

Use of Force Committee

2019 Year End Summary

The Use of Force Committee members are charged with reviewing use of force reports generated by Urbana Police Officers. The Committee members for 2019 were Inv. Adam Marcotte, Inv. David Roesch, Ofc. Colby Wright and Sgt. Andrew Hewkin. Oversight for the committee is provided by Lt. David Smysor and the committee chair is Sgt. Tim McNaught. For the majority of 2019, oversight for the committee was provided by Lt. Matt Bain and the committee chair was Sgt. David Smysor.

The committee reviewed 112 reports this year as compared to 141 reports in 2018, 136 reports in 2017 and 122 in 2016. All reports were identified as incidents where officers encountered resistance from subjects they came in to contact with and how they overcame that resistance. Officers responded to varying levels of resistance by using control or defensive tactics/techniques, impact weapons, oleoresin capsicum (OC), duty pistols, patrol rifles, and TASERs.

The purpose of this committee as outlined in Urbana Police Policy 301, is to ensure officers are properly and accurately documenting actions taken when using force against a person. The committee is also responsible for identifying trends and/or deficiencies and offer suggestions, through the chain of command, on how to address those issues. In addition, the committee is charged with identifying when force is used by an officer that is not consistent with Urbana Police Department policies and report on that issue.

There are several tools at the disposal of the Urbana Police Department for officers to overcome a resistive subject depending on the circumstances. The use of force committee tracks the use of each tool. The following is a summary of how each tool was used in 2019.

Urbana officers used their duty pistol to control someone on 42 occasions in 2019, as compared to 47 occasions in 2018, 49 occasions in 2017 and 29 occasions in 2016. Urbana officers used their patrol rifles to control someone on 6 occasions in 2019 as compared to 4 occasions in 2018, 4 occasions in 2017 and 5 occasions in 2016. There were no reports of the less lethal shotgun being deployed in 2019, same as in 2018, 2017 and 2016. There was no reported discharge of any firearms as it relates to the use of force in 2019.

Oleoresin capsicum (OC) was reportedly used on a subject only 1 time in 2019, and officers displayed OC on 2 other occasions but did not discharge it. Officers reported using their baton on 4 occasions as a pry tool in 2019 but zero uses as an impact weapon. There were 17 TASER

incidents reported in 2019. The TASER was discharged 3 times on a 3 different subjects, 2 of the three times the TASER deployment was not successful (i.e., subject was wearing a thick coat or struck with only one probe). For the other 14 TASER incidents, the TASER was displayed to control someone's actions. Officers used pressure points on subjects 4 times in 2019.

Some other statistics on various methods of use of force include:

1. Tackles/Takedowns – 31 times
2. Punches/Strikes – 4 times
3. Use of the hobble – 9 times
4. Strength – 34 times

Strength is a “general” term where an unspecified method was utilized that cannot be defined. Examples of this would be a “bear hug”, pulling someone's arm from underneath their body, or pinning them against something to gain control. It should be noted that several of the 112 incidents reviewed included multiple use of force methods.

In 2019 there were a reported 8 officers injured while using force against a resistive subject. Three of those officers required medical treatment, with one resulting in a serious injury. There were a total of 9 subjects reporting injured during a use of force incident. Two of those subjects required medical treatment. A majority of the total injuries for both officers and subjects were minor scrapes and abrasions.

Use of Force Committee Suggestions for 2020

1. We can still do a better job documenting injuries or lack of injuries. Officers/Supervisors are doing a fairly good job documenting officer injuries in the report; however, explanations and documentation of offender injuries can improve. A statement as simple as “there were no apparent injuries as a result of this use of force” would be helpful. Also, photographs of officer and offender injuries (or lack thereof) are important, especially if an offender is claiming some injury but photographic evidence does not support the claim. Lastly, it needs to be documented more consistently when Officers/Offenders go to the hospital, especially on the face sheet, such as hospitalized – “Yes” and location “Carle.”

2. All Officers involved in use of force situations will write a report, even if they do not feel like they did anything. This helps in several ways such as affirming what other officers stated they did or did not do; confirming they were present and assisted although minimally, therefore helping their recollection when/if the case goes to criminal or civil court; and covering being named in another officer's report yet not doing a report. Additionally, with the utilization of body cameras now, different angles of view provide different aspects from different officers, all which can be helpful to someone reviewing the use of force incident.

An e-mail was sent to all sergeants and administration covering these topic (as listed above).

There have been several changes to the Use of Force Committee for 2020. First Inv. Roesch retired from the committee and was replaced by Inv. McCartney and Sgt. Gardner was added as a TASER instructor.

Additionally, as outlined in DCOP Surles' memorandum from August 11, 2020, we will meet as a committee once a month, body worn camera videos will be reviewed for each use of force incident, and supervisors will also be required to review body worn camera videos for use of force incidents (see DCOP Surles' memorandum for full details). This concludes the 2019 summary.