

The Dover Police Department is committed to following best practices related to use of force policy and will continue to do so. As such:

- All Dover Police officers are trained in de-escalation techniques.
- The use of choke holds, neck restraints and other similar techniques are prohibited by policy.
- Officers of the Dover Police Department are authorized to utilize only the amount of force that is reasonably considered necessary to achieve the lawful objective of the officer. The use of excessive or inappropriate force is not tolerated.
- Excessive force is any force that is more than necessary and not just limited to lethal force.
- Officers are required to intervene anytime another officer is using more force than is reasonable and would be disciplined if they failed to intervene.
- Firing at a moving vehicle is prohibited unless necessary in self-defense or in the defense of others. Additionally, warning shots are prohibited as is firing while running, or from a moving vehicle. Firing at a suspect when lesser force could be used and the officer believes the suspect can be apprehended reasonably soon thereafter without the use of deadly force is prohibited. Furthermore, the use of firearms is prohibited when there is a substantial danger to innocent bystanders.
- All Dover Police officers follow a detailed and strict use of force continuum that begins with officer presence and verbal persuasion and proceeds into an escalating use of physical force. However, physical force is only authorized when the actions of the suspect make it justified. Just because verbal persuasion doesn't work does not allow an officer to use force. All use of force has to be justified based upon actions of the suspect.
- Excessive force is never authorized. Officers are required to use all other reasonable alternatives before using any level of force.
- Officers are required to provide warnings when feasible prior to using any level of force.
- The Dover Police Department has a significant internal review process related to all use of force incidents. Officers are required to specifically document any use or threatened use of force. The incident is reviewed at multiple supervisory levels with a final review by the Chief of Police.
- To the best of our ability, officers are vetted to ensure that they do not have a history with abuse, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, or discrimination. This begins in the initial hiring process with an extensive background and suitability investigation and continues throughout the officer's career. Department command staff continuously review traffic stop and other enforcement data to ensure that officers are conducting fair and unbiased enforcement. Additionally, the department reviews all arrest, enforcement and use of force incidents annually as part of the CALEA accreditation review.
- Officers are required to provide medical attention to anyone injured during a use of force incident. Officers receive training to properly provide basic medical aid. They carry tourniquets as well quick clotting gauze and are required to immediately request an ambulance.
- The Dover Police Department has an early warning system in place that is designed to identify individual officer issues. The system used by the department identified and tracks many issues, not just use of force.
- Any unauthorized use of force is addressed immediately. How it is addressed varies on the facts and circumstances of the specific incident and can range from re-training to termination. There is no specific number of complaints that need to be received before an officer is disciplined. If appropriate, an officer with no history of prior complaints could be reprimanded or terminated if the specific situation warranted it. It should also be noted that a complaint does not need to be received for the department to take action against an officer who we have determined used unnecessary or inappropriate force.