



# TOWN OF HARRISON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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*John T. Vasta*  
*Chief of Police*

## USE OF FORCE FAQ

### **Are officers trained to de-escalate altercations?**

Yes. Officers are trained on de-escalation techniques at the Westchester County Police Academy Basic Course for Police Officers, The Westchester County Police Academy Supervisory Training, and Department in-service training. As a New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Accredited Agency, we conduct annual in-service training, utilizing a lesson plan provided by DCJS.

### **Are officers authorized to use carotid restraints?**

No. Intentional chokeholds, carotid holds and similar compressions of the neck are not authorized, unless an officer or another person is in imminent danger of death or serious physical injury.

### **Are officers authorized to transport persons face down in a vehicle?**

No.

### **Are officers required to intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force?**

Yes. Any officer present and observing another officer using force that he/she reasonably believes to be clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances, shall intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force, if and when the officer has a realistic opportunity to prevent harm.

**Are officers authorized to shoot at moving vehicles?**

No. Officers are not permitted to shoot at a moving vehicle, except in the limited circumstance where, consistent with the standard set forth in [Graham v. Connor](#), 490 U.S. 386 (1989) and [Tennessee v. Garner](#), 471 U.S. 1 (1985), doing so is required to defend themselves or another when the occupants of the vehicle are employing deadly force, which the officer reasonably perceives as an immediate threat of death or serious physical injury to themselves or another (including situations where the vehicle itself is being used as a deadly weapon and the officer is unable to escape the path of travel), and the officer reasonably believes that they will not endanger innocent persons.

**Is there a use-of-force policy that details what weapons and force are acceptable in a wide variety of civilian-police interactions?**

Officers are trained to use only that level of force that is objectively reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances. Our use of force policy is guided by the Department of Criminal Justice Services and Municipal Police Training Council model policy. Use of force training, including review of the policy, is conducted yearly.

**Are officers required to exhaust every other possible option before using force?**

Consistent with the standards set forth in [Graham v. Connor](#), 490 U.S. 386 (1989) and [Tennessee v. Garner](#), 471 U.S. 1 (1985), officers may only use that level of force that is objectively reasonable based upon the totality of circumstances. Officers will attempt to use the lowest level of force in order to effectuate the lawful objective

**Are officers required to give a verbal warning to civilians before drawing their weapon or using force?**

Consistent with the standards set forth in [Graham v. Connor](#), 490 U.S. 386 (1989) and [Tennessee v. Garner](#), 471 U.S. 1 (1985), officers may only use that level of force that is objectively reasonable based upon the totality of circumstances. Officers will attempt to use the lowest level of force in order to effectuate the lawful objective, and will attempt to warn individuals prior to using any level of force, provided that they have the time and opportunity to do so. There may be, however, some very limited instances, where it is

impossible for officers to provide a warning prior to using force, such as when doing so is necessary in order to preserve human life. Harrison police officers are trained to issue a verbal warning and identify themselves, if circumstances allow, during a lethal force encounter.

**Are officers required to report each time they use force on civilians?**

Yes. Officers are required to complete a use of force report for each instance where force is used. The use of force reports are reviewed by the patrol supervisor.

**Are officers thoroughly vetted to ensure that they do not have a history with abuse, racism, xenophobia, homophobia/transphobia, or discrimination?**

Harrison Police Officers undergo a rigorous, in depth background investigation by the department, and an independently administered psychological exam by an agency authorized by the Westchester County Department of Human Resources.

**Are officers trained to perform and seek necessary medical action after using physical force?**

Yes. Any injuries resulting from a use of force incident shall result in the appropriate and timely medical attention being provided to the injured party.

**Is there an early intervention system enforced to correct officers who use excessive force?**

Officers are required to complete a use of force report for each instance where force is used. The use of force reports are reviewed by the patrol supervisor. Every officer receives annual in-service training covering use of force. All complaints are thoroughly investigated and appropriate disciplinary actions are taken when necessary.

**\*\*As a New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services Accredited Agency, we are required to meet rigorous standards set by the state. Our policies are reviewed on a regular basis by both the department and DCJS. Policies are updated and/or instituted whenever necessary.\*\***