



Year End Report – 2021

Use of Force Options Utilized in the Field

St. Thomas Police Service

Incidents requiring *Use of Force* (Ministry Reportable)

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

2021 – 55 Ministry submissions (individual officer actions) for 37 incidents

Identified Trends in 2021

- Incident increase - 1% increase 2020 to 2021 (averaging 61 incidents/24hrs – holding stable from 2020 at 60 incidents/24hrs).
- Incidents that are classified as requiring the Use of Force by our officers increased by 42% from 2020, which resulted in a 25% increase in individual officer decisions to apply a Use of Force option.
- There are strong indicators (from ongoing incident reviews) that our officers fully understand that a reasonable application of force requires awareness of the facts and circumstances of each particular situation, including the severity of the issue, whether the subject poses an immediate threat to the safety of officers or others and whether the subject is actively resisting or attempting to evade arrest by flight.

- A requirement of Ministry Reporting is on perceived subject race. Of the 37 incidents where Use of Force was applied, 35 different individuals were the subjects of the reporting. One (1) subject identified as Black, one (1) subject identified as Middle Eastern, one (1) subject identified as Indigenous and thirty-two (32) subjects identified as White.

Firearms

In 2021, officers drew their firearm in seven (8) operational incidents (7 in 2020). The most prevalent weapons that officers faced on the street were edged weapons and the potential for firearms. Three (3) separate incidents involved the dispatching of injured animals by the use of a firearm.

Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW)

In 2021, the Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) or more commonly known as the Taser, was used in deployment mode (probes were fired from the cartridge) 5 times (2 in 2020), and was used in display mode (de-escalation compliance option and no probes were fired from the cartridge) on thirty-two (38) different occasions – individual officer actions (12 in 2020).

Undoubtedly, the CEW remains a very important tool available for police officers to de-escalate violent situations. This tool provides all around officer and community safety when it comes to encountering violent interactions. The PSB's decision to upgrade this piece of equipment (Taser7) was an investment that continues to support the delivery of modern public safety services.

Oleoresin Capsicum (OC Spray)

O/C (Pepper) Spray was not used operationally between 2016 - 2021 (Ministry submissions).

ASP Baton

The (Asp) baton was not used operationally between 2016 - 2021 (Ministry submissions).

Empty Hand Techniques

In 2021, Empty Hand Techniques were used in four (4) operational incidents (1 in 2020).

Police Service Dog (PSD)

PSD Axle was used two (2) times in 2021 in a *Use of Force* situation where the subject was bitten (2 in 2020). 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.

Body-Worn Cameras (BWC's)

In 2021, all frontline STPS officers began wearing BWC's. The PSB's decision to implement this piece of equipment has provided visual and audio evidence that independently verifies police-citizen encounters and works to widely enhance citizen perceptions of police transparency and legitimacy. Equally, we are seeing positive cost-benefit analysis data that is reflecting a future in the reduction of complaints against officers and the time required to investigate such complaints, especially with Use of Force matters. There are compelling positive financial impacts to the swift resolution of these professional standards matters. Importantly, the ongoing and vital maintenance of our officers' mental and physical well-being due to the early clearance of conduct investigations is being positively addressed with this new equipment. BWC recordings are proving to be a game-changer that definitively benefit the delivery of public safety services.

The often unpredictable environment that police operate in today has become the *new-normal* with an increase in matters pertaining to the social determinants of health. These

non-core policing pressures are showing no sign of easing. As such, public safety personnel 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 remain 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 2021 was adequate, reasonable and effective in the delivery of public safety services to the community.

Marc Roskamp,
Deputy Chief of Police