

**RCW 10.120.020 Permissible uses of force.** (1) PHYSICAL FORCE.

Except as otherwise provided under this section, a peace officer may use physical force against a person to the extent necessary to:

- (a) Protect against a criminal offense when there is probable cause that the person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit the offense;
- (b) Effect an arrest;
- (c) Prevent an escape as defined under chapter 9A.76 RCW;
- (d) Take a person into custody, transport a person for evaluation or treatment, or provide other assistance under chapter 10.77, 71.05, or 71.34 RCW;
- (e) Take a minor into protective custody when authorized or directed by statute;
- (f) Execute or enforce a court order authorizing or directing a peace officer to take a person into custody;
- (g) Execute a search warrant;
- (h) Execute or enforce an oral directive issued by a judicial officer in the courtroom or a written order where the court expressly authorizes a peace officer to use physical force to execute or enforce the directive or order; or
- (i) Prevent a person from fleeing or stop a person who is actively fleeing a lawful temporary investigative detention, provided that the person has been given notice that he or she is being detained and is not free to leave;
- (j) Take a person into custody when authorized or directed by statute; or
- (k) Protect against an imminent threat of bodily injury to the peace officer, another person, or the person against whom force is being used.

(2) DEADLY FORCE. Except as otherwise provided under this section, a peace officer may use deadly force against another person only when necessary to protect against an immediate threat of serious physical injury or death to the officer or another person. For purposes of this subsection: "Immediate threat of serious physical injury or death" means that, based on the totality of the circumstances, it is objectively reasonable to believe that a person has the present and apparent ability, opportunity, and intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or another person.

(3) REASONABLE CARE. A peace officer shall use reasonable care when determining whether to use physical force or deadly force and when using any physical force or deadly force against another person. To that end, a peace officer shall:

- (a) When possible, use all de-escalation tactics that are available and appropriate under the circumstances before using physical force;
- (b) When using physical force, use the least amount of physical force necessary to overcome resistance under the circumstances. This includes a consideration of the characteristics and conditions of a person for the purposes of determining whether to use force against that person and, if force is necessary, determining the appropriate and least amount of force possible to effect a lawful purpose. Such characteristics and conditions may include, for example, whether the person: Is visibly pregnant, or states that they are pregnant; is known to be a minor, objectively appears to be a minor, or states that they are a minor; is known to be a vulnerable adult, or objectively appears to be a vulnerable adult as defined in RCW 74.34.020; displays

signs of mental, behavioral, or physical impairments or disabilities; is experiencing perceptual or cognitive impairments typically related to the use of alcohol, narcotics, hallucinogens, or other drugs; is suicidal; has limited English proficiency; or is in the presence of children;

(c) Terminate the use of physical force as soon as the necessity for such force ends;

(d) When possible, use less lethal alternatives that are available and appropriate under the circumstances before using deadly force; and

(e) Make less lethal alternatives issued to the officer reasonably available for his or her use.

(4) A peace officer may not use any force tactics prohibited by applicable departmental policy, this chapter, or otherwise by law, except to protect his or her life or the life of another person from an imminent threat.

(5) Nothing in this section:

(a) Limits or restricts a peace officer's authority or responsibility to perform lifesaving measures or perform community caretaking functions to ensure health and safety including, but not limited to, rendering medical assistance, performing welfare checks, or assisting other first responders and medical professionals;

(b) Prevents a peace officer from responding to requests for assistance or service from first responders, medical professionals, behavioral health professionals, social service providers, designated crisis responders, shelter or housing providers, or any member of the public;

(c) Permits a peace officer to use physical force or deadly force in a manner or under such circumstances that would violate the United States Constitution or state Constitution; or

(d) Prevents a law enforcement agency or political subdivision of this state from adopting policies or standards with additional requirements for de-escalation and greater restrictions on the use of physical and deadly force than provided in this section. [2022 c 80 § 3; 2022 c 4 § 3; 2021 c 324 § 3.]

**Reviser's note:** This section was amended by 2022 c 4 § 3 and by 2022 c 80 § 3, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

**Intent—Effective date—2022 c 80:** See notes following RCW 10.120.010.

**Intent—Effective date—2022 c 4:** See notes following RCW 10.120.010.

**Intent—2021 c 324:** See note following RCW 10.120.010.