

**STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**GENERAL ORDER**

**USE OF FIREARMS**  
**SUBJECT**

**DATE:** March 10, 2017

**NO:** Q-1n

**FROM:** CHIEF ERIC JONES

**TO:** ALL PERSONNEL

**INDEX:** **USE OF FIREARMS**  
**DEADLY FORCE**  
**LESS LETHAL FORCE**

**I. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Stockton Police Department to use firearms, which are authorized by the Chief of Police when appropriate during the course of duty.

**II. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

A. Firearm – 18 U.S. Code § 921(a)(3)(A) defines a firearm as “Any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive.”

Both “Lethal” and “Less Lethal Weapons” are classified as firearms.

B. Lethal firearm – Lethal firearms are firearms designed to fire lethal ammunition.

C. Less Lethal Weapon System – Less Lethal Weapon Systems are less lethal use of force options designed to resolve potentially-dangerous situations by striking a subject with one or more flexible or non-flexible projectiles specifically designed to be fired from either 12 gauge, 37mm, or 40mm weapon systems, with the goal of gaining the subject’s compliance and the cessation of their hostile behavior. Use of a Less Lethal Weapon System is an alternative use of force option and is not intended as a substitute for a firearm used exclusively for the application of lethal force.

D. Lethal Munitions – Lethal ammunition intended to be fired from lethal weapons.

E. Less Lethal Munitions – Less Lethal Munitions are those munitions specifically designed to be either hand delivered (in the case of sting ball grenades or diversionary devices), or fired from a Less Lethal Weapon System (12 gauge, 37mm, and 40mm).

F. Discharge/Intentional Discharge – Occurs when a firearm, as defined above, is fired as intended by its design.

G. Negligent Discharge – Occurs when a firearm, as defined above, is fired as intended by its design but as a result of the negligent operation by the individual in possession of the firearm.

H. Environmental Discharge – Occurs when a firearm, as defined above, and its ammunition are involved in the discharge of ammunition in a manner not intended by its design. Environmental discharge of ammunition can be caused by the ammunition’s primer being struck in such a way as to cause the priming compound to ignite and detonate the cartridge’s gun powder and projectile.

- a. Example: A cartridge lands on the ground and the primer strikes a rock, causing the priming compound to ignite and detonate the cartridge’s gun powder and expel the projectile from its cartridge case.

**III. PROCEDURE**

**A. USE OF FIREARMS**

1. Firearms may be discharged in the performance of a police duty only under the following circumstances:

- a. When necessary in the defense of another person’s life, when all other reasonable means have failed, or are impractical.

- b. When necessary in the defense of an officer's life, when all other reasonable means have failed, or are impractical.
  - c. When necessary to effect the capture of, or prevent the escape or the rescue of a person whom the officer has reasonable cause to believe has committed a felony involving the use of, or threat to use deadly force when all other reasonable means have failed, or are impractical.
  - d. At an approved firearms range.
2. When using Less Lethal Weapon Systems and Less Lethal Munitions in accordance with General Order Q-1m (Less Lethal Weapons Systems).
  3. Lethal firearms will not be discharged under the following circumstances:
    - a. At a person suspected of committing a misdemeanor and the suspect is not posing an imminent threat to use deadly force or force likely to produce great bodily injury.
    - b. As warning shots.
    - c. When capturing or preventing the escape of a person believed to have committed a felony that did not involve use or threat to use deadly force.
    - d. At moving or fleeing vehicles involved in violations of the Vehicle Code (including felony violations such as 20001, 10851, 23105, etc.) unless necessary to defend the life of the officer or another person. Two facts make this necessary:
      - i. Experience has proven that shooting at moving vehicles is one of the most uncertain and hazardous shooting conditions in police work, particularly when the officer is in a moving vehicle.
      - ii. Many vehicles involved in traffic violations are driven by persons whose age or reason for fleeing do not justify the use of firearms as means of apprehension.
  4. Officers shall make every effort to avoid putting themselves into a position where they could be struck by a fleeing vehicle, requiring them to use a firearm to protect themselves.

**B. Responsibility when a firearm is discharged**

1. A Department member who discharges a firearm either accidentally or in the performance of a police duty, except while hunting or at a firing range, will protect the scene and evidence and will ensure that the on-duty Watch Commander and the employee's supervisor are notified as soon as time and circumstances permit.
  - a. Command Officer's Responsibility:
    - i. When a firearm is discharged, but does not result in an injury, the involved officer's supervisor shall be assigned to investigate the incident.
    - ii. When a firearm is discharged and results in injury or death, the Watch Commander will coordinate the initial investigation. The Watch Commander will make all notifications as required per General Order Q-6 (Investigation of Officer-Involved Shootings).
  - b. Responsibilities of the Investigations Division:
    - i. When Investigations Division personnel respond to the scene, the assigned investigator(s) will assume command of the investigation. (Refer to General Order Q-6).
2. Reporting the discharge of a firearm or other use of deadly force:

- a. Department members who discharge a firearm accidentally, in performance of a police duty, or otherwise use any deadly force by any means, shall notify a supervisor, and comply with supervisor's specific instructions.
  - b. The notification that a Department member has discharged their firearm or used deadly force is required as soon as practical or at least within one hour after occurrence. This includes an out-of-city incident.
  - c. Off-duty Department members shall notify the on-duty Watch Commander.
3. Report by Department Members:
- a. A Department member performing any function during the investigation of a firearm being discharged or any type of deadly force used shall submit the appropriate report prior to securing from duty.
  - b. Each individual Department member involved in the incident, no matter how insignificant, shall submit a subsequent report detailing their individual actions during the investigation. This includes Department members performing crowd control, traffic control, collection or transportation of evidence, etc.