



Huntington Beach Police Department

2000 Main Street, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

(714) 960-8811

Robert Handy, Chief of Police

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Subject: Statement Regarding Recent Events

Details:

In light of the recent George Floyd tragedy, the City of Huntington Beach has received a number of inquiries regarding recent high profile events that have occurred locally and also on a national scale. Many of those questions have related to Police Chief Handy's position on the death of Mr. Floyd, the Huntington Beach Police Department's position on the recommendations of the 8CANTWAIT Campaign, and other requests related to our internal policies and procedures.

The City of Huntington Beach and our Huntington Beach Police Department are committed to transparency and openness, and provides the following information in response to the many questions we have received.

Chief Handy's Statement on the Death of George Floyd

Like many of you, members of our Police Department and I watched in disbelief the video of George Floyd's death while he was being arrested by four Minneapolis police officers. The actions and inactions of the officers in Mr. Floyd's death are appalling and inconsistent with modern policing standards. Let me be clear – what we saw in the video stands in direct conflict with our values here in the Huntington Beach Police Department, and in violation of the values that guide the policing profession.

As we all work through the anger, frustration, and fallout from Mr. Floyd's death, the men and women of the Huntington Beach Police Department are committed to working tirelessly with our community to continually earn your trust as we navigate these challenging times together.

The Huntington Beach Police Department's Mission Value Statements

In the Huntington Beach Police Department, we are guided by our mission statement, which identifies that we “*provide the highest level of service to our residents, businesses, and visitors and the public through a partnership with our community to preserve and improve the quality of life in Huntington Beach.*”



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Our mission parallels our core values, and the men and women of the Huntington Beach Police Department take pride in how we serve our community through these values:

Accountability:

We recognize the importance of accountability and personal responsibility to our community, to each other and to our Department. We shall model this behavior in our organization and implement accountability at all levels.

Respect:

We are committed to treating others with dignity, taking responsibility for our words and actions with respect to all people, regardless of our differences. We strive to provide a safe, supportive environment in which the community and employees are valued and encouraged to communicate their ideas and opinions.

Trust:

We have committed ourselves to elevated standards of trust, responsibility and discipline while promoting justice in a fair and impartial manner. We maintain the trust of the community by being honest, compassionate and consistent in our actions. We hold ourselves responsible to the highest standard of personal, professional and ethical conduct.

Service:

We value the opportunity to provide service that is courteous, responsive, firm, fair, and effective. We are devoted to the enforcement of laws, crime prevention activities and involvement with our community. We regard the members of our community as partners and a valuable resource in a combined policing effort.

Teamwork:

We collaborate with our residents and businesses to preserve peace, improve quality of life, and protect life and property in the best interests of our city and the community we serve. We work together towards the common goal of providing the best service to our city.

Integrity:

The accuracy of our actions will be defined by professional ethics and personal conduct. We resolve this to be true and consistent, despite the perception or level of difficulty. These values are implemented in all decisions, regardless of its magnitude.



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Response to the “8CANTWAIT Campaign”

The use of force by law enforcement is a matter of critical concern, both to the public and to the law enforcement community. Officers are involved on a daily basis with numerous and varied interactions and when warranted, may have to use reasonable force in carrying out their duties.

Officers must have an understanding of and true appreciation for their authority, and the limitations of their authority. This is especially true with respect to overcoming resistance while engaged in the performance of law enforcement duties.

The Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD) recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity, without prejudice. Vesting officers with the authority to use reasonable force to protect the public requires monitoring, evaluation, and a careful balancing of all interests.

HBPD has received several inquiries from members of our community related to the “#8cantwait” campaign, which is sponsored by Campaign Zero. Below are the eight pillars of their campaign and how they relate to HBPD.

1. De-Escalation Requirement:

California Senate Bill (SB) 230 requires that “*officers utilize de-escalation techniques, crisis intervention tactics, and other alternatives to force when feasible.*” SB 230 also mandates each policy require officers to conduct all duties in a manner that is fair and unbiased. Additionally, SB 230 requires all officers be trained in alternatives to deadly force and de-escalation techniques.

The HBPD continually trains officers to contact citizens and effect arrests utilizing de-escalation techniques. Each officer completed 16 hours of Crisis Intervention training from 2015-2019 re-enforcing these very skills along with 8 hours of de-escalation training in 2019, and Bias Based Policing in 2020. Furthering our commitment to on-going training, officers are required to complete Daily Training Bulletins on a variety of topics including the use of force to ensure their proper knowledge of policies, procedures, and the law. The HBPD is committed to training practices which provides professionalism consistent with the highest level of policing standards to ensure community trust.

2. Require Warning Before Shooting:

California Assembly Bill (AB) 392 states: “*where feasible, a peace officer shall, prior to the use of force, make reasonable efforts to identify themselves as a peace*”



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officer and to warn that deadly force may be used, unless the officer has objectively reasonable grounds to believe the person is aware of those facts.”

Further, HBPD’s policy 300.4 (b) states: *(b) An officer may use deadly force 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. Where feasible, the officer shall, prior to the use of force, make reasonable efforts to identify themselves as a peace officer and to warn that deadly force may be used, unless the officer has objectively reasonable grounds to believe the person is aware of those facts.*

3. Duty to Intervene and Stop another Officer from Using Excessive Force:

HBPD officers have a duty to intercede, which is outlined in policy section 300.2.1. This policy states, *“any officer present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstance shall, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force. An officer who observes another employee use force that exceeds the degree of force permitted by law should promptly report these observations to a supervisor.”*

Our officers receive on-going training in intervention techniques during routine use of force instruction. Additionally, SB 230 sets forth a *“requirement that an officer intercede when present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is necessary, as determined by an objectively reasonable officer under the circumstance.”* This is also consistent with current Federal Law.

4. Ban Shooting at Moving Vehicles in All Cases:

Outright prohibitions in all circumstance does not account for situations where the driver of a vehicle may be threatening death or great bodily injury to others. SB 230 requires, *“comprehensive and specific guidelines for the application of deadly force.”*

HBPD policy section 300.4.1 provides those guidelines by stating, *“Shots fired at or from a moving vehicle are rarely effective. Officers should move out of the path of an approaching vehicle instead of discharging their firearm at the vehicle or any of its occupants. An officer should only discharge a firearm at a moving vehicle or its occupants when the officer reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others. Officers should not shoot at any part of a vehicle in an attempt to disable the vehicle.”*



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5. Ban Chokeholds and Strangleholds:

The HBPD does not use nor have we trained our officers in the use of “*chokeholds*” or “*strangleholds*.” We also do not train our officers to place a knee or use their bodyweight on a subject’s neck while effecting an arrest.

For many years, we have trained in and authorized the proper use of the Carotid Control technique, which does involve compression to the sides of the neck during a use of force incident. ***However, based on recent events, the use of the Carotid Control technique has been suspended and is no longer an authorized control hold for the HBPD.***

6. Require Comprehensive Reporting:

Use of force by HBPD officers is of critical concern, both to the public and to the law enforcement community. Current HBPD Policy 300.5, states that any use of force by a member of this department shall be documented promptly, completely and accurately in an appropriate report, depending on the nature of the incident. The officers should articulate the factors perceived and why he/she believed the use of force was reasonable under the circumstances.

Additionally, officers are required to notify their immediate supervisor whenever there is a reportable use of force. When able, the supervisor shall respond to the scene of the incident, ensure appropriate medical treatment and complete a use of force review. The supervisor is required to identify and interview witnesses, gather all appropriate evidence and complete a separate use of force report which is ultimately reviewed by all levels of supervision, up to and including the Assistant Chief of Police. These steps are to ensure comprehensive reporting related to uses of force, as well as policy compliance and identification of training issues.

7. Require Use of Force Continuum:

The “*use of force continuum*” was a concept adopted by departments decades ago that has since given way to better informed, evidence-based use of force practices. The HBPD, in keeping with modern police practices, utilizes industry standard force options in which officers are required to use only the amount of force which is reasonable to overcome resistance to affect an arrest.



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8. Require to Exhaust all Alternatives Before Shooting:

Law Enforcement groups statewide worked through this issue with the California State Legislature when crafting AB 392. They identified the untenable position it puts officers and departments in, by permitting second-guessing of split-second decisions. Instead, the focus should be on training alternatives to deadly force, requirements on proportional force, and de-escalation requirements, all of which are contained in SB230. If this requirement were to be implemented, it would be contrary to existing law established by the United States Supreme Court. An officer's decision concerning the use of force alternatives should be judged based upon the totality of the circumstances and reasonable officer standard outlined by the Supreme Court and in AB392

HBPD Policy section 300.4 states "*officers should evaluate the use of other reasonably available resources and techniques when determining whether to use deadly force.*" The use of deadly force is only justified under the provisions of Penal Code § 835a. The Huntington Beach Police Department places a high training standard to emphasize the importance of deadly force training.

In 2018, the department purchased a use of force simulator system to place officers in unique and challenging situations where force must be decided in a split second. This includes practical scenario and simulated training scenarios scientifically proven to improve decision making and performance under stress.

Building Trust in the Huntington Beach Community

Along with the 8CANTWAIT campaign, there are a number of things the HBPD already does to engage and interact with the community in an effort to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the public.

The HBPD practices transparency in how it operates by making its Policy and Procedure manual public by posting it on the City of Huntington Beach website home page. (<https://www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/government/departments/pd/about-us/ProfessionalStandardsUnit.cfm>). In addition, we provide many online services to assist in gathering information about our department. We provide crime mapping to allow residents to check locations to determine trends in specific locations, and we have a number of ways for our community to meet and interact with our officers.



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Some of the community programs we sponsor include the HBPD's Youth Leadership Academy, youth fishing days, surfing days and other interactive youth programs designed to engage police officers with young people in our community in positive ways. In addition, the Every Fifteen Minutes program is designed to engage students and empower them to not drink or use drugs and drive with a simulated fatal DUI crash.

The 911 Gold Nation is an educational program for kids to teach them when to call 911, and the Reins of Success is a program where officers partner with social workers to teach at-risk children within the community about life skills while working with horses to break down barriers.

We host both a Citizen Academy and a Spanish Citizen Academy to allow our residents to participate in a 12-week course on a variety of topics related to policing. Tip-A-Cop is a partnership with Special Olympics where departmental personnel partner with Special Olympic athletes to interact with the public at local restaurants and raise money and awareness for their organization. Shop with a Cop is an annual holiday event for underserved kids to be paired with an officer to purchase gifts for themselves and for their family members during the holiday season.

National Night Out and our annual Open House host thousands of people to learn about the police department and interact with our employees. We also host Coffee with a Cop at local coffee shops throughout the year to give both officers and residents the opportunity to engage in conversation in a casual positive environment.

The Neighborhood Watch program is a non-profit organization led by community volunteers who have an interest in preventing crime in our city. In an effort to provide crime prevention information, Neighborhood Watch volunteers collaborate with the Huntington Beach Police Department to provide up-to-date information and resources to residents. Additionally, the Neighborhood Watch program coordinates meetings with interested neighborhoods, which provides a platform to have a dialogue about crime prevention, neighborhood concerns, and it serves as a way to strengthen relationships with both neighbors and law enforcement.

Police Department Policy and Oversight

The Huntington Beach Police Department partners with Lexipol for policy guidance. Lexipol utilizes best practices, statutory and case law to develop constitutionally sound policies to thousands of law enforcement agencies in the country. Lexipol's staff of attorneys and subject matter experts continuously review and update policies as laws change or best practices evolve. Law enforcement regulations are constantly changing, and Lexipol provides the Huntington Beach Police Department with current and contemporaneous policies which are legally defensible.



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When the Huntington Beach Police Department receives updated policies, an internal review process occurs to add specific language to the practices of Huntington Beach employees. Department subject matter experts weigh in on the implementation of policy to ensure we stay within the law when putting policy into effect.

Furthermore, each month, Lexipol releases 20-30 Daily Training Bulletins. All Huntington Beach Police Officers are required to complete these training bulletins which cover a multitude of polices and provide continuous on-going education on the policies of the Huntington Beach Police Department.

Technology and Social Media

The HBPD has implemented technology that is consistent with local needs and aligned with national standards. The Department utilizes numerous forms of technology in crime detection, prevention and intervention. We invest in technology to be as efficient and as effective as possible in serving the Huntington Beach community. The HBPD has adopted policies and best practices for technology-based community engagement that increases community trust and access. Of note, we currently have body worn cameras issued to all officers assigned to the uniform division.

The Huntington Beach Police Department is extensively involved in social media to ensure we are open, available and transparent. We have a robust Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Next Door presence that includes tens of thousands of followers. We have two department members who regularly engage directly with our community in multiple forums online in order to allow people to ask direct questions using social media.

We utilize these platforms to relay community safety messages and to maintain open lines of communication with our residents and visitors.

The HBPD encourages the community to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Next Door to receive updates and see how the HBPD is working directly with the community to ensure the safety and security for all of those living, working and visiting Huntington Beach.

Visit <https://www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/government/departments/pd/>.

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