

BOLIVAR COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Law Enforcement
Policies and Procedures

Subject: Knives & Edged Weapons	Policy Number: 5.05
Issue Date:	Revision Date:
Approval Authority Title and Signature:	

POLICY:

Officers of the Bolivar County Sheriff's Office are authorized, but not required, to carry tactical knives and edged weapons for general service and defensive purposes. This policy is intended to instruct the officer in the acceptable use of the knife in common tasks and in defense of life.

DEFINITIONS:

Edged weapon: Any blade for cutting, as in a tool or machine.

Knife: An instrument for cutting, consisting of a sharp-edged metal or composite blade fitted with a handle of some type.

Immediate measure of defense: Taking action or using any implement to defend the officer's life or safety, or the life or safety of another, with implements or devices not normally intended to be weapons or issued as public safety equipment.

Tactical folding knife: A knife with a hinged blade, designed primarily for tactical and defensive use.

Tactical fixed-blade knife: Any tactical knife in which the blade and the grip or handle are permanently fused in some manner with a blade sharpened on one or more edges for cutting or stabbing.

PROCEDURES:

Precautions:

Officers are authorized to possess and use a tactical knife both on and off-duty. While in normal duty uniform, or in civilian attire, officers may carry a *tactical folding knife* in a specifically designed holder on the duty belt, or in a pocket. Folding tactical knife blades must not be casually visible to the public, except during intentional use by the officer. During special operations or assignments such as SWAT, search parties in rough terrain,

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and rescue operations, officers may carry *tactical fix blade knives* in sheaths on the belt, and the knife and sheath may be visible to the casual observer. All carriers, sheaths, and knives must be of the type normally carried by police officers, and subject to the approval of the officer's immediate supervisor.

It is recognized that officers may have many needs for a knife, including both general work and for limited defensive purposes. While not considered to be a primary weapon of choice in a defense-of-life situation, officers may, under *extraordinary circumstances*, use a tactical knife in defense of their life and the lives of others.

General Use:

The officer uses reasonable care in the general use of the knife as a tool to prevent injury to the officer and others. General use of tactical knives may be employed in such actions as *cutting injured occupants out of seat belts, to release flex restraints in emergencies, to pry, open, cut, etc.*

The carrying and use of any knife by on and off-duty officers is done as unobtrusively as possible so as not to alarm any bystander. Officers must use the tactical knife in a safe and responsible manner, taking care not to exhibit or handle the knife carelessly.

Defensive Use:

Officers may use a tactical knife as a weapon of defense under extraordinary circumstances. Any use of a knife as a defensive weapon must be in compliance with policy 5.1 - *Use of Force & Deadly Force*, maintaining that use of a knife as a defensive weapon is a Level 5 application of force.

Officers are cautioned that a tactical knife is primarily a cutting tool to assist them in their daily duties, and is not intended to be a *primary weapon of defense*. Extraordinary circumstances, however, may dictate that the tactical knife be used as an *immediate measure of defense of life*.

The use of a tactical knife against an aggressive, life-threatening suspect can be employed only when the officer has an objective and reasonable belief that human life is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death, and this belief is based on the totality of the circumstances known to the officer at the time. Officers are cautioned that while any use of *deadly force* is a grave undertaking by police, the use of any knife against another human being may be viewed as an extraordinary defensive measure, and should be reserved for those extraordinary situations where defensive options are limited.

Reporting Use of Force:

Officers who cause bodily injury or death to other persons through the use of an edged weapon must first call for medical assistance, secure the scene as well as possible, and then notify their direct supervisor. Upon arrival, the supervisor takes charge of the scene, along with any investigation concerning the incident, and reports the incident to the Sheriff.

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Officers are required to complete a written report detailing the circumstances surrounding the use of force incident. This written use of force report requirement must be met even though other required reports may have already covered the situation.

In incidents involving the use of force, all officers assist in every way possible with the investigation. All Use of Force reports receive executive review in an effort to:

1. Protect the integrity of the facts and the evidence;
2. Ensure that the officer's use of force complied with all appropriate state and federal laws, and department policy;
3. Determine if the officer's use of force indicates a need for special counseling, training, or disciplinary action; and
4. Determine whether the situation requires further action.

Reporting Requirements:

The Sheriff must be notified immediately when any type of deadly force is used and there are resulting *serious physical injuries or death*.

Each officer who witnessed the incident or responded to the scene must complete a written report. These witness reports must be completed no later than the conclusion of the shift in which the incident occurred and filed with the Chief Deputy.

The officer(s) who actually used or employed the deadly force are relieved of duty and transported to the station. At the time the officers are relieved of duty the weapon(s) used in the incident are collected and tagged as evidence. The Chief Deputy or next senior supervisor at the scene instructs the officer(s) who used deadly force to:

1. Refrain from making any statements to the news media, other officers, or supervisors;
2. Refrain from discussing the matter between officers or witnesses [if more than one officer];
3. Return directly to the station; and
4. Refrain from completing any reports or statements for at least twelve [12] hours.

When the officer arrives at the station, investigators debrief the officer and advise Chief Deputy of their findings. Thereafter the officer(s) are transported home. Upon return to duty the next day, the officer(s) involved in the deadly force incident must complete his report and make all required statements. The officer(s) provide all required information as if a witness to the incident, first hand *perception of events* at the time, and the *corresponding force options used*. Special attention is given to any deviation from this policy.

All reports completed by the officers using force, other officers or witnesses must include the following:

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1. The original offense or *probable cause* for the stop or action;
2. A description of the events leading to the use of force or deadly force;
3. An accurate description of the incident and reasons for employing force;
4. A description of the weapon or device used and the manner in which it was used;
5. A description of the injuries suffered, and the treatment given or received;
6. A list of all participants and witnesses to the incident; and
7. A copy of all incident reports compiled as a result of the incident.

The Sheriff formalizes criteria for reporting incidents. Reports of all injuries are filed in the central file and the employee's personnel record.

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