

Annual Review of Use of Force & Vehicle Pursuit Incidents

This submission is made in accordance with Sections 7.6 and 7.7 of the Attorney General’s Use of Force Policy (April 2022) (“Use of Force Policy”), and Sections 12.2 and 12.3 of Addendum B to the Attorney General’s Use of Force Policy (April 2022) (“Vehicular Pursuit Policy”).

County*

Passaic

Law Enforcement Agency *

Ringwood Police Department

Date of Report *

3/18/2024

Year of Data Covered in this Report*

1/1/2023 – 12/31/2023

Check the box below to confirm*

Report has been reviewed by and endorsed by the agency's law enforcement executive.

Contact Information

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Use of Force Annual Review: Written Report

Section One: BWC/Video Audit

Your review must include a brief description of your agency's random and risk-based audit process (e.g., how videos are selected, who reviews the videos, etc.). If your agency did not conduct a risk-based and/or random BWC/video audit in 2023, please indicate how you plan to remedy that in 2024.

Section One: BWC/Video Audit*

I found in my annual review, that this police department conducted a total of 267 random body worn camera reviews for the year 2023, conducted on a monthly basis by Sergeants of their shift subordinates. It was discovered during my annual review, Sergeants were not being reviewed by the Lieutenant except for UOF incidents, and as a result, Sergeant BWC's will be reviewed by the Lieutenant going forward in 2024 on a random basis.

The random video reviews by Sergeants were above and beyond the review of any and all video reviews for every single UOF incident, required to conduct the meaningful review processes. Additionally, this agency conducted random body worn camera video inspections to identify policy and safety issues. This was completed by both the Lieutenant and Captain as an informal review.

Every Use of Force report of every member in the agency undergoes a comprehensive administrative review by the Lieutenant and Captain and approved by the Chief. All UOF incidents are utilized as the sample required for a risk-based audit. The risk-based audit includes a review of all of the original dispatch audio recordings, the CAD reports, all Incident and Supplemental reports, as well as all the body worn camera footage associated with all incidents in which UOF was used.

Section Two: Internal Affairs Complaints

Your analysis must include a review of internal affairs complaints related to use of force incidents and must include the following: 1. number of IA complaints filed; 2. number filed by civilians; 3. number initiated by the agency; 4. numbers sustained; and 5. number still pending.

Section Two: Internal Affairs Complaints *

A review of 2023 Use of Force reports identified ZERO Internal Affairs complaints that were received from citizens who alleged excessive force was used during their encounters with officers of the Ringwood Police Department. All these incidents had executive/command-level reviews conducted and those reviews did not reveal any discernable pattern, practice, or trend regarding the use of force with respect to a subject's race, ethnicity, gender, or any other protected characteristic. The level and type of force used was warranted and appropriate.

Section Three: Meaningful Review of Individual Uses of Force

Section 7.5 of the Attorney General's Use of Force Policy requires that every use of force must undergo a meaningful command level review. Your annual review should include a brief description of your agency's meaningful review policy. If your agency was not able to conduct a meaningful review of each use of force incident, please explain why you were unable to do so and please indicate how you plan to do so going forward.

Section Three: Meaningful Review of Individual Uses of Force*

Every Use of Force report of every member in the agency undergone a comprehensive administrative review by the Lieutenant and Captain and approved by the Chief. All UOF incidents includes a review of all of the original dispatch audio recordings, the CAD reports, all Incident and Supplemental reports, Benchmark reports, as well as all the body worn camera footage associated with all incidents in which UOF was used. The command level review is memorialized by the Captain and Lieutenant in a written report and submitted to the Chief for review. The Chief, also reviews body worn camera, reports and audio recording of the UOF incident, memorializing the review in a written report.

All UOF incidents are reviewed to ensure compliance with Attorney General Guidelines as well as department policy and procedures.

Section Four: Non-Discriminatory Application of Force

Your review must include an explanation of how you concluded whether force was applied in a non-discriminatory manner based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic. Your analysis should include a review of your community's demographics and demographic data from the Use of Force portal. If you conclude that any use of force was applied in a discriminatory manner, please explain what steps you have taken and will take to address this conclusion.

Section Four: Non-Discriminatory Application of Force*

In 2023, the Ringwood Police Department had 5 use of force incidents. The racial breakdown of the subjects were 4 white males and 1 black or African American female. The use of force pertaining to the black female was the result of a motor vehicle stop, of which the Officer had no ability to identify the racial make-up of the driver prior to the stop. The stop was conducted at night, initiated on a dark section of roadway, and the initial reason for the stop was improper use of high-beams as the Officer was traveling in the opposite direction of the subject's vehicle. The UOF in this incident was physical only, proper de-escalation techniques were utilized, and the minimal amount of force was used in the arrest.

Borough of Ringwood demographics data based on 2020 census count, has black or African American population at 1%, American Indian at 1%, Asian at 2%, two or more races at 4% and Hispanic or Latino at 9% and white at 83%. While the few use of force incidents in Ringwood reflect that 20% of the use of force incidents were against black or African American individual compared to a population demographic consisting of 1%, I believe these numbers are skewed due to the low incidents of use of force in the department. I conclude that the use of force incidents by the Ringwood Police were not applied in a discriminatory manner.

Section Five: Overall Review of Use of Force

Please utilize as much space as needed to conduct a thorough review of your agency's use of force during the preceding calendar year. Your review should evaluate whether force was used in compliance with the Attorney General's Use of Force Policy and your agency's policy. Even if the use of force itself was compliant with those policies, your review should include any recommendations for training, equipment, or room for improvement (e.g., additional de-escalation efforts could have been made).

Section Five: Overall Review of Use of Force*

Currently, our agency employs 22 full time officers, 0 SLEO II officers, 0 SLEO III officers and 4 SLEO I officers. I serve as the Chief of Police and have done so since 2020. Our additional command staff consists of 1 Captain and 1 Lieutenant. There are 6 Sergeants, 5 in the patrol division and 1 in the investigative division. We currently have 1 detective, 12 patrol officers and 1 in Passaic County Police Academy graduating in March 2024. In 2023, the Ringwood Police Department responded to over 13,000 calls for service and only used force on a total of 5 individual incidents. This equates to our officers utilizing force options on .00038% of the total calls for service.

I am fortunate in the sense that we don't have many UOF incidents, and that I am able to thoroughly review every single incident. All 5 UOF incidents were in compliance with Attorney General and Agency Use of Force policy. De-escalation was attempted in all instances, but unfortunately the subjects refused to participate in the de-escalation process. The subject's actions eventually lead to the UOF by the Officers.

Of the 5 incidents, 3 pertained to mental health issues, in which the Officer's actions were required to maintain the scene and protect the subject as well as the Officers. De-escalation was used in these 3 incidents as well as utilizing as much time to de-escalate as possible before action needed to be taken.

The remaining 2 incidents involved subjects who actively resisted while being placed under arrest with one of the two becoming a threatening assailant prior to arrest. Physical force only was used only after de-escalation and use of time were exhausted and only minimal amounts of physical force for the arrest.

The Use of Force Reports showed that the members of this agency in all of the incidents utilized physical force with suspects/persons instead of enhanced mechanical or mechanical force. This physical only pattern has been consistent over the past 3 years. The reasons members may be choosing to utilize physical force, in lieu of enhanced mechanical or mechanical force when justified, include time/distance variables encountered during their interactions, and the ability for the members to resolve the situation utilizing de-escalation techniques and minimal physical force only.

Over the prior 3 years, UOF incidents have remained relatively similar in number. In 2021 there were 4 UOF incidents, 2022 saw an increase of 2 UOF incidents for a total of 6 and in 2023 saw a decrease of 1 UOF incident from 2022.

Officer injuries have also remained comparative to prior years, 2021 -4, 2022 -2, 2023-3. The level of Officer injuries has also remained consistent with minor injuries of complaint of pain, contusions and abrasions being the most severe and common injury types.

Respectively, subject injuries are similar in nature with minor injuries consisting of complaint of pain, abrasions and contusion being the most severe.

UOF incidents over the prior 3 years occurred primarily in afternoon and overnight hours and took place on random days of the week. There was no trend in what days of the week the incidents occurred.

My recommendation for training would be to have the State of New Jersey provide, on a county level, and pay for the training of Officers in defensive tactics to reduce injuries to Officers and subjects. De-escalation is great and was used in all 5 UOF instances in Ringwood, but it isn't always going to work due to the subject. Much like vehicle pursuits, the Officer can do everything right, but inevitably the subject driver of the vehicle determines whether they will stop or not. Similarly, de-escalation and use of time can only work while the subject allows. Subject actions, like attempting to flee scene, taking actions which could cause harm to themselves or others and becoming threatening to Officers were all actions by the subjects leading to UOF by Officers in Ringwood.

Section Six: Further Action

Please explain what further action your agency has taken, or will take, to implement any changes in departmental structure, policy, training, or equipment you have deemed appropriate. These actions can include department-wide changes, or changes applicable to specific officers or divisions.

Section Six: Further Action *

At this time, I see no need to make any changes in departmental structure, policy or equipment. The Officers have consistently utilized the training received and have adhered to all policies both state and departmental. Further training in defensive tactics could be utilized but at this time there are none offered other than Officers participating in and paying for on their own.

In all instances, equipment such as pepper spray and expandable batons were available, but were not used by the Officers, opting for physical force only, even though in some instances could potentially have legally used pepper spray.

As new technologies develop, this agency will consider adding additional levels of less lethal force options available to Officers.

Vehicle Pursuit Annual Review: Written Report

Section One: BWC/Video Audit

Your review must include a brief description of your agency's random and risk-based audit process (e.g., how videos are selected, who reviews the videos, etc.). If your agency did not conduct a risk-based and/or random BWC/video audit in 2023, please indicate how you plan to remedy that in 2024.

Section One: BWC/Video Audit *

Every vehicle pursuit report of every member in the agency undergoes a comprehensive administrative review by the Lieutenant and Captain and approved by the Chief. All vehicle pursuit incidents are utilized as the sample required for a risk-based audit. The risk-based audit includes a review of all of the original dispatch audio recordings, the CAD reports, all Incident and Supplemental reports, as well as all the body worn camera footage associated with all incidents in which vehicle pursuit was initiated.

Section Two: Internal Affairs Complaints

Your analysis must include a review of internal affairs complaints related to vehicle pursuit incidents and must include the following: 1. number of IA complaints filed; 2. number filed by civilians; 3. number initiated by the agency; 4. numbers sustained; and 5. number still pending.

Section Two: Internal Affairs Complaints*

Zero IA's related to vehicle pursuits.

Section Three: Meaningful Review of Individual Pursuits

Section 12.1 of the Attorney General's Vehicular Pursuit Policy requires that every vehicle pursuit must undergo a meaningful command level review. Your annual review should include a brief description of your agency's meaningful review policy. If your agency was not able to conduct a meaningful review of each use of force incident, please explain why you were unable to do so and please indicate how you plan to do so going forward.

Section Three: Meaningful Review of Individual Pursuits*

This agency could not perform a meaningful command review of vehicle pursuits due to there not being any in 2023.

Section Four: Analysis of Non-Compliant Reports

Your review must include an analysis of all pursuits determined to not be in compliance with the Attorney General's Vehicular Pursuit Policy, or agency policy, and the steps taken to address the non-compliance. Please indicate whether all non-compliant pursuits were referred to the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability or the County Prosecutor in compliance with Section 12.1(e) of the Attorney General's Vehicular Pursuit Policy.

Section Four: Analysis of Non-Compliant Reports *

N/A

Section Five: Non-Discriminatory Pursuits

Your review must include an explanation of how you concluded whether vehicular pursuits were conducted in a non-discriminatory manner based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic. Your analysis should include a review of your community's demographics and demographic data from the Use of Force portal. If you conclude that any pursuit was conducted in a discriminatory manner, please explain what steps you have taken and will take to address this conclusion.

Section Five: Non-Discriminatory Pursuits*

N/A

Section Six: Overall Review of Vehicle Pursuit Analysis

Please utilize as much space as needed to conduct a thorough review of your agency's vehicle pursuit incidents during the preceding calendar year. Your review should include but is not limited to: the reason the pursuit was initiated; the number of officers who engaged in pursuits; whether supervisors approved or terminated pursuits; role of any outside agencies; length of pursuits by time and distance; top speeds reached; nature of any injuries, crashes, or property damage; reason for termination (if terminated), and the outcome of pursuits. Your review should evaluate whether pursuits were compliant with the Attorney General's Vehicular Pursuit Policy and your agency's policy. Even if pursuits were compliant with those policies, your review should include any recommendations for training, equipment, or room for improvement.

Section Six: Overall Review of Vehicle Pursuit Analysis*

N/A

Section Seven: Further Action

Please explain what further action your agency has taken, or will take, to implement any changes in departmental structure, policy, training, or equipment you have deemed appropriate. These actions can include department-wide changes, or changes applicable to specific officers.

Section Seven: Further Action*

In 2023 there were zero vehicle pursuits. At this time, I see no need to implement any changes in departmental structure, policy, training or equipment.