

 <hr/> Official Policy Manual	Date issued 08/25/23	Supersedes 04/01/07	Page 1 of 2	Section # A-3021
	Section: Administration			
	Directive: Body Armor Vests			
	Policy Owner: Director, Administrative Support Services Group			

BODY ARMOR

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) maximizes Peace Officers' safety through the individual use of soft body armor vests. While soft body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not a substitute for the diligent use of Officer safety practices. The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for distribution and use of soft armor body vests. These guidelines supersede any existing facility guidelines and/or current and past practices pertaining to this subject.

Ballistic minimum rating: LEVEL II - .06 STANDARD ballistic rating. All ballistic-resistant vests and plates must carry the NIJ Standard-0101.06 July 2008 certification.

USE OF SOFT BODY ARMOR VESTS

- Individually fitted soft body armor vests shall be issued to all sworn OMH Safety and Security Officers upon successful completion of the Safety Officer Training Academy and New Officer Traineeship. The body armor and internal/external vest will become part of the standard Safety and Security Officer facility uniform issuance procedures.
- All Safety and Security Officers assigned to uniformed functions are required to wear department issued body armor vests while engaged in field activities and/or tasks that place or could place officers in situations where they would be required to act in an enforcement role rather than in an administrative or support role.
- Officers have the option to wear their soft body armor concealed under their uniforms or as an outerwear garment. When on duty in an administrative or support role, officers must keep the armor within reach whenever practical.
 - If wearing the outerwear garment, a standard patch badge may be applied to the exterior of the ballistic vest carrier in lieu of the issued metal badge; however, the Officer must still wear the numbered shield on the uniform shirt or must carry the numbered shield in a wallet along with Peace Officer credentials. Patch badges for outerwear ballistic vests may be obtained through the Administrative Support Services Group (ASSG) (see also Sec. A-3020).
- Use of department issued body armor for nonwork purposes is prohibited.
- Each officer is responsible for the proper storage and daily inspection of their issued body armor for damage and general cleanliness. The cleaning of soft body armor shall be done by the officer following the manufacturer's instructions.
 - All Safety and Security Officers will receive a copy of the manufacturer's instructions with the body armor when it is issued.

- The officer is responsible for reporting, in writing, any damage or wear to their immediate supervisor, who will forward the written report to the Chief of Safety through the chain of command.
- Any damage to, loss of, or theft of the ballistic panels, ballistic panel covers, and/or outer garment resulting from unauthorized usage or storage is the responsibility of the officer.
- Officers may take the outer garment and the ballistic panel covers home to be washed and then return to the facility for wear.
- Anti-Ballistic plates/panels must be secured in the Officer's assigned facility locker when the Officer is off duty.
- Soft body armor will be inspected at least annually, generally during uniform showdowns.
- Armor will be checked for recommended expiration date from the date of issue, wear and tear, and fit.
- Deficiencies will result in written communication to the Chief of Safety through the chain of command and the armor will be repaired or replaced as soon as practical.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY

Immediate supervisors will verify that this policy is complied with and shall be responsible for ensuring that body armor is worn, maintained, and stored as required.

SAFETY CHIEF RESPONSIBILITY

Safety Chief will work with the facility's business office to follow approved regulations to procure equipment for the replacement at the end of useful life of these vests and to replace items that have been damaged or destroyed.

EXCEPTIONS

Officers may be exempt from wearing soft body armor when:

- A licensed physician specifically provides acceptable, written documentation that a temporary medical condition would preclude the officer from the wearing of body armor for a limited period of time (e.g., pregnancy; temporary light duty assignments after injury or illness). Such exemption must be requested through the Reasonable Accommodation process.
- Officers may be exempt, at the discretion of the Chief of Safety, from wearing soft body armor when*:
 - Assigned to perform administrative functions which usually involve no patrol or response to patrol functions, although it is optional and allowed.
 - Engaged in training or other times specified by the instructor.
 - The Chief or designee determines an exception is appropriate due to exceptional circumstances.
 - The Officer is assigned to internal duty posts which have been identified by the Chief of Safety to be low or no risk; or
 - When authorized, in accordance with the OMH Uniform Regulations, to perform duties in civilian clothing.

***NOTE:** When exempted as stated above, the officer must have their body armor within reach whenever practical.