



Year End Report – 2020
Use of Force Options Utilized in the Field
St. Thomas Police Service

Incidents requiring *Use of Force* (Ministry Reportable)

2015 – 21 Incidents

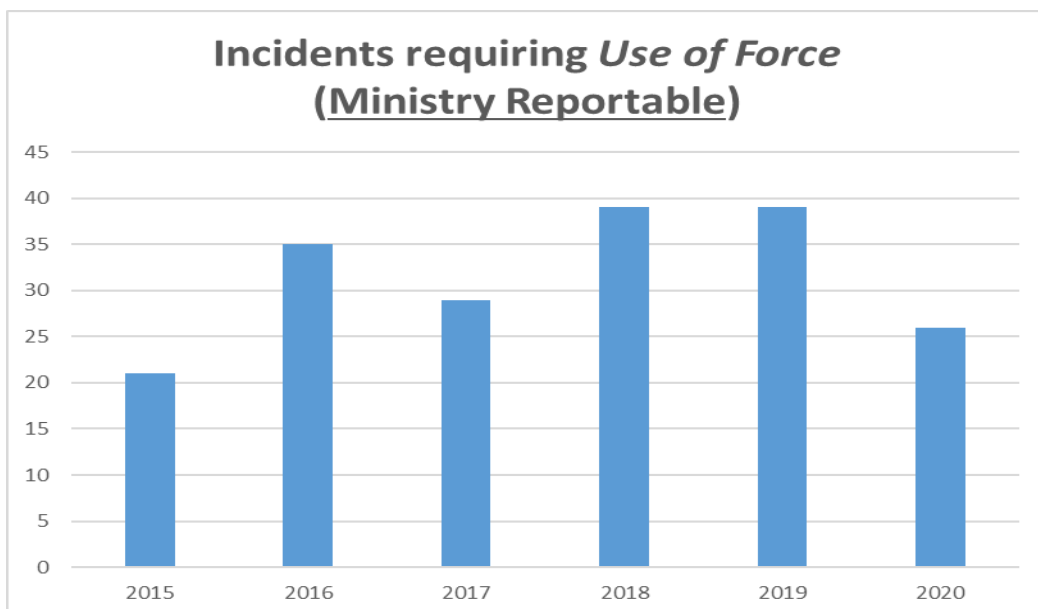
2016 – 35 Incidents

2017 – 29 Incidents

2018 – 39 Incidents

2019 – 49 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 39 incidents

2020 – 44 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 26 incidents



Identified Trends 2014 - 2020

- In reviewing the Use of Force Reports for the years 2015 through 2020 it is noted that the number of use of force incidents have not increased at an alarming rate, despite the steady increase in the number of calls for service (2020 = 22,007). It is now proven that the Conducted Energy Weapon (Taser), as deployed to all front line officers, has offered notable de-escalation benefits that were not available in years past. The Taser has been extremely effective in preventing the escalation of violent behavior as well as preventing injuries and saving lives. The CEW (Taser) has been standard equipment for all front line officers since June 2015. The Taser assists greatly in gaining compliance through verbal commands, simply by an un-cooperative subject knowing its present. It should be noted that each time an Officer draws their Taser to gain compliance from a subject, whether it's fired in a particular incident or not, a Ministry *Use of Force Report* submission is required. Statistically, this results in higher numbers of *Use of Force Report* submissions.
- It should be noted that each time an officer is required to use their firearm to dispatch an animal for humanitarian reasons a Ministry *Use of Force Report* submission is required. Statistically, this can result in what appears to be an inflated number of *Use of Force* incidents related to police firearms use. The number of sick or injured animals that officers were required to destroy for humanitarian reasons in 2020 was eight (15 in 2019, and 6 in 2018).
- In late 2018, the C8 Patrol Carbine was added for use by STPS officers on patrol. The patrol carbine is not listed as a requirement for Ministry reporting if simply drawn in the presence of the public (similar to the shotgun). The STPS engaged in three (3) incidents where the patrol carbine was deployed. One was to search a residence for a robbery suspect; the second incident was for the arrest of a potential hatchet wielding suspect and the third incident was to dispatch an injured animal.

- Incident increase - 10% increase 2019 to 2020 (averaging 60 incidents/24hrs – an increase from 55 incidents/24hrs in 2019). Despite this increase in officer interactions with the public, our Use of Force incidents decreased by 33% from 2019. Individual officer decisions to apply a Use of Force option decreased 10% from 2019. This is a very strong indicator of officer awareness, de-escalation skills and education and training capabilities of our officers.
- A requirement of Ministry Reporting is on perceived subject race. Of the 26 incidents where Use of Force was applied, 17 individuals were subject to the reporting. One (1) subject identified as Black, one (1) subject identified as Middle Eastern, one (1) subject identified as East/Southeast Asian and fourteen (14) subjects identified as White.

In 2020, officers drew their firearm in seven (7) operational incidents (8 in 2019, 8 in 2018, and 2 in 2017). The most prevalent weapons that officers faced on the street were edged weapons and the potential for firearms.

In 2020, the Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) or more commonly known as the Taser, was used in deployment mode (probes were fired from the cartridge) two (2) times (2 in 2019), and was used in display mode (de-escalation compliance option and no probes were fired from the cartridge) on twelve (12) different occasions (15 in 2019).

O/C (Pepper) Spray has been rarely used from 2015 to 2020. In 2020, O/C spray was used once to thwart off a dog attack (not a Ministry submission). From 2017 to 2019 Pepper Spray was used zero (0) times. In 2016, O/C Spray was only used one (1) time.

The (Asp) baton was not used in a reportable *Use of Force* situation in 2020. Similarly, the Asp Baton was not used in 2016 to 2019.

In 2020, Empty Hand Techniques were used on one (1) occasion (3 in 2019, 2 in 2018, 4 in 2017, and 3 in 2016).

Our current Police Services Dog (PSD) 'Axle' was put into service at the end of 2017. PSD Axle was used two (2) times in 2020 in a *Use of Force* situation where the subject was bitten (1 in 2019, 1 in 2018). These are required Ministry Use of Force Reporting submissions due to the bite injuries sustained. The PSD remains a strategic de-escalation compliance tool for many operational incidents that are perceived to be volatile. There is great value in the PSD patrolling as a supplemental resource for frontline officers.

I am pleased to report that our 2020 *Use of Force* statistics show a decrease in comparison to 2019. With a 10% increase in incidents, STPS officers have performed well exercising more de-escalation strategies. The pressures on frontline policing are tremendous. There should be no question, the CEW (less than lethal weapon) has become a very important tool available for officers to de-escalate violent situations. This tool provides all around officer and community safety when it comes to encountering violent interactions. The increase in incidents involve growing concerns pertaining to the social determinants of health. These non-core policing pressures are showing no sign of easing. As such, policing must adapt and improve Use of Force training to account for the large number of matters that are symptomatic of mental health, homelessness, poverty and addictions. We are committed to a continual review of our Use of Force incidents, our Use of Force training curriculums, and our equipment.

I have closely reviewed all of the *Use of Force incidents and Ministry reporting submissions* by our officers and their respective Supervisors throughout the year. I am satisfied that our collective *Use of Force* that was applied in 2020 was adequate, reasonable and effective in delivering public safety services to the community.

Marc Roskamp, Deputy Chief of Police

Use of Force Statistical Summary – 2020

1) **Firearms** - were drawn or displayed to public view 28 times (16 operational incidents). Eight (8) of those incidents related to occasions where firearms were used to dispatch injured animals for humanitarian purposes.

2) **Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW)** - was fired operationally in two (2) incidents and drawn and used as a de-escalation compliance option (not discharged) 14 times.

3) **Aerosol weapons (O/C Spray)** - was not used in a Ministry reportable *Use of Force* incident in 2020.

4) **ASP baton (Impact Weapon)** - was not utilized in a reportable Use of Force incident in 2020.

5) **Empty Hand Techniques** - was used in one (1) reportable Use of Force incidents in 2020 (3 in 2019).

6) **PSD Axle** - was involved in two (2) operational incidents (bites occurred). Involved as a de-escalation compliance option 38 times.

