



TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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HANDCUFFING

The principle reason for handcuffing an arrestee is to maintain control of the individual and to minimize the possibility of a situation escalating to a point that would necessitate using a higher level of force or restraint. The decision to use restraining procedures and devices depends on common sense and good judgment. While felony arrestees shall normally be handcuffed, the restraining of misdemeanants is discretionary. The purpose of this Bulletin is to examine discretion in handcuffing and handcuffing techniques.

Discretion in Handcuffing

The handcuffing of an arrestee is not based on rigid criteria. It is determined by the nature of each situation as perceived by the officer. There may be extenuating circumstances which would make handcuffing a felony arrestee inappropriate. To ensure the effective and appropriate use of handcuffs, it is necessary to place the responsibility for the handcuffing of arrestees with the involved officer. Officers should evaluate all available facts concerning each arrestee prior to determining whether or not to use handcuffs. The varied nature of each arrest situation makes it unrealistic to provide specific and detailed guidelines for handcuffing.

When restraining an individual, the following factors should be considered: the possibility of the arrestee escaping or the incident escalating, a potential threat to the officers and other persons, and the knowledge of the arrestee's previous encounters with law enforcement.

Arrestees with Mental Illness: Officers shall handcuff a person with mental illness taken into custody when the person is not restrained by means of a straitjacket or leather restraining straps. The exception exists when a person with mental illness whose physical condition is such that the safety of the individual and the officer are not jeopardized. The use of handcuffs is then within the discretion of the officer.

HANDCUFFING TECHNIQUES

Handcuffs are meant to be a temporary restraint and are not escape-proof. Officers should always remain alert for an attempted escape. It is not uncommon for an arrestee to conceal a handcuff key or metal shim to assist in escaping from custody. Officers should continue to monitor the arrestee during transportation, while at a hospital for medical

treatment, or while the arrestee is in a holding tank prior to booking. Remember that an arrestee who is seated on a holding bench should be properly handcuffed and secured to the bench.

Basic Handcuffing Procedures: When there is a need to use handcuffs, officers should remember the basic procedures for proper application. The hands should be handcuffed behind the back with palms together, or back-to-back. Avoid injury to the wrists when applying the handcuffs and check to ensure the handcuffs are not too loose or too tight. Handcuffs should be double-locked.



Speedcuffing: The speedcuffing technique is an effective way to quickly secure a suspect's hands. With the suspect in the pat down position, the handcuffs are drawn and held by the chain. The handcuffs are pressed onto one of the suspect's wrists, then onto the other wrist in one fast, crisp motion. The handcuffs are immediately adjusted to firmly secure the suspect's hands.



Alternative Handcuffing Techniques

Plastic Handcuffs: The plastic handcuff is a disposable restraining device provided to officers for use as an alternate or reserve means of restraint. Officers should carry two of these handcuffs as part of their field equipment. This will allow the control and transportation of arrestees when there are not a sufficient number of steel handcuffs available.

The plastic handcuff is prepared for use by inserting the serrated tips of the straps through the eyelets located between the two straps, forming two loops. The arrestee's hands should be placed behind the back, palms out, with the thumbs up. The cuffs are placed over the arrestee's hands and tightened to secure the wrists. The one-way locking action in the head of the plastic handcuff prevents the restraint from being loosened once applied. Therefore, care should be taken not to tighten the restraint more than is necessary. The restraint is removed by using Department cutters which are available in the Area watch commander's offices and in some supervisors' vehicles.



Plastic handcuffs are used for handcuffing non-violent arrestees and should not be used to restrain combative arrestees or persons with mental illness. These restraints can be difficult to apply while attempting to gain physical control of a suspect. Additionally, some individuals with mental illness or combative arrestees continue to struggle and resist these restraints once they have been applied causing injury to their wrists.



When two arrestees have been handcuffed, they may be secured together by using a plastic handcuff around their upper arms. One loop of the plastic handcuff is secured on the first arrestee's upper arm, and the other loop secures the second arrestee's upper arm.

The plastic handcuff can also assist officers in controlling handcuffed suspects by preventing them from slipping the handcuffs underneath their legs. The arrestee's handcuffed hands can be secured to the belt by utilizing a plastic handcuff looped around the handcuffs' linking chain and belt.



Hobble Restraint Device: The Hobble Restraint Device may be used as an alternative to handcuffs on a non-violent arrestee with an arm injury or full arm cast. The officer places the hobble loop just above the elbows. The loop is slowly tightened until it appears the arrestee cannot escape.



This technique can also be used for removing handcuffs from a violent arrestee for fingerprinting, medical treatment, or to place the arrestee into a holding cell with a minimal chance for an altercation. While the arrestee is still handcuffed, the officer places the hobble loop just above the elbows. The loop is slowly tightened until it appears the arrestee cannot escape. The officer can now safely remove the cuffs for medical treatment or fingerprinting. Additionally, if the officer intends to place the arrestee into a cell, this method allows control of the arrestee at

the elbows. The officer then directs the arrestee into the cell. As the arrestee moves forward into the cell, the officer releases the hobble and pulls it free from the arrestee's arms.

The hobble can also assist officers in controlling handcuffed suspects by preventing them from slipping the handcuffs underneath their legs. The hobble can be looped around the arrestee's waist and clipped to the handcuffs' linking chain. After locking the hobble around the arrestee's waist, any excess must be wrapped around the handcuffs' linking chain or arrestee's wrist before it is clipped to the handcuffs.





Carabiner Hook: The carabiner hook is a 2" x 3 ½" aluminum alloy device that has a safety locking mechanism. The primary use of the carabiner hook is to assist officers in controlling handcuffed suspects by preventing them from slipping the handcuffs underneath their legs.

To utilize the carabiner hook, twist open the safety lock. Press open the carabiner and hook it onto the handcuff chain. Attach the open end to the suspect's belt or belt loop and twist the safety lock tightly closed to secure the hook.

The carabiner hook is to be used only to control handcuffed suspects as described above and must only be placed on the handcuffs and through the suspect's belt or belt loop. The carabiner hook shall not be used as a striking weapon or as a tool for attaching suspects to other suspects, to fences, vehicles, or any other object.



CONCLUSION

Officers must be aware of the Department's discretionary handcuffing policy and how this policy influences handcuffing and restraining arrestees. The handcuffing of arrestees is not based on rigid criteria. Rather, it is determined by the unique nature of each situation, the officer's evaluation of the incident, and a concern for the well being of all involved persons. Even though an arrestee is handcuffed, the degree of vigilance still required of an officer cannot be overemphasized.

Field Training Services Unit
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