



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

City Hall | 340 North Washington Avenue | Scranton, PA 18503 | 570.348.4101

June 4, 2020

Dear Citizens of Scranton:

We have a responsibility to create an environment where citizens feel safe to express their views and free speech is encouraged. Scranton Police Chief Carl Graziano continues to reach out to community organizers to listen, and see how SPD can be helpful in their efforts.

No one should feel unsafe anywhere, let alone in their own community. No one should fear that they or their loved ones will be treated with disregard, disrespect, or violence.

Racial injustice is embedded in our country's history. It is our duty to acknowledge the truth of that history and eradicate the disparities in our current social structure. Violence like the horror we saw take place in Minneapolis last week feels like violence against our own community. Feelings of outrage, pain, and the need to take action are all valid. It is our job to listen to you and take action through better communication and continuously revisiting and revising policies and procedures.

The men and women in law enforcement who protect us every day are also hurting. I am grateful to Chief Graziano and the SPD for their dedication to policies to reduce use of force and maintain constant training for officers. We are – and have always been, through the Policy Review Committee – reviewing policies and training schedules to ensure that our Police Department has the most up-to-date training and our policies match best practices.

Please see the attached information outlining current SPD policies including use of force, duty to intervene, de-escalation, and use of body cameras. We are here to listen, act, and move forward with you.

Sincerely,

Paige Gebhardt Cognetti
Mayor, City of Scranton

Carl R. Graziano
Chief of Police, City of Scranton

Scranton Police Department: Listening to our community

Below are responses to the proposed “#8cantwait” proposed policy reforms to reduce violence. Each of these eight (8) policy elements exist within the policies and training within the Scranton Police Department. A few are defined differently, however, they mirror the context of these points:

1. Ban chokeholds & strangleholds: SPD policy already prohibits these.
2. Require de-escalation: In addition to Crisis Intervention Training (CIT de-escalation training) the use of force policy states, “The escalation in the use of force (force continuum) typically follows a pattern of increasing levels, as does the de-escalation of force as the threat diminishes”.
3. Require warning before shooting: Our policy states, “if possible officers shall first give a verbal warning”.
4. Exhaust all other means before shooting: This is already part of our “use of force continuum”.
5. Duty to intervene: This is inherent as it is a crime not to stop and/or report excessive force; our officers would be held criminally liable should they not intervene. However, we will add language reinforcing this to our existing policy. Policy requires mandatory reporting by all officers using any force.
6. Ban shooting at vehicles: Police cannot completely ban shooting at vehicles as there are exigent circumstances where this may be necessary (i.e.: police being actively shot at from occupants of a suspect vehicle or the vehicle is being utilized as a weapon to injure or kill civilians, such as a terrorist act, etc.). Our policy is very restrictive and requires “all other means of defense to be exhausted including moving out of the path of the moving vehicle”.
7. Require use of force continuum: This is already part of our policy.
8. Require comprehensive reporting: This is already part of our policy.

Biased Based Profiling Policy

SPD has various policies and procedures in place to prevent any type of bias based policing regardless of race, color, religion, etc., including, but not limited to, a Biased Based Profiling Policy which strictly identifies and prohibits any types of racial profiling or bias based profiling and mandates, at a minimum, all sworn members receive in-house training on this at least once every 3 years.

Use of Force

The Scranton Police Department has a comprehensive use of force policy and use of force reporting/investigating criteria. This policy specifically **prohibits officers from utilizing any type of neck restraint**. At a minimum, all officers must attend annual training on the proper use

of force which would review areas such as the law on the use of force, use of force continuum, moral and ethical uses of force and safety issues related to the use of force situations.

Incident Review

All use of force incidents, however slight, are reviewed for justification and policy compliance.

De-escalation Training

Beginning in 2011, SPD was the first department in the Northeast to adopt Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). We have officers who are “train the trainers” for this de-escalation training and they have been and are still currently are part of the NEPA CIT Team and help to train other officers throughout NEPA in this week-long de-escalation training. I teach the policy portion of this training to all of the CIT training classes within NEPA. Since CIT was introduced to SPD in 2011 our use of force incidents within the department dropped 60% from the 2009 (Pre-CIT) number of use of force incidents.

Duty to Intervene

This is inherent as it is a crime not to stop and/or report excessive force; our officers would be held criminally liable should they not intervene. However, we will add language reinforcing this to our existing policy. Policy requires mandatory reporting by all officers using any force

Body Worn Cameras

SPD has both Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) and mobile video recorders (MVRs). MVRs are installed in all of our patrol vehicles. Those recorders automatically turn on every time the vehicles emergency lights are activated and also every time the gun release switch is activated to remove a rifle and/or shotgun from these patrol vehicles. The forward facing cameras capture both video and audio as all officers, in addition to their BWCs (video & audio), wear a wireless microphone which Syncs with the vehicle MVR. For the past two years all uniformed patrol officers wear Body Worn Cameras. The BWC Policy mandates that at the beginning of all calls for service and/or proactive interactions with citizens that their BWCs must be activated and outside of privileged communications they cannot be tuned off until the incident has completely concluded. In addition to the officers being required to manually turn on the BWCs for all incidents we have automatic activation triggers which turn on these BWCs. For example, when a vehicle’s emergency lights or vehicle gun racks switches are activated (similar to an MVR) an officer’s BWC automatically turns on as does it automatically turn on all other officers BWCs that are within 30 feet of the vehicles sending unit. In addition we are in the trial stages (several officers have them currently installed right now) of testing out a new technology where a sensor is installed on an officers holster where every time he or she removes their firearm from the holster it automatically activates their BWC. If this trial stage is successful all patrol officers wearing BWCs will also have these sensors installed on their holsters. Again these automatic

BWC triggers (activated the camera) are in addition to the mandatory requirements of officers manually turning them on. It adds an extra layer to ensure they are turned on immediately as there can be an unexpected emergency situation where an officer cannot turn on a camera immediately and these automatic triggers will help account for those rare instances.

Citizen Review Boards (CRB)

If done correctly, Citizen Review Boards (CRBs) they can be very effective. Mostly they are in the larger metropolitan police departments because they are expensive to implement and maintain properly. We are open to exploring this option.

While no agency can confidently say that they are 100% certain that no officer will ever violate any protective policies, procedures, and standards of conduct that are put in place to prevent any type of adverse incident it is imperative that all agencies be as transparent as possible and proactively do as much as possible to prevent adverse conduct of their officers. That is something I and all the command staff are always evaluating to make sure that our officers are out in the field doing their jobs and interacting with our citizens the way they are trained to do.