



Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is the department's position on #8CantWait?

1. Ban chokeholds and strangleholds
2. Require de-escalation
3. Require a warning before shooting
4. Exhaust all other means before shooting
5. Duty to intervene
6. Ban shooting at a moving vehicle
7. Require use of force continuum
8. Require comprehensive use of force reporting

Answer:

1. **Ban on the use of chokeholds**--WRPD Officers are trained extensively in de-escalation in all situations and chokeholds haven't been used for decades and are not authorized by WRPD. The Department is reviewing policy language to see if this should be stronger.
2. **Require de-escalation**--WRPD Officers always use less lethal force and refer to the Use of Force Continuum to determine the level of force warranted by the situation that is lawful and reasonably necessary. Extensive training in de-escalation focuses on using verbal tactics whenever possible. WRPD policy requires officers to use verbal tactics whenever possible and requires that officers treat all people with respect.
3. **Require a warning before shooting**- While situations don't always allow for a verbal warning, officers are trained to issue a verbal warning and to use de-escalation if at all possible
4. **Exhaust all other means before the use of force** --Based on the analysis of the situation, officers are trained to use verbal tactics and de-escalation techniques and only that force warranted by the situation that is lawful and reasonably necessary
5. **Require the duty to intervene**--The process to update language about the duty to intervene was underway before the situation in MN unfolded. WRPD officers are empowered and trained to report and intervene when they believe Use of Force is unjustified.
6. **Ban shooting at a moving vehicle**-This is generally prohibited by officers of WRPD; however, there may be circumstances where there could be an exception. Any incident involving shooting at a moving vehicle is thoroughly investigated. There was one case nearly 10 years ago and disciplinary action was taken.
7. **Use of Force Continuum**-- WRPD Officers refer to the Use of Force Continuum to determine the level of force warranted by the situation that is lawful and reasonability necessarily Extensive training in de-escalation focuses on using verbal tactics whenever possible.
8. **Reporting Use of Force**--WRPD has a comprehensive process in place for reporting Use of Force. Force is thoroughly documented in case reports as well as detailed in Use of Force Reports required by policy to include review of body camera video. If a situation falls outside the policy, officers are disciplined or if determined to be a criminal offense, referred to the District Attorney's office for prosecution.

Question: If an officer trainee observes what they consider to be excessive use of force by another officer or their Field Training Officer is there a mechanism to report it without retribution?

Answer: Every WRPD officer is required to report cases of excessive use of force and expected to follow all department policies and procedures once they are on the street. The department also has an

early warning system so in any 12 month period if an officer receives two sustained (at fault) complaints or four complaints overall no matter what the disposition or four use of force incidents no matter what the disposition, an internal review process is begun by the Professional Standards Unit.

Question: What is the department/City's position on Senate Bill 217?

Answer: City leadership including the Chief of Police, are reviewing the bill and carefully considering the benefits and impact of Senate Bill 217 to community policing and the profession of law enforcement. While the focus is on creating greater accountability for law enforcement, Wheat Ridge is a progressive department and has already instituted training and technology to hold WRPD officers accountable for their actions. We believe a balance must be struck between accountability and the expectation that every interaction between police and the public will always go smoothly. Having policies and procedures in place, with input provided from the community, is essential when things don't go as planned or when decisions are made that fall outside agency polices so that disciplinary action is clear.

Question: Do WRPD officers wear body cameras or Personal Video Devices?

Answer: Yes, all uniformed officers and sergeants including School Resource Officers and Community Services Officers have been trained in the use of body cameras that were issued in 2019.

Question: Can officers use discretion in turning body cameras on and off or are they on all the time?

Answer: Body Cameras are turned on for each interaction with the public and especially for times outlined in the PVD policy. Times when the body camera may be turned off include interactions in which discussion takes place between officers or when victim information, personal information or medical information is shared.

Question: Is there a time specified in department policy by which body camera footage will be released?

Answer: Body camera footage will be available for release after 72 hours unless otherwise restricted or by order of the DA.

Question: Are the use of choke holds or carotid compression used by WRPD as tactics to subdue suspects?

Answer: Officers do not train on the use of chokeholds and neither of these tactics are authorized by WRPD. WRPD Officers use less lethal force whenever possible and refer to the Use of Force Continuum to determine the level of force warranted by the situation that is lawful, ethical, and reasonably necessary. Extensive training in de-escalation focuses on using verbal tactics whenever possible.

Question: How many hours of training do WRPD officers receive?

Answer: In adherence to Colorado State Statute, WRPD officers receive 24 hours of annual training. Additionally the in-service skills training provided includes an additional 40 hours with the following topics: Anti-Bias, Arrest Control, Driving Skills, Firearms, CPR/First Aid, Ethics, Law and Legal Updates, Community Policing, the Firearms Simulator, Use of Force, and Body Worn Camera use. Crisis Intervention Training is also provided for all officers with more than two years on the job as well as training in Procedural Justice. In 2019, WRPD Officers received more than 4,030 hours of training in these and many other topics. We also review critical incidents by county during training and use of deadly force tests are performed annually.

Question: What topics are covered in annual training?

Answer: Training topics include: Anti-Bias, Arrest Control, Driving Skills, Firearms, CPR/First Aid, Ethics, Law and Legal Updates, Community Policing, the Firearms Simulator, Use of Force, and Body Worn Camera use, Mental Health Issues and Crises Recognition and Response. Crisis Intervention Training (40 hours) is also required for officers with two years of experience after attending the Police Academy and management level staff attend a two-day course.

Question: How many use of force incidents were reported in 2019?

Answer: There were 19 reported incidents termed Level 3 Control and Compliance which occurred over the course of 38,921 calls for service.

Question: What types of Community Engagement Activities is the department involved with during the year?

Answer: In addition to staffing and attending city-wide events including the Carnation Festival, Localworks' Criterium, Trunk or Treat, and the Holiday Lighting celebration, members of the WRPD Command Staff serve on community service and non-profit organizations and may engage in any number of community events or collaborations including those focused on homelessness. The department hosts fundraising annually for such causes as the Special Olympics, Breast Cancer, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Alzheimer's Disease and Child Abuse Prevention. Coffee with a Cop events are hosted at different locations throughout the year in addition to National Night Out in August. The Crime Prevention Unit also presents classes on personal safety, and a Neighborhood Watch program called Dog Walker Watch. The department also offers a cadet program for area youth to learn about a career in law enforcement while also building leadership skills. During the summer patrol officers issue ice cream tickets to children wearing bike helmets. Officers are also encouraged to stop at local lemonade stands and participate in birthday parades whenever call load allows. In 2019, the department also created a Community Advisory Group of volunteers who meet regularly to provide input on community concerns regarding policing and learn about the department's policies, procedures and programs.

Question: What type of oversight is there for WRPD?

Answer: CALEA is the accrediting organization that reviews policies, procedures and best practices every four years. The Chief reviews all disciplinary action. Outside agencies are asked to review cases if there might appear to be a conflict if reviewed internally. The process of having a Critical Incident Review Team (CIRT), a multi-jurisdictional team with oversight by the District Attorney, investigate shootings was initiated by WRPD in 1984.

Question: What is the WRPD's position on Bias-Based Profiling?

Answer: Bias-Based Profiling complaints are thoroughly investigated and subjected to an administrative review. With a total of 38,921 calls for service in 2019, there were three complaints of Bias-Based Profiling, and after a thorough investigation, these were found to be unsubstantiated. In 2018 there were no cases reported.

Question: How do residents submit a complaint or commendation to an officer with whom they have had an interaction?

Answer: Every officer is required by state law to provide a business card to ANYONE with whom they have an interaction unless that interaction resulted in an arrest or ticket. In those cases contact information, name and badge number are included in the police report or ticket. A complaint or commendation form is also available online. Customer Surveys are also sent randomly to districts of Wheat Ridge following calls for service. The data is compiled and provided in the annual report.

Question: Did the City know about the federal lawsuit filed in 2018 against members of Prince George's County Police Department before hiring Chris Murtha?

Answer: Chris Murtha was hired as the Chief of Police for Wheat Ridge in February of 2020 after a robust vetting process that included a background investigation, psychological exam, polygraph, panel interviews, community forums, candidate information made available on social media and the City website, and a staff and community survey. Murtha was selected as the final candidate due in large part to his many years of experience in law enforcement, and in particular, for his very specific expertise working for a large law enforcement agency serving a diverse community.

Early in the interview process with the Wheat Ridge Police Department, Murtha disclosed information about a federal lawsuit filed in 2018 case against Prince George's County Police (PGCPD) in which he was initially named. The suit was brought by current and former employees, not residents. Many of the plaintiffs were officers who were terminated or disciplined. Chief Murtha was dismissed from the suit in the first subsequent hearing because none of the plaintiff's alleged he committed a discriminatory act. The terminations cited in the case were decisions that held officers accountable for actions that went against department policy.

Question: Are there any concerns about Chief Murtha's ability to work with a diverse population?

Answer: No. PGCPD Commanders and fellow officers as well as the community of Prince George's County, confirmed that during his tour of duty there, Chief Murtha led by exemplifying the values identified by WRPD which include integrity, respect, courage, perseverance and initiative, and as the Chief of the Wheat Ridge Police Department that he will serve **every** person who lives, works, shops, dines, and plays in Wheat Ridge regardless of religion, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.