



# BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

Firearms and Range Policy	<b>Related Policies:</b> <b>Safe Storage of Firearms</b>
<i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i>	
<b>Applicable State Statutes:</b>	
<b>CALEA Standard:</b>	
<b>Date Implemented:</b>	<b>Review Date:</b>

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to direct members of this agency with respect to department approved firearms, firearms training, firearms certification, and range procedures.
- II. **POLICY:** It is the policy of the Bethlehem Police Department to properly equip its officers to insure uniform, safe, and efficient operations and enforcement. In compliance with this policy and to provide maximum efficiency and safety of all persons concerned, the following procedures shall be adhered to with regard to firearms.
- III. **SAFE HANDLING OF FIREARMS:** Except for general maintenance, storage or authorized training, officers shall not draw or exhibit their firearms unless circumstances create strong reasonable cause to believe that it may be necessary to lawfully use the weapon in conformance with other sections of this policy.
- IV. **DEPARTMENTAL CONTROL OF WEAPONS**
  - A. All on-duty officers shall be armed with a department approved firearm.
  - B. A department approved handgun intended for official use by a police officer must meet the following requirements, whether on-duty or off-duty.
    - 1. **ON DUTY:** The firearm must either be a Glock model 21 in .45 caliber. Other auxiliary weapons approved by the department are the department issued patrol rifle in 5.56 mm semi-automatic version and Mossberg Shotgun in 12-gauge caliber.
    - 2. **OFF-DUTY:** If an Officer chooses to carry a firearm off-duty the only weapon authorized and covered by the Department is his/her departmental issued handgun. Ammunition shall be issued by the Department. If an Officer wishes to carry a non-department issued weapon off duty, the Officer must provide ammunition, qualify with the weapon annually and the weapon and ammunition



# BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

must be approved in writing by the Firearms Instructor and the Chief of Police. Officers are encouraged, but not mandated to carry a handgun when off-duty. An officer who elects not to carry a handgun while off-duty shall not be subjected to disciplinary action if an occasion should arise in which s/he could have taken police action if s/he were armed. However, off-duty officers, while operating a Department vehicle, shall be armed with an APPROVED weapon.

3. All firearms shall be inspected, fired, and certified safe by the Department Armorer prior to issue or authorization to carry.
4. A record shall be maintained by the Department of all firearms. The record will contain the make, model, caliber and serial number of each weapon and date of annual certification.
5. Officers shall be certified with all assigned on duty weapons and any approved weapon carried off duty in his/her official capacity as a police officer.
  - a. Certification shall mean the successful completion of an annual mandatory four (4) hour Use of Force training class and the successful completion of an approved qualification course of fire at the range.
  - b. No firearms shall be modified without the specific approval of the Firearms Instructor and the Chief of Police and said modification being certified as safe by the Department Armorer.
  - c. Any officer who elects to keep his departmental issued weapon at home is to ensure it is done so in a safe manner. Home firearms safety is a must for any weapons kept in the home. These firearms should be stored in a locked safe or locked storage area not readily accessible to anyone except the officer. If at all possible the firearms and the ammunition should be stored separately unless that firearm is being used at home for defensive purposes. The Department will provide optional trigger or cable locks for Department weapons at the Officers request. Any Department weapon kept at home shall be stored unloaded with a trigger or cable lock installed unless that firearm is being used at home for defensive purposes. If being used for defensive purposes within the home, the firearm may be kept loaded, however, must be secured in a manner that renders it inaccessible to anyone but that officer (i.e. in a safe).

## V. FIREARMS TRAINING

- A. Annually all officers will be certified with their on-duty firearms. This certification will include four (4) hours of classroom instruction in Use of Force and Firearms, and the successful completion of an approved firearms qualification course of fire at the range in accordance with NHPSTC Rule 404.3.



## BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

- B. Firearms Proficiency training will, as closely as possible, reflect those circumstances and conditions that our police officers are most likely to confront in real life deadly force situations.
- C. Firearms training will be based on a continual year-round on-going training program that includes low light shooting techniques and clearing weapon malfunctions.
- D. In the event of any accidental discharge the officer must complete recertification training prior to returning to full duty.
- E. Should a police officer fail to qualify with his/her weapon during their annual qualifications, their authority to carry the weapon shall be immediately revoked and the weapon shall be retained by the department instructor. If the failure involves the officer's department issued duty pistol, the Chief of Police or his/her designee shall be immediately notified. The officer shall be reassigned to non-uniformed administrative duty and remedial training will begin as soon as possible.
- F. Officers who fail to achieve certification after attending remedial firearms training will be placed on suspension. After thirty (30) days on suspension, if the officer has still failed to achieve certification, s/he shall be terminated for failing to maintain standards.
- G. Only those officers trained in the use of their assigned firearm by a certified instructor will be allowed to carry this weapon. Annual refresher training will be conducted. Anyone not certified as competent in the use of this weapon will not be authorized to use it and will receive remedial training in the use of this weapon.

### VI. FIREARM CERTIFICATION RECORDS

The Department Training Officer shall maintain a permanent certification log for every officer authorized to carry firearms. The log shall consist of the following minimum information.

- A. Officer's name, make, model, caliber and serial number of all on-duty weapons with which the officer has qualified.
- B. The date and times of all firearms training qualifications, the course of fire conducted the instructor's name and the qualification or test results.

### VII. AMMUNITION

Only department issued ammunition is authorized for duty use in department issued firearms. No re loaded ammunition shall be fired through department weapons.



# BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

## VIII. WEAPON MAINTENANCE

- A. The Chief of Police or his designee will appoint an armorer/s with the responsibility for ensuring the proper maintenance of all Department weapons. The armorer/s will be certified in an armorer's course.
- B. It will be the armorer's responsibility to document all repairs made to department weapons.
- C. Once a year the armorer will take each weapon, disassemble it as needed, check all parts and subassemblies, and reassemble the weapon. Each weapon will be checked for safety functions and operator maintenance. If any unauthorized modifications have been made to the weapon, the armorer will report it immediately to the Firearms Instructor or Chief of Police, in writing, explaining what he observed. The weapon will be taken out of service until it is returned to factory specifications.
- D. When weapons are requested for maintenance they will be:
  - 1. Tagged indicating the officers name and Id number.
  - 2. A spare weapon will be issued if needed.
- E. Any officer who has a functional difficulty, however minor, with his duty weapon between inspections, or at any time drops his/her weapon, the officer shall immediately bring the weapon to the armorer or shift supervisor. Any dropped weapon will be considered non-functional until it is checked by the armorer. A spare weapon will be issued for either of the above circumstances.
- F. Officers will be responsible for field stripping their issued weapon and cleaning it after firing it. Field stripping is considered only as disassembling the slide from the frame and taking the slide assembly apart (barrel, recoil spring guide rod, recoil spring). Officers are forbidden from disassembling any part of the frame assembly including the grips.
- G. Shotguns/rifles: These weapons will be cleaned by the officers following use. Any malfunction will be brought to the attention of the armorer immediately. They will be periodically inspected by the armorer for both preservation and operation.

## IX. FIRING RANGE

The following procedure will be followed to insure safety and uniformity with respect to the use of the firing range as a training area for members of the Bethlehem Police Department.



# BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

## A. PROCEDURE

1. There will be no one allowed on the firing range except for sworn personnel of the Bethlehem Police Department. Deviations from this will be allowed with the approval of the Chief of Police or his designee.
2. Officers wishing to use the firing range shall advise the shift supervisor when the range will be used.
3. More than one officer must be present during the use of the firing range and the senior officer present is responsible for the following:
  - a. Ensuring the "Range in Use" sign is visible and that flags are posted when the range is being used.
  - b. Notifying Grafton County Dispatch that the range is in use before firing begins. (787-6911). Also notify Dawn Ferringo at 616-6770
  - c. Removing the flags and covering the "Range in Use" sign, and notifying the Grafton County Dispatch at the conclusion of training/firing.
  - d. Ensuring that the range is clear of all trash, brass, etc., following use.
  - e. Ensuring that all equipment is properly secured.
4. A Certified Firearms Instructor/Range Officer must be present during any use of the firing range by an outside agency. The Range Officer is responsible for ensuring the "Range in Use" sign and flags are visible and that the Grafton County Dispatch and Dawn Ferringo are notified as stated above.
5. Certified sworn officers from other police agencies will be allowed to use the firing range only after a request has been made in writing to the Chief of Police and permission has been granted. The Chief of Police from the requesting agency shall sign a Range Agreement and each Officer will sign a Waiver and Indemnity Agreement prior to the requesting agency utilizing the range.
6. No one will be allowed on the range without suitable eye and ear protection. Protection must be worn any time the range is active. Shatterproof eye glasses or safety glasses will suffice for eye protection. Eye protection must include side eye protection when firing on steel targets. Standard ear protectors or ear plugs will suffice for ear protection.
7. The designated Range Officer shall have absolute control over the range and of all personnel during any shooting event. The Range Officer will deliver a safety briefing prior to commencing any shooting activity.



## BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

8. All commands of the Range Officer will be instantly obeyed by everyone without exception. Upon hearing the command "Cease Fire" or the whistle, all shooters will immediately stop firing, make their handgun safe, re-holster, stand easy and await further instructions from the Range Officer. For safety reasons, anyone who observes an unsafe situation may call "Cease Fire".
9. The Range Officer has the authority to deny permission to shoot to anyone if the Range Officer feels that the person cannot participate safely.
10. Any firearm uncased and unattended will be unloaded with the magazine removed and the action locked open. Revolvers will be unloaded with the cylinder open.
11. Handguns carried in holsters will remain holstered until the Range Officer instructs otherwise.
12. The handgun may not be removed from the holster unless the shooter is on the firing line facing downrange and the downrange area is clear.
13. All personnel will keep their muzzles pointed in a safe direction at all times. A safe direction is defined as any direction where, if an unintentional discharge were to occur, there would be no chance of personal injury, and minimal property damage.
14. Every time the shooters step up to the line, they should look downrange to personally check out the impact area.
15. At no time will the trigger finger be placed inside the trigger guard until the firearm is in the fire position and aimed in the direction of the intended target.
16. The trigger finger will be removed from the trigger guard and placed alongside the trigger guard and away from the trigger any other time the firearm is handled (during drawing, holstering, loading, unloading, moving or making of adjustments).
17. Only weapons approved by the Firearms Instructor shall be allowed on the firing range at the time of weapons training and/or qualifications.
18. Shoot only at designated targets and in the designated "Live Fire" area.
19. No fireworks or explosive devices shall be allowed on the firing range except by direction of the Range Officer.
20. Any damage to the firing range shall be reported immediately to the Firearms Instructor and Chief of Police.



# BETHLEHEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

21. All firing range-related accidents shall be reported immediately to the Chief of Police. At all times a radio and first aid kit will be kept on the range during firearms training.

## **B. RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the responsibility of everyone utilizing the firing range to strictly adhere to this policy. Failure to observe this policy or otherwise handle a firearm in an unsafe manner, as judged by the Range Officer, shall result in immediate disciplinary action.