



Questions Regarding Police Procedures

1. Are West Chicago Police Officers forbidden from using chokeholds and neck restraints?

The Illinois Criminal Code (720 ILCS 5/7-5.5) details prohibited use of force by peace officers. A “chokehold,” meaning the application of direct pressure to the throat, windpipe, or airway of another with the intent to reduce or prevent the intake of air, is unlawful under the Illinois Criminal Code when used by a law enforcement officer in any situation where deadly force is not justified. Therefore, it is unlawful for a West Chicago Police officer to use a chokehold when deadly force is not justified. The language of this law is mirrored and memorialized in our policy.

Further on the issue of chokeholds, West Chicago Police Department policy, and the Illinois Criminal Code, prohibit the use of a chokehold or any lesser contact with the throat or neck area of another in order to prevent the destruction of evidence by ingestion.

2. Are the police officers in West Chicago trained to de-escalate situations when possible, eliminating or reducing the need to use force?

The West Chicago Police Department strives to ensure that all employees receive quality training on a continuing basis to provide professional law enforcement services to the community of West Chicago. Law enforcement dictates that training be a continuous process of personal and professional growth and development. Training stimulates, develops and improves skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for individuals to stay competent in the duties and responsibilities of their respective positions.

All officers complete monthly on-line training that covers a variety of topics, which includes material related to crisis intervention and de-escalation. All officers also complete monthly on-line scenario-based training in regards to our policies. As our policies incorporate the best practices of crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques, this training provides further opportunities to reinforce the associated mentality and concepts.

In addition to the monthly on-line training, 24 officers have also attended the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, and 36 officers have attended training in regards to de-escalation techniques and identification and response to individuals with mental illness.

All new or probationary officers receive certification through the Law Enforcement Basic Academy. The 560-hour Academy curriculum includes training in de-escalation, communication in the police environment, control and arrest tactics, procedural justice and mental illness behavior.

In an effort to ensure the professional growth and continuing education of active police officers, the City of West Chicago has a full time Training Officer position within the Police Department.

The Training Officer is responsible for coordinating the continuing education all police personnel. This includes ensuring State-mandated training is completed by officers covering the following topics:

- Constitutional and proper use of law enforcement authority
- Procedural justice
- Civil rights
- Human rights
- Mental health awareness and response
- Cultural competency
- Law updates
- Use of force training, to include scenario-based training

Finally, the City of West Chicago employs a full-time Social Worker within the Police Department. One of her many responsibilities is to provide 24-hour crisis intervention and emergency counseling at the Police Department, or on-scene as needed. The efforts of the Social Worker complement and contribute to our underlying approach to policing; specifically, de-escalation as primary perspective and mindset, rather than the immediate issuance of orders and application of force.

3. Are West Chicago Police Officers required to give a verbal warning before shooting?

West Chicago Police Department Policy states a verbal warning should precede the use of deadly force, when feasible.

4. Are the West Chicago Police Officers required to exhaust all other alternatives, including non-force and less lethal force options prior to resorting to deadly force?

Pursuant to Department policy, officers shall use only that amount of force that he/she reasonably believes to be necessary given the facts and circumstances perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

The reasonableness of force will be judged from the perspective of an officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Any evaluation of reasonableness must allow for the fact that officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force that he/she reasonably believes to be necessary in a particular situation, with limited information and in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving.

Given that no policy can realistically predict every possible situation an officer might encounter, they are entrusted to use well-reasoned discretion in determining the appropriate use of force in each incident.

It is also recognized that circumstances may arise in which officers reasonably believe that it would be impractical or ineffective to use any of the tools, weapons or methods provided by the Department.

Officers may find it more effective or reasonable to improvise their response to rapidly unfolding conditions that they are confronting. In such circumstances, the use of any improvised device or method must nonetheless be reasonable and utilized only to the degree that he/she reasonably believes to be necessary to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

While the ultimate objective of every law enforcement encounter is to avoid or minimize injury, nothing in this policy requires an officer to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable force.

5. Are the police officers in West Chicago forbidden from shooting at moving vehicles?

Shots fired at or from a moving vehicle are rarely effective. West Chicago Department Policy states that officers should move out of the path of an approaching vehicle instead of discharging their firearm at the vehicle or any of its occupants. An officer should only discharge a firearm at a moving vehicle or its occupants when the officer reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others. Officers should not shoot at any part of a vehicle in an attempt to disable the vehicle.

6. Are West Chicago officers required to intervene and stop the use of excessive force against civilians?

West Chicago Police Department Policy states that any officer present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force. An officer who observes another employee use force that exceeds the degree of force permitted by law should promptly report these observations to a supervisor.

7. Is there an established use of force continuum that restricts the most severe type of force?

The West Chicago Police Department policy recognizes that circumstances may arise in which it would be impractical or ineffective to use tools within a set order. In such circumstances, the use of any improvised device or method must be reasonable and used only to the degree that reasonably appears necessary to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose. In addition, officers receive training in defensive tactics and de-escalation.

8. Are the officers in West Chicago required to report each time they threaten to or use force on civilians?

Yes. Any use of force, including the pointing of a firearm at an individual, by a member of the West Chicago Police Department shall be documented promptly, completely and accurately in an appropriate report, depending on the nature of the incident. The officer should articulate the factors perceived and why he/she believed the use of force was reasonable under the

circumstances. To collect data for purposes of training, resource allocation, analysis and related purposes, the Department may require the completion of additional report forms, as specified in department policy, procedure or law.