



# LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

## USE OF FORCE

### DIRECTIVE

UOF Directive No. 13

November 2024

## COVER FIRE

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Directive is to provide Department personnel with guidelines for utilizing cover fire as a lethal force option.

### PROTOCOL

The Department's guiding principle when using force shall be reverence for human life. Officers shall attempt to control an incident by using time, distance, cover, communications, and available resources in an effort to de-escalate the situation whenever it is safe, feasible, and reasonable to do so. When warranted, Department personnel may use objectively reasonable force to carry out their duties. Officers may only use a level of force that they reasonably believe is proportional to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance.

### Definitions

**Deadly Force:** That force which creates a substantial risk of causing death or serious bodily injury, including but not limited to, the discharge of a firearm.

**Cover Fire:** Controlled and deliberate fire directed towards a location where an officer reasonably believes there is a life-endangering threat. Cover fire can be utilized by officers to protect themselves or others and to stop the threat. Cover fire is considered a use of deadly force and can only be used in accordance with the Department's policy on the use of deadly force.

### Use of Deadly Force

It is the policy of this Department that officers shall use deadly force upon another person only when the officer reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary for either of the following reasons:

- To defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person; or

- To apprehend a fleeing person for any felony that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury, if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury to another unless immediately apprehended.

**Note:** The Department will analyze an officer's use of deadly force by evaluating the totality of the circumstances of each case consistent with California Penal Code Section 835(a), as well as the factors articulated in *Graham v. Connor*.

## Cover Fire

Cover fire is used in situations where officers determine that this type of gunfire is necessary to facilitate the movement or evacuation of individuals in response to life-threatening circumstances. It is important to note that cover fire does not have to be aimed directly at the suspect but rather at the specific area where the **officer reasonably believes the suspect is located**. Cover fire can be directed through walls to suppress the suspect's attack where immediate action is required. Cover fire can involve providing gunfire to assist in protecting officers and civilians from a threat and enable safe movement. Effective coordination and communication are vital for success when providing cover fire.

Cover fire can also be used to deny the suspect a position or location from which they can target officers who are redeploying to a position of advantage or moving to conduct an officer/victim rescue. Officers employing cover fire must fire in a methodical manner to provide the rescuer with the necessary time for extraction. Officers are responsible for each round they discharge and must justify their actions in accordance with the Department's deadly force policy.

When an officer chooses to use cover fire, their rate of fire should be controlled and at a pace that allows the officer to maintain accuracy and manage their ammunition effectively. Before discharging a firearm, officers shall, when feasible, consider their surroundings, background, and potential risk to bystanders to the extent reasonable under the circumstances.

Cover fire can be used in incidents such as, but not limited to, active shooters, hostage rescues, and officer rescue operations. Given the level of force (i.e., deadly force), the decision to use cover fire requires that officers act decisively in response to an imminent threat. It is imperative that police officers use cover fire in a controlled and deliberate manner consistent with Department deadly force policy.

## Rendering Aid

After any use of force, including deadly force, if a medical emergency situation exists, officers shall render medical aid consistent with Department policy and request a rescue ambulance to respond to their location.

Points to Remember

- Cover fire is the Use of Deadly Force
- Cover fire should be controlled and deliberate fire where the officer believes the threat to be
- Cover fire can be used to shoot through walls
- Cover fire can be used to suppress the suspect(s)' actions
- Cover fire can be also utilized in Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment tactics and officer/civilian rescue
- **Planning, Assessment, Time, Redeployment and/or Containment, Other Resources, and Lines of Communication (PATROL)**

**CONCLUSION**

Cover fire is a deadly force option in police operations that enhances officer safety, supports tactical maneuvers, and can be used to effectively manage dangerous situations. This Directive serves as a reminder that whenever practical and feasible in a fluid tactical environment, the use of cover fire can provide officers with the ability to protect themselves and others during high-risk deadly encounters.

Important Reminder

**Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force Policy.**



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Chief of Police

DISTRIBUTION "A"