

Minnesota Department of Corrections

Use of Force Continuum

- **Assessment:** You assess the situation, taking into consideration the circumstances and your perception of what is happening.
- **Subject's Behavior:** You decide which of the five behavioral categories applies to the person you think is a threat (the subject).
 - *Cooperative:* The subject is listening to what you say.
 - *Passive Resistant:* The subject is not responding to verbal communication.
 - *Active Resistant:* The subject resists being restrained.
 - *Assaultive:* The subject is pushing, kicking, hitting, or using other physical contact.
 - *Grievous Bodily Harm or Death:* The subject is threatening another person's life.
- **Response Options:** When choosing a response option, you must follow the reasonableness standard that is accepted in Minnesota. In some states, the law says that you may only use deadly force or threaten to use force if you reasonably believe such action is necessary to defend yourself or another person against a subject's use of deadly force. (See Minn. Stat. §§ [243.52](#); [609.06](#); [609.065](#) and [609.066](#))
- Based on your assessment of the situation and the subject's behavior, here are the six general ways to respond to protect your life and/or your property.
 - *Presence:* You let the subject see that you are there.
 - *Communication:* You talk to the subject. This could include letting the subject know that you are planning to get assistance from others.
 - *Soft Physical Control:* You restrain the subject by applying pressure to specific points or by using another similar approach.
 - *Hard Physical Control:* You hit, kick, or strike the subject.
 - *Alternatives to Firearms:* Alternatives include sprays or electrical devices.
 - *Deadly Force:* This is the last response option that you should consider using.

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National Institute of Justice (NIJ) standard

officers are instructed to respond with a level of force appropriate to the situation at hand, acknowledging that the officer may move from one part of the continuum to another in a matter of seconds.

An example of a use-of-force continuum follows:

- **Officer Presence – No force is used. Considered the best way to resolve a situation.**
 - The mere presence of a law enforcement officer works to deter crime or diffuse a situation.
 - Officers' attitudes are professional and nonthreatening.
- **Verbalization – Force is not-physical.**
 - Officers issue calm, nonthreatening commands, such as "Let me see your identification and registration."
 - Officers may increase their volume and shorten commands in an attempt to gain compliance. Short commands might include "Stop," or "Don't move."
- **Empty-Hand Control – Officers use bodily force to gain control of a situation.**
 - *Soft technique.* Officers use grabs, holds and joint locks to restrain an individual.
 - *Hard technique.* Officers use punches and kicks to restrain an individual.
- **Less-Lethal Methods – Officers use less-lethal technologies to gain control of a situation.**
 - *Blunt impact.* Officers may use a baton or projectile to immobilize a combative person.
 - *Chemical.* Officers may use chemical sprays or projectiles embedded with chemicals to restrain an individual (e.g., pepper spray).
 - *Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs).* Officers may use CEDs to immobilize an individual. CEDs discharge a high-voltage, low-amperage jolt of electricity at a distance.
- **Lethal Force – Officers use lethal weapons to gain control of a situation. Should only be used if a suspect poses a serious threat to the officer or another individual.**
 - Officers use deadly weapons such as firearms to stop an individual's actions.