

Body Armor

Supersedes: 10-31-14

Effective: 05-19-19

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide uniform members of Boston EMS with guidelines for the proper use and care of body armor. The Department issued body armor provides significant protection against firearm fired-projectiles and shrapnel from explosions, and other forms of blunt trauma. The armor, while not certified to resist direct stabbing objects, can provide additional protection against slashing. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for remaining vigilant.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Boston EMS individually issues body armor to each uniformed member to include the ballistic plates (Level II), undergarment carrier, and/or the brown nylon external- wear utility vest. Department members should maintain their issued body armor in good, clean condition, while keeping in mind that wet or humid conditions potentially degrades the efficiency of the armor.

A lost or stolen vest represents a significant risk to other public safety agencies and a monetary loss to the department. Department members will secure their equipment in a safe place and exercise due diligence in maintaining control over the equipment at all times. If body armor is lost or stolen, Department members must immediately file a police report in the municipality where the incident occurred. Copies of said police reports, and a Department incident report, must be filed immediately with Professional Standards and the Superintendent of Special Operations.

Department members are required to secure their individually issued body armor in their assigned vehicle while on duty and to maintain it in a condition of operational readiness.

In addition, 2 - Level III vests and 2 - Level IIIA helmets have been issued to each department vehicle. This equipment will be stored in the compartment under the bench seat in the ambulance or in another area designated by the Department. Tango units, supervisor and shift commander vehicles will also have a cache of this equipment.

All members are responsible for ensuring that the Level III body armor equipment issued to each vehicle is maintained in a condition of operational readiness. Likewise, the carrier vests, plates and helmets should be checked during routine vehicle checks. All members are asked to try-on and adjust the Level III vest and helmet at the beginning of every shift. Also, supervisors should check this equipment through routine observation and periodic documented inspection of vehicles.

USE OF BODY ARMOR

The Department strongly encourages each member to routinely wear their individually issued body armor to afford themselves protection. All body armor should be worn in accordance with the manufacturer/distributor's guidelines and recommendations. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the vests, the Level III vest must be worn in conjunction with individually issued Level II soft body armor.

In order to protect members at high risk incidents where Level II armor is insufficient, members may don or be ordered to wear Level III vests and Level IIIA helmets by a supervisor or incident commander. Examples of "high risk" incidents include but are not limited to, incidents that involve long guns or rifle fire, (potential) active shooter or other active crime scene responses where an identified threat may exist or has been identified.

When wearing a Level III vest and Level IIIA helmet, members should be aware that they may experience a restriction in their mobility. Please be advised, wearing body armor in extreme heat requires frequent hydration and warrants attempts to stay cool whenever possible. Consideration should be given when responding to incidents in or around water hazards. Any damage to the body armor must be reported to the Superintendent of Special Operations and Professional Standards immediately.