



Less-Than-Lethal Force

In recognition of National Police Week 2023, the Comp Alliance developed safety tips aimed at providing information to protect officers from workplace injuries. The final tip of the week is a discussion on the use of less-than-lethal force, a strategy that can provide improved safety for officers when interacting with the public.

Less-than-lethal force, or less lethal force, is any use of force that is not considered deadly and involves physical effort to control, restrain, or overcome the resistance of another. This encompasses manual restraint, electronic control weapons, aerosol sprays, and impact projectors. These weapons provide an alternative force option that is less likely to result in a fatality while still effectively subduing a person with little to no harm to the police officer.



Studies have shown that when officers use less lethal technology, they are likely to suffer fewer and less severe injuries. Additionally, deadly force is not necessary in most instances so the impact on officers' mental health is likely to be greatly reduced. Officers have often stated that using a Taser or pepper spray saved them from performing a riskier solution during an escalating situation.

There are several types of less lethal force devices including:

- Electronic Control Devices (ECDs) like Tasers and stun guns.
- Remote restraint devices like a BolaWrap.
- Chemicals, for example, pepper spray and tear gas.
- Vehicle-stopping technology equipment that stops cars during a pursuit, like spike strips.
- Barriers such as nets, foams, and other physical barriers.
- Blunt force items, namely regular or collapsible batons and projectiles.

Staff training is an absolute must when your department seeks to utilize one or more of these devices. Training must be completed upon initial introduction to the department, when an officer displays incompetence with the device, or when an officer changes job functions. Document all such training and conduct routine refreshers as recommended. The goal of training is to confirm that the administration has the utmost confidence in the officers' understanding of the safe use of such devices and their ability to follow policy on their utilization.

We hope that these week-long safety tips during National Police Week were a help to your department and municipality. The Comp Alliance is here to assist our members and their employees in reducing and preventing workplace injuries. Please reach out to the Director of Loss Control, Robert Blaisdell, at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com or (518) 330-8591 for more information on this topic or any of the topics discussed during the week. We wish our police departments the very best in providing safety and security for their communities and police officers.