

Model Deadly Force Policy

A. The Department's highest priority is valuing and preserving the sanctity of human life. An officer shall only use deadly force when necessary in defense of human life. [Police Executive Research Forum's [Guiding Principles on Use of Force](#), California [deadly force law](#)]

B. Deadly force is justified only when an officer reasonably believes that:

1. such force is necessary to protect the officer or another person from imminent death, serious bodily injury, kidnapping, or sexual intercourse compelled by force or threat [[HB 1664](#) introduced by Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus]; and
2. all other permissible options, including but not limited to tactical repositioning and other de-escalation tactics, have been exhausted or are not feasible under the circumstances. [DC Metropolitan Police [use-of-force policy](#), California [deadly force law](#), Police Executive Research Forum's [Guiding Principles on Use of Force](#)]

C. When feasible under the circumstances, an officer shall give the suspect a verbal warning before using deadly force. [Philadelphia Police Department [use-of-force policy](#)]

D. An officer is prohibited from using deadly force against a person who presents only a danger to themselves and does not pose an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person. [San Francisco Police Department [use-of-force policy](#), Police Executive Research Forum's [Guiding Principles on Use of Force](#)]

E. An officer shall ensure their actions do not precipitate the use of deadly force by placing themselves or others in unnecessary jeopardy by taking unreasonable, overly aggressive, or improper actions. It is often a tactically superior police procedure to withdraw, take cover, or reposition rather than advance or hold a position that may require the immediate use of force. [Philadelphia Police Department [use-of-force policy](#), Police Executive Research Forum's [Guiding Principles on Use of Force](#)]

F. Definitions:

1. *Deadly force*: force which, under the circumstances in which it is used, is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury. [Pennsylvania Crimes Code, [Title 18, Chapter 5, Section 501](#)]
2. *Reasonable belief*: the facts, circumstances, and permissible tactics that an officer trained in Department policy and in the same situation would be expected to know.
3. *Imminent*: a threat by someone with the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause harm to an officer or another person. [California [deadly force law](#), [National Consensus Policy on Use of Force](#)]

4. *Serious bodily injury*: bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes serious, permanent disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ. [Pennsylvania Crimes Code, [Title 18, Chapter 23, Section 2301](#)]
5. *Tactical repositioning*: moving away from a threat, using cover, concealment, or other tactical concepts to reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in the force necessary. [Police Executive Research Forum's [Guiding Principles on Use of Force](#)]
6. *De-escalation*: taking action or communicating verbally or non-verbally during a potential force encounter in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in the force necessary. [[National Consensus Policy on Use of Force](#)]