

**HEALDSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
CA POST PERISHABLE SKILLS PROGRAM (PSP)

**TACTICAL FIREARMS (HANDGUN)**

COURSE OVERVIEW

**I. COURSE GOAL(S)**

To present in-service officers with the below listed minimum topics of tactical firearms education and training required by the CA POST Perishable Skills Training Program (PSP). The goal of this training is to develop and/or maintain the necessary tactical firearms knowledge and skill base(s) to survive and win lethal force encounters. The course consists primarily of hands-on/practical firearms exercises, and is presented in a 4, 6, or 8-hour format depending specific agency or trainee group needs.

**II. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The trainee will:

- a. Demonstrate knowledge of their individual department Use of Force/Firearms Policy
- b. Discuss key findings of the most recent FBI Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) studies, including strategies/tactics for countering future casualties
- c. Demonstrate a minimum competency in tactical handgun deployment to include:
  1. Safe tactical weapon handling
  2. Judgment and decision making
  3. Proficiency in fundamentals of marksmanship
  4. Threat/Non-threat identification
  5. Speed, accuracy, and effectiveness under dynamic, scenario-based stress conditions
  6. Analysis of shot placement and corrective actions

**III. MINIMUM TOPICS COVERED**

- a. Safety orientation
- b. Fundamentals of marksmanship
- c. Weapons familiarization, handling, and clearing
- d. Scenario-based exercises requiring use of sound judgment and decision making
- e. Target recognition, engagement, and after-action analysis of shot placement (including corrective actions)
- f. Skill-builder exercises/courses of fire
- g. Analysis of case law and policy pertaining to use of lethal force
- h. Other legal/moral/psychological considerations
- i. Evaluation/testing of officers

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE SHALL BE EVALUATED BY AN INSTRUCTOR OBSERVING THE TRAINEE DURING THEIR PERFORMANCE OF EACH TECHNIQUE, EXERCISE, AND COURSE OF FIRE. IF THE TRAINEE DOES NOT MEET MINIMUM STANDARDS, AS ESTABLISHED BY THE PRESENTER, REMEDIATION WILL BE PROVIDED UNTIL THE STANDARD IS MET.

## EXPANDED COURSE OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Registration & Orientation

1. POST Roster/Roll-call
2. Instructor introductions (departments and experience)
3. Student introductions (departments, experience, career goals)
4. Overview of course objectives

#### B. Firearms Safety

##### 1. Cardinal safety rules

- a. Treat all firearms as if they are loaded
- b. Never point a firearm at something you are not willing to destroy
- c. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on target and you have made the decision to fire
- d. Know your target and what is beyond it; never shoot at anything you have not positively identified

##### 2. Additional general safety considerations

- a. Keep all firearms pointed in a safe direction (i.e., a direction in which an accidental discharge is only likely to cause minor property damage if any)
- b. If a firearm is dropped or falling, let it fall; an attempt to catch the firearm or break its fall can result in an accidental discharge in an unsafe direction
- c. Your firearms has two safeties:
  - i. You, the human safety, are the most important: use common sense, maintain situational awareness, and hold your peers accountable; their safety is your safety
  - ii. Manual/mechanical safety: mechanical safeties can and do fail; Do not rely on them in place of other safety measures

##### 3. Review/sign Range Safety Policy

- Adhere the four cardinal rules of firearms safety
- Practice and enforce strict muzzle control
- Firearms shall not be handled while anyone is forward of the firing line (weapons shall either be holstered or racked)
- Horseplay will not be tolerated
- Eye and ear protection shall be worn at all times
- When not on the firing line, officers shall keep their firearms on safe and holstered or slung
- Only personnel approved by the rangemaster/instructor(s) are permitted on the range
- Unless otherwise directed, loading and unloading of firearms shall be done only on the firing line at the command of an instructor
- Once on the firing line, officers must neither move forward or backward nor change elevation without the approval of an instructor

- Avoid talking while on the firing line, unless you have a safety concern
- If you experience a malfunction on the firing line, and are unable to safely clear/correct it, remain in place and alert an instructor using your support/non-gun hand
- All officers are safety officers. If you see a safety concern, alert the rangemaster/instructor(s)
- The rangemaster/instructor(s) reserve the right to impose the following penalties for violations of the above range safety rules:
  - Removal from the firing line
  - Removal from the training exercise
  - Removal from the range/training facility

## II. LETHAL FORCE OVERVIEW

### A. Use of Force law

#### PC 835a

Any peace officer who has reasonable cause to believe that a person has committed a public offense may use reasonable force to effect the arrest, overcome resistance, or prevent escape.

The peace officer need not retreat or desist, will not be deemed the aggressor, and does not lose their right to self-defense.

#### PC 198

Three elements needed to establish sufficiency of fear:

1. Circumstances must be sufficient to excite the fears of a reasonable officer
2. The officer must not act under the influence of fear alone; there must be some overt act
3. The decision to use deadly force must be made to save self or other from great bodily injury or death

#### Graham v. Connor

The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be:

1. Judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer
2. With similar training and experience
3. Facing similar circumstances

#### Tennessee v. Garner

Use of deadly force on a fleeing felon justified when:

1. Suspect had threatened an officer with a weapon, or there is probable cause to believe that he/she has committed a crime involving infliction of great bodily injury or death, and/or
2. There is probable cause to believe the suspect poses a threat of death or GBI to the officer or others, and
3. There is probable cause to believe that the use of deadly force is reasonably necessary (to prevent escape), and

4. When feasible, some warning should be given prior to the application of deadly force

B. Department-specific Use of Lethal Force Policies

C. Other Legal, Moral, and Psychological Considerations

D. Documenting Uses of Force

### **III. RESEARCH ON LINE-OF-DUTY DEATHS AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING MODERN THREAT ENVIRONMENT**

A. FBI LEOKA Studies

1. Law Enforcement Officers Killed & Assaulted
2. 66 officers feloniously killed in 2016
3. Average age of officers killed was 40 years, with average experience of 13 years
4. Two thirds of officers were assigned to uniformed patrol
5. Circumstances
  - 17 officers were killed in ambush situations.
  - 13 officers who died had responded to disturbance calls.
  - 9 officers died as a result of investigating suspicious persons or circumstances.
  - 9 officers died as a result of arrest situations.
  - 6 officers were killed as a result of tactical situations (barricaded offender, hostage taking, high-risk entry, etc.).
  - 5 officers were conducting investigative activities (surveillance, search, interview, etc.).
  - 4 officers were fatally injured during traffic pursuits/stops.
  - 3 officers were killed in unprovoked attacks.
6. Weapons
  - Of the officers killed in 2016, most (62) were killed with firearms. Of these, 37 were killed with handguns.
  - 14 officers fired their weapons; 11 officers attempted to fire their weapon.
  - One third of officers slain were between 0 and 5 feet from the suspect

B. NLEOMF Studies

1. National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF)
2. 2016 experienced a 56% increase in officer deaths over 2015, including the highest number of firearms-related deaths since 2011
3. Of the 64 officers killed by firearms in 2016, at least a third were murdered in ambush-style shootings.

C. Prevailing in Today's Threat Environment

1. Firearms training by and for our nation's peacekeepers undergoing a paradigm shift, toward more dynamic, scenario-based firearms exercises that encourage quick thinking and decisive action.

2. Because potentially lethal firearms encounters are fight-or-flight situations, they necessarily trigger physiologic responses in an officer's body that can compromise his or her motor skills.
3. Reality-based practice under pressure improves the handgun shooting performance of police officers because, as shooters become acclimatized to shooting under stress, they experience less of a change in the stress-related responses that tend to compromise shooting performance.
4. Number of ways for law enforcement agencies to integrate dynamic, scenario-based firearms training as part of their firearms programs.
  - a. Tactical live-fire exercises
  - b. Role-playing scenarios using Simunitions
  - c. Interactive computer force option simulators
  - d. While the merits of simulators and Simunitions exercises must not be overlooked, this course focuses specifically on enhancing the officer's live-fire competencies.

#### **IV. FUNDAMENTALS OF MARKSMANSHIP**

##### **A. Stance**

1. There is no shortage of commentary on what the "proper" shooting stance should look like (e.g., Isosceles, Weaver, Fighting).
2. In thinking about stance, the officer should defer to whatever position provides them with the most stable shooting platform. For many, this is a bladed or "fighting" stance, with the officer keeping their feet shoulder-width apart and their torso squared to the target.
3. Ultimately, one's stance should not tire them unnecessarily.

##### **B. Grip**

1. One's grip should be geared toward consuming as much of the pistol's frame as possible, with web of dominant hand as high as possible on backstrap.
2. Balance contact and pressure between dominant and support sides.

##### **C. Sight Alignment & Sight Picture**

1. Together, sight alignment and sight picture comprise one of the two primary factors in the fundamentals of marksmanship.
2. Sight alignment refers to the proper alignment of the front and rear sights.
3. Sight picture refers to how the officer's sights appear on the target. A "center hold" on center mass (the middle- to upper-chest area on a human target), wherein the top of the front sight post is in clear focus while the target and rear aperture are slightly out of focus, is the optimal sight picture.

#### D. Trigger Control

1. Trigger control is the second primary factor in the fundamentals of marksmanship.
2. Trigger control is the ability of the officer to apply continual gradual pressure rearward, PRESSING the trigger with the first pad of the trigger finger – without affecting sight alignment/sight picture – until a round is discharged.
3. Trigger control also refers to not simply removing one's finger from the trigger after firing, but instead riding it through the sear reset.

#### E. Breathing

1. Exercising consistent breath control can significantly improve the officer's accuracy.
2. Breath control involves pausing one's breathing at the natural apex of inhaling or exhaling, and timing this pause with the terminus of trigger press.

#### F. Follow Through

1. Follow through refers to maintaining the fundamentals of marksmanship (e.g., realigning one's sights and guiding the trigger to its point of reset).
2. This can be likened to a golfer focusing on the top of the tee while completing his/her stroke rather than looking for the ball.

#### G. Scan and Reassess

1. The officer should keep his/her muzzle directed at the threat until it is neutralized.
2. At the same time, the officer must scan side-to-side and behind them to maintain situational awareness

### V. SKILL BASES

#### A. The decision to shoot and pistol presentation

1. Getting off the "X"
2. Communication (e.g. calling out the threat, issuing warnings)
3. 5-step pistol presentation used as a guideline.
4. Efficient drawing and holstering should mirror each other.

#### B. Reloading

1. Combat (speed) reloads
2. Tactical reloads.

#### C. Low light shooting

1. Fight's on, light's on.
2. Light discipline in threat settings

#### D. Cover vs. concealment

1. Cover provides both concealment AND protection
2. Concealment simply hides your location but is penetrable
3. Shooting from barricaded positions

- a. Strong and support (NOT “weak”) side shooting
- b. Using distance from barricade; same principal as pie-ing a corner

E. Positional shooting

- 1. Static range
  - a. Strong side standing/kneeling/prone
  - b. Support side standing/kneeling/prone
- 2. Operational environment
  - a. Urban prone/lateral
  - b. High vs. low kneeling

F. Shooting on the move

- 1. Moving to shoot
  - a. Getting off the “X” shifts time and distance to the officer’s advantage
  - b. Aggressive but disciplined movement (AVOID CROSSING YOUR FEET!), pause, shoot, scan/reassess, move again if necessary
- 2. Shooting while moving
  - a. Generally not recommended
  - b. If becomes necessary, focus should be on moving only the lower body, and in a manner that allows for as stable a shooting platform as possible with the upper body
  - c. This is often achieved with a controlled heel-to-toe transfer of weight (“duck walk”)

G. Resolving malfunctions

- 1. Failure to fire & stove pipe
  - a. Tap, Rack, Bang
- 2. Double feed
  - a. Strip, Rack, Feed, Rack

H. Shooting around people and vehicles

- 1. Sul vs. temple indexing
- 2. Communication (e.g., reloading, moving, covering)
- 3. Positional shooting and using cover

**VI. Drills/Exercises and Courses of Fire**

Instructors will draw from an evolving library of drills and courses of fire to test officer competency in the above fundamentals and skill bases. As noted above, the goal of the course is to develop and/or maintain the necessary tactical firearms knowledge and skill base(s) to survive and win lethal force encounters. This is achieved by moving officers through progressively more complex and dynamic exercises, thereby extending their skill beyond existing comfort levels, and preparing them to address the modern threat environment.