

PROGRAM TO ARM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICE OFFICERS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This issue adds a new appendix to VA Handbook 0720, "Procedures to Arm VA Police Officers." The newly added Appendix A provides authority and policy requirements for the purchase and issue of long guns to VA Police officers.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS AND MAJOR CHANGES:

a. **SUMMARY:** Appendix A provides authority for VA Police officers to train and qualify on long guns as a supplemental weapon to the issued Service Pistol. Long guns are required to appropriately respond to specific types of incidents, such as Active Threat. The attached appendix specifies the required type of weapon selected, training/qualification requirements; and deployment guidelines.

b. MAJOR CHANGES IN THE HANDBOOK

- (1) Defines long guns as an authorized weapon for VA Police officers.
- (2) Provides training and qualification requirements for VA Police officers on this weapon.
- (3) Provides deployment and storage guidelines for the weapon.

3. RELATED DIRECTIVES: VA Directive 0720, January 24, 2000 and VA Directive 0730, December 12, 2012.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness, Office of Security and Law Enforcement, Police Services is responsible for the material contained in this Handbook.

5. RESCISSION: This is a newly added Appendix. No rescissions of existing policy are necessary.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
SECRETARY OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS:**

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Appendix A

1. **Background:** Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities (and some National Cemetery and Benefits locations) are protected by uniformed VA Police officers.

a. VA Police Officers are: VA employees who have appointed authority under statute to enforce Federal law within VA's jurisdiction. Such officers are armed with Department-approved weapons and are the primary initial response forces to Active Threat incidents on a VA-owned campus. VA Police officers complete substantial training in Active Threat Response (VA Handbook 0730/5, July 2014).

b. VA has determined the necessity to add a long gun to the inventory of weapons available to VA Police officers. This is necessary to ensure the safety of VA staff, patients, and VA Police officers responding to active threat incidents.

2. **Policy:**

a. Long guns, of a caliber, make and model approved by the VA Office of Security and Law Enforcement (OS&LE), will be procured and deployed to all VA Police Services.

b. VA Police officers will be required to undergo training and qualification on the use of these weapons as a functional requirement of the position. If an officer fails to qualify with the long gun, that officer will not be allowed to deploy the weapon until such qualification is met.

c. The weapons will be pre-positioned in secure locations on a facility, primarily in police operations areas, using secure lockers or racks that would allow for rapid deployment by authorized officers only. Trunk-mounted carrying racks in VA Police vehicles will also be used as appropriate.

d. Access to the secured storage of the long guns will be limited to VA Police officers who have completed training requirements and have qualified on the long gun as described in this Handbook.

e. Long guns will be deployed as described by this Handbook.

3. **Authorities:**

a. Chapter 9, title 38, United States Code, "Security and Law Enforcement." Section 901 requires the Secretary for VA to protect "life and property" within the Department's jurisdiction. Section 902 provides for VA Police officers to enforce Federal laws on VA

facilities; and Section 904 give the Secretary authority to provide “appropriate weapons and equipment” to VA Police officers. This Handbook implements the requirements of 38 U.S.C. § 904 for determining the appropriate weapons and equipment.

b. VA Directive and Handbook 0720, “Program to Arm VA Police.” The Office of Security and Law Enforcement is responsible for determining the type of firearm used by VA Police officers. VA’s agreement with the Department of Justice regarding police firearms is that the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Security and Law Enforcement is responsible for determining the scope and training requirements for VA Police firearms.

4. Definitions:

a. Long Guns: A weapon specifically designed for and used by Police officers responding to appropriate tactical situations. After substantial research and testing, OS&LE has chosen a weapon with the following specifications: M-4 platform, 11.5 inch short barrel configuration; .223/5.56 mm caliber; with collapsible stock, tactical equipment mounting; and sling.

b. VA Police Officer: VA employees in the GS-0083, GS-0080 and GS-1811 classification codes, who are members of a VA Police Service and whose training requirements are up-to-date. Training requirements include: Basic Police Officer Course; any VA required Advanced Police Officer course, basic and current firearm qualifications with the Department Service Pistol; and successful completion of the VA Law Enforcement Training Center (VA LETC) long gun training course. In addition, all of the training, medical and psychological screening requirements of VA Directive and Handbook 0720, “Program to Arm VA Police” must be met.

c. Department Service Pistol: As defined in VA Handbook 0720, the 9mm semi-automatic handgun selected by OS&LE is the primary duty firearm of a VA Police officer. The deployment of the long gun is an additional weapon, and does not replace the Department Service Pistol.

5. Long Gun Procurement:

a. VA-approved long guns will be purchased by the employing VA facility.

b. Purchase will be through a contract instrument that is managed by OS&LE. Specific instructions for procuring and receiving the approved long gun will be provided to VA Police Services by OS&LE.

c. In order to ensure sufficient numbers of long guns for both training and deployment, the long guns will be purchased at a minimum rate of one for every five VA Police officers at that facility. All facilities are required to have long guns.

6. Training and Qualification:

- a. All VA Police officers will complete appropriate training (as determined by the VA LETC) and qualify with the long gun. This is necessary as it is impossible to predict which officers may be on duty when the long gun is needed for deployment. Long gun qualification will be a requirement for all VA Police officers.
- b. VA Police officers will maintain qualification by firing a passing score at least once annually, under the direction of a VA LETC certified rifle instructor.
- c. VA LETC certified firearms instructors must successfully complete a rifle instructor certification course before they may train and certify other officers.

7. Storage and Deployment of Long Guns:

- a. VA Police officers will continue to be armed with the Service Pistol for day-to-day operations. Long guns will be maintained in VA Police operation rooms, or stored in locked racks in VA Police vehicles, and not carried on the person while on routine patrol duties. Vehicle storage racks will be secure and mounted out of sight.
- b. When stored in either a vehicle trunk-mounted rack or secure rack in the Police Operations Room, the long gun will have a full 30- round magazine of OS&LE approved ammunition inserted. No round will be chambered and the gun will be in “safe” mode.
- c. The long gun will only be deployed and carried by VA Police officers in response to life-threatening emergency situations in which that capability would be required. VA Police officers will be trained to recognize when the long gun is appropriate for deployment.
- d. A minimum of two long guns will be maintained on the facility at all times for emergency deployment.
- e. When deployed, each long gun will have a fully loaded 30-round magazine, with a round chambered. The officer will have 2 fully loaded additional magazines in their possession.
- f. The long gun will be kept in the “safe” mode while being carried by an officer.
- g. Facility armorers will regularly ensure the rifles are appropriately sighted-in to factory specifications. Armorers will also be responsible for cleaning and maintaining the rifles to factory specifications at all times.

References:

VA Handbook 0720, “Program to Arm Department of Veterans Affairs Police”

Available at:

<http://www.bing.com/search?q=va+handbook+and+Directive+0720+Program+to+Arm&qs=n&form=QBRE&pq=va+handbook+and+directive+0720+program+to+arm&sc=0-45&sp=-1&sk=&cvid=F7465308DC2045519872BD9B9ED3FE53>

VA Handbook 0730, “Security and Law Enforcement”. Available at:

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=va+directive+and+handbook+0730&qs=n&form=QBRE&pq=va+directive+and+handbook+0730&sc=2-30&sp=-1&sk=&cvid=4603509396314432AA44E304A4F0E416>