training and qualifications must be on the required range course meeting minimum standards and requirements (COMAR 12.04.02.08; COMAR 12.04.02.05).

Officers may not use or carry a firearm that has been surrendered or for which authority to carry or use has been withdrawn, except during supervised training to meet the annual firearms training and qualification requirements (COMAR 12.04.02.08(E)(3)).

At least annually, all members carrying a firearm should receive practical training designed to simulate field situations including low-light shooting.

During firearms qualification, members shall wear their department issued ballistic vest. This applies to all phases of firearms live fire- to include handgun, rifle, and shotgun qualification.

306.6.1 NON-CERTIFICATION OR NON-QUALIFICATION

If any member fails to meet minimum standards for firearms training or qualification for any reason, including injury, illness, duty status or scheduling conflict, a Firearms Instructor shall submit a memorandum to the Support Services Commander immediately.

Members who repeatedly fail to meet minimum standards will be removed from field assignment and may be subject to disciplinary action.

306.6.2 ANNUAL FIREARMS NON-CERTIFICATION

If an officer fails to successfully complete the annual firearms classroom instruction, training and qualification requirements for an authorized firearm within a calendar year, the Chief of Police (COMAR 12.04.02.08(E)(1)):

- (a) Shall remove the firearm, or the authorization to use or carry the firearm if personally owned, from the officer by January 1 of the next calendar year.
- (b) May not return or authorize the officer to use or carry the firearm until the officer successfully completes the appropriate firearms classroom instruction, training and qualification.

306.6.3 ANNUAL FIREARMS NON-QUALIFICATION

An officer who fails a firearms qualification shall successfully complete the qualification within 30 consecutive calendar days of the initial attempt (COMAR 12.04.02.08(E)(2)).

If an officer does not successfully meet the qualification requirements, the Chief of Police shall immediately:

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- Report the officer's failure to qualify to the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC).
- Require the officer to surrender all department firearms.
- Withdraw the officer's authority to use or carry personally owned firearms.

306.7 FIREARM DISCHARGE

Except during training or recreational use, any member who discharges a department-issued firearm intentionally or unintentionally, on- or off-duty, shall make a verbal report to his/her supervisor as soon as circumstances permit. If the discharge results in injury or death to another person, additional statements and reports shall be made in accordance with the Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths Policy. If a firearm was discharged as a use of force, the involved member shall adhere to the additional reporting requirements set forth in the Use of Force Policy.

In all other cases, written reports shall be made as follows:

- (a) If on-duty at the time of the incident, the member shall file a written report with his/her Bureau Commander or provide a recorded statement to investigators immediately or as soon as practicable, unless otherwise directed.
- (b) If off-duty at the time of the incident, a written report shall be submitted or a recorded statement provided immediately or as soon as practicable, unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.

Blue Team Entry and Routing Procedure:

- (a) Within 24 hours from which the incident occurred, a Firearm Discharge Incident within Blue Team shall be completed by the investigating supervisor
- (b) Investigating supervisors shall complete and submit a Blue Team Incident and CODY report for all firearm discharges, with the exception of practice or qualifying on a firing range, or when a firearm is used to kill a wounded or dangerous animal.
- (c) Officers discharging their firearm to kill a wounded or dangerous animal shall document the incident with a Firearms Discharge Incident within Blue Team and a CODY incident report.
- (d) If applicable, a Use of Force Incident will be completed in addition to the Firearms Discharge Incident within Blue Team.

306.7.1 DESTRUCTION OF ANIMALS

Members are authorized to use firearms to stop an animal in circumstances where the animal reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to human safety and alternative methods are not reasonably available or would likely be ineffective.

In circumstances where there is sufficient advance notice that a potentially dangerous animal may be encountered, department members should develop reasonable contingency plans for dealing with the animal (e.g., fire extinguisher, TASER (TM), oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray, animal control officer). Nothing in this policy shall prohibit any member from shooting a dangerous animal

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if circumstances reasonably dictate that a contingency plan has failed or becomes impractical. The appropriate report will be completed by the member prior to the end of his/her shift.

306.7.2 INJURED ANIMALS

When an animal is injured in a traffic accident, the member shall notify the appropriate local organization to give such injured animal medical care (Md. Code TR § 20-106).

With the approval of a supervisor, a member may euthanize an animal that is so badly injured that human compassion requires its removal from further suffering and where other dispositions are impractical. The appropriate report will be completed by the member prior to the end of his/her shift.

306.7.3 WARNING AND OTHER SHOTS

Warning shots are strictly prohibited. Shots fired for the purpose of summoning aid are discouraged and may not be discharged unless the member reasonably believes that they appear necessary, effective, and reasonably safe.

306.8 FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR DUTIES

The range will be under the exclusive control of the Firearms Unit. All members attending will follow the directions of the Firearms Instructor. The Firearms Instructor will maintain a roster of all members attending the range and will submit the roster to the Support Services Commander.

A Firearms Armorer has the responsibility of making periodic inspections, at least once a year, of all duty firearms carried by members of this department to verify proper operation. A Firearms Armorer has the authority to deem any department-issued or personally owned firearm unfit for service. The member will be responsible for all repairs to his/her personally owned firearm; it will not be returned to service until it has been inspected and approved by a Firearms Armorer.

All firearms will be inspected and cleaned by a Firearms Armorer according to the established schedule or as directed by the Support Services Commander.

A Firearms Armorer has the responsibility for ensuring each member meets the minimum requirements during training shoots and, on at least a yearly basis, can demonstrate proficiency in the care, cleaning, and safety of all firearms the member is authorized to carry.

The Firearms Instructor shall complete and submit to the Support Services Commander documentation of the training courses provided. Documentation shall include the qualifications of each instructor who provides the training, a description of the training provided and, on a form that has been approved by the Department, a list of each member who completes the training. The Firearms Unit should keep accurate records of all training shoots, qualifications, repairs, maintenance, or other records as directed by the Support Services Commander.

The Support Services Commander shall report firearm qualification scores for each firearm the officer is authorized to use or carry to the Chief of Police by January 15 of the calendar year immediately following firearms qualification. The Chief of Police shall submit the report to the MPTSC by January 31 (COMAR 12.04.02.08(D)).

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306.9 FLYING WHILE ARMED

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has imposed rules governing law enforcement officers flying armed on commercial aircraft. The following requirements apply to officers who intend to be armed while flying on a commercial air carrier or flights where screening is conducted (49 CFR 1544.219):

- (a) Officers wishing to fly while armed must be flying in an official capacity, not for vacation or pleasure, and must have a need to have the firearm accessible, as determined by the Department based on the law and published TSA rules.
- (b) Officers must carry their Elkton Police Department identification card, bearing the officer's name, a full-face photograph, identification number, the officer's signature and the signature of the Chief of Police or the official seal of the Department and must present this identification to airline officials when requested. The officer should also carry the standard photo identification needed for passenger screening by airline and TSA officials (e.g., driver's license, passport).
- (c) The Elkton Police Department must submit a National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) message prior to the officer's travel. If approved, TSA will send the Elkton Police Department an NLETS message containing a unique alphanumeric identifier. The officer must present the message on the day of travel to airport personnel as authorization to travel while armed.
- (d) An official letter signed by the Chief of Police authorizing armed travel may also accompany the officer. The letter should outline the officer's need to fly armed, detail his/her itinerary, and include that the officer has completed the mandatory TSA training for a law enforcement officer flying while armed.
- (e) Officers must have completed the mandated TSA security training covering officers flying while armed. The training shall be given by the department-appointed instructor.
- (f) It is the officer's responsibility to notify the air carrier in advance of the intended armed travel. This notification should be accomplished by early check-in at the carrier's check-in counter.
- (g) Any officer flying while armed should discreetly contact the flight crew prior to take-off and notify them of his/her assigned seat.
- (h) Discretion must be used to avoid alarming passengers or crew by displaying a firearm. The officer must keep the firearm concealed on his/her person at all times. Firearms are not permitted in carry-on luggage and may not be stored in an overhead compartment.
- (i) Officers should try to resolve any problems associated with flying armed through the flight captain, ground security manager, TSA representative or other management representative of the air carrier.

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- (j) Officers shall not consume alcoholic beverages while aboard an aircraft, or within eight hours prior to boarding an aircraft.

306.10 CARRYING FIREARMS OUT OF STATE

Qualified, active, full-time officers of this department are authorized to carry a concealed firearm in all other states subject to the following conditions (18 USC § 926B):

- (a) The officer shall carry his/her Elkton Police Department identification card whenever carrying such firearm.
- (b) The officer is not the subject of any current disciplinary action.
- (c) The officer may not be under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating or hallucinatory drug.
- (d) The officer will remain subject to this and all other department policies (including qualifying and training).

Officers are cautioned that individual states may enact local regulations that permit private persons or entities to prohibit or restrict the possession of concealed firearms on their property, or that prohibit or restrict the possession of firearms on any state or local government property, installation, building, base or park. Federal authority may not shield an officer from arrest and prosecution in such locally restricted areas.

Active law enforcement officers from other states are subject to all requirements set forth in 18 USC § 926B.