

## “PUBLIC AGENDA”

**TO:** Darlene Brander, Chairperson  
Board of Police Commissioners

**FROM:** Troy Cooper  
Office of the Chief

**DATE:** 2020 May 11

**SUBJECT:** 2019 Use of Force Report

**FILE #:** 10,030

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### **ISSUE:**

The Saskatoon Police Service provides statistical reporting to the Board of Police Commissioners on an annual basis. This report details the Use of Force that was reported from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That this report be received as information.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY:**

Reduce Crime and Victimization.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Every use of force used by a member of the Saskatoon Police Service is reviewed by the Use of Force Committee for training and coaching considerations. The Committee's goal is to ensure that force used by SPS officers is lawful, proportional and in line with training. The Committee is independent of and not involved in any related administrative or criminal investigations.

The Committee is made up of the following positions:

- Inspector of Northwest Division (Chair)
- Staff Sergeant of Headquarters Division
- Staff Sergeant of Sex Crimes Section
- Staff Sergeant of Training Section.
- Staff Sergeant of Detention/Court Prep

The S/Sgt of Detention/Court Prep was added to the committee during 2019 in order to alleviate the file load on the other members.

Also present at each committee meeting is a use of force expert to give guidance to the committee on tactics and training. Presently, Sgt. Panamaroff attends as an expert in defensive

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tactics as well as in canine procedures. As well, a member of the Saskatoon Police Association monitors each committee meeting.

The Committee met 5 times during 2019 and reviewed 271 different occurrences that involved officers using force.

### The Process:

The following process is implemented for each use of force by an SPS officer:

1. If an officer uses one of the prescribed Uses of Force, they must leave an occurrence report and fill out a Use of Force form prior to the end of their shift. The Use of Force form captures 24 different categories of force and documents the circumstances surrounding the situation.
2. The immediate supervisor, usually a Sergeant, will review the matter and may provide coaching to the officer if it is deemed necessary. The supervisor forwards a written review to their Staff Sergeant.
3. The Staff Sergeant will go through the same procedure and then forward the entire report to the Use of Force Committee.
4. The Use of Force Committee Chair assigns each file to an individual member for review. The Committee member will review the use of force submission and report their finding to the entire Committee.
5. The Committee will discuss the file and come to a determination as to whether the use of force was appropriate and compliant with policy.

Every use of force is therefore reviewed a minimum of 4 times as it goes through the review process to determine if the officer's actions are in line with their training and policy.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### Statistics

The chart on the next page shows the breakdown of the types of force that were used in 2019 as well as the previous 2 years. It should be noted that these are the individual types of force that were used. There were 271 occurrences where force was used; however, there is sometimes more than one type of force used in a single occurrence.

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<b>Use of force Comparison 2017-2019</b>			
<b>Type of Force Used</b>			
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Firearm Discharged	14	12	12
Firearm Pointed	14	12	14
Firearm - animal Destruction	11	10	12
Less Lethal	5	3	0
Baton	3	2	2
OC Spray	8	13	10
Chemical Weapon	1	1	0
Canine	33	21	43
Diversionsary Device	9	4	10
Conducted Energy Weapon	21	33	32
Conducted Energy Weapon - Point	17	17	14
Neck Restraint	1	5	2
Pressure Point Stun	2	4	4
Physical Strike	90	89	107
Joint Lock	16	15	18
Takedown/Throw	52	54	50
Restraint Strap	24	19	16
Spit Sock	32	31	28
Restraint Chair	8	23	18
Tactical Team	32	17	35
Explosive Forced Entry	0	0	1
Other	12	15	1

<b>Injury Status</b>			
<b>Suspect Injured</b>	110	81	119
Death	0	1	0
Medical Attention	101	74	91
Hospitalized	27	24	32
<b>Officer Injured</b>	30	24	26
Medical Attention	8	16	6
Hospitalized	1	3	1

The Saskatoon Police Service had 271 occurrence reports in 2019 where force was used. In 2018 there were 256 and in 2017 there were 264. This is not counting police pursuits which are categorized as a use of force, but are reviewed by a separate committee. The 12 firearm discharges all relate to the destruction of animals.

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### Injuries

There was an increase in injuries to the arrested persons in 2019 as there are 38 more listed over last year. However, the amount of injuries is more consistent with the amount recorded in 2017. This can be partly explained with the increased number of canine uses in 2019 over 2018.

### Canine contacts

The number of canine use of force events has fluctuated over the last three years. Sgt Cory Goodwin, who is in charge of the Canine Section, advised that in 2018, there was a sudden decline in the number of dogs being deployed. Two dogs became ill and perished and one was taken out of service for eight months due to an unintentional contact. One officer was removed from the section. This resulted in the section losing half of its strength in a short period of time. In 2019, the numbers came back to nearly full strength. The increase in canine numbers allowed for more apprehensions in 2019.

### Preventative Uses of Force

There are several categories of force that are recorded that do not fit into what the public may typically consider to be force used by the police. Force is often seen as a physical altercation where the officer is using striking or self- defense technics. Separate from that, SPS officers often take actions to prevent injury, prevent assaults or prevent suffering to animals. These are recorded as force and are included in the SPS numbers. The following are examples:

- Euthanizing an injured animal – 12 occurrences.
- Use of a spit sock to prevent officers from being spit on. This allows the officers to be in contact with an arrest that is spitting at them without having to use any further physical force – 28 occurrences.
- Use of a restraint chair to prevent self-harm in Detention – 18 occurrences.
- Use of a restraint strap to stop officers from being kicked and to prevent self-harm and damage occurring during transport – 16 occurrences.
- Use of Tactical Support Unit – 35 occurrences. The specialized training and equipment of the TSU team increases the likelihood that a lower level of force will be used if TSU is involved. The use of TSU is not considered an escalation; however, the team’s presence is recorded as a use of force regardless of whether they interact directly with a person. If TSU is utilized in order to execute a search warrant in a safe manner, it is recorded as a use of force. By contrast, if the Drug Section executes the same search warrant, it is not recorded as a use of force.

There were no reportable physical uses of force by TSU in 2019 other than their presence and their use of diversionary devices. A diversionary device was used 10 times by TSU. Its purpose is to prevent the suspect from being able to react to cause harm to police or anyone else in the residence.

Restraint Chair

The restraint chair is used in Detention for people who are suicidal or causing self-harm. It is used as a means of preventing injury. Policy for the chair requires that only trained officers are to use the chair and the person who is in the chair is to be closely monitored. The use of the restraint chair in Detention has increased since 2017 but is down from last year. New chairs were purchased in 2018. The new chairs are easier to use, more effective and more comfortable for the person being put into the chair. The chair is padded and allows for a reclined sitting position. This is much more conducive to making the person comfortable and allowing them to calm down to a point where they are no longer a threat to themselves. It should be noted that policy directs that a paramedic must check a person upon being put into the chair and also upon their removal.

Conducted Energy Weapon

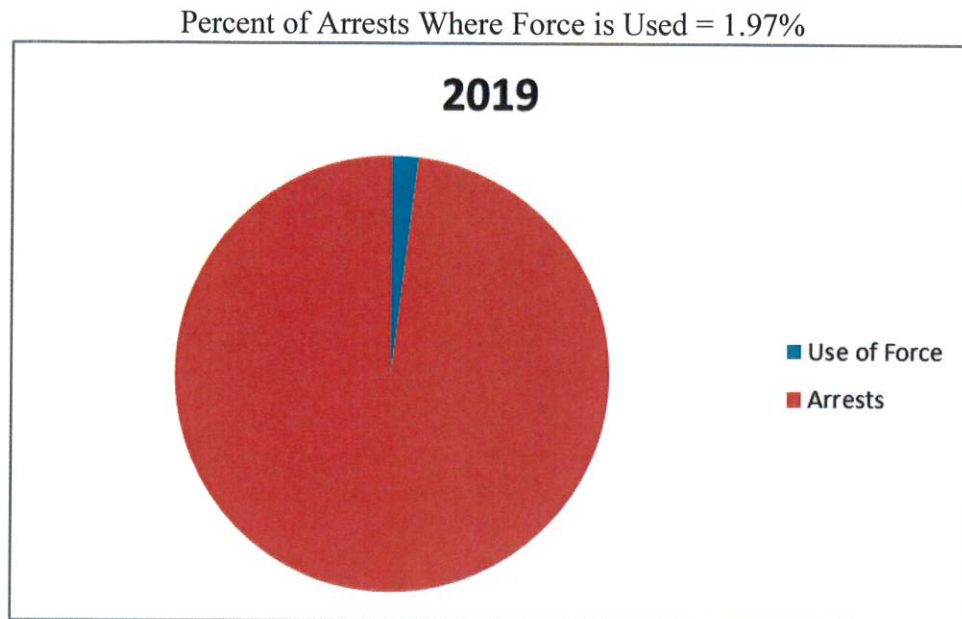
The use of CEW's has increased since 2017 but did remain the same compared to 2018. The CEW is a valuable tool for police to use when dealing with violent individuals. Dr. Craig Bennell of Carleton University wrote a paper titled, Research Review – Use of Force, for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police on use of force. He references a 2017 Canadian study which stated that CEW's were likely to cause fewer subject and officer injuries compared to stuns and strikes. The only injuries noted resulting from a CEW in 2019 for SPS are from the probes themselves and are minor in nature.

Frequency of Use of Force

Dr. Bennell's paper also discusses the incorrect perception that police use force more often than they do. *“For example, research from my lab has indicated that the public doesn't appreciate how rare use of force is, ” .... “For instance, it is not uncommon for participants we've studied to estimate that force is used in 20% of all police-public interactions, ”.*

In 2019, the Saskatoon Police Service had 271 occurrences where force was used. The Planning Section advises that during this same year, we attended 86,144 dispatched calls. This shows that 85,873 calls were resolved without any force which is a rate of 99.68%.

It is recognized that most dispatched calls would not require force to be used as no arrest is occurring; however, officers did make 13,713 arrests during the year. This would indicate that force was used in only 1.97 % of arrests during the year. This percentage drops even further if categories where no force is used are removed from the total. Animal destruction does not involve people and often the use of TSU does not result in contact or arrests but it is still documented as a use of force.



This comparison is consistent with the two previous years of 2018 at 1.89% and 2017 at 1.84%. The message from this is that SPS officers are well trained and do a very good job of dealing with arrest situations, only needing to resort to force tactics in a slim minority of occurrences.

### Training

SPS officers are trained on the Use of Force model, Defensive Tactics and De-escalation on an annual basis. During this training, reality based training scenarios are implemented where they can practice their de-escalation communication skills.

Sgt Panamaroff of the Training Section has advised that over the last 6 years, techniques have been added to the training program at SPS to help mitigate strikes to the head for a subject that is “turtling” on the ground with their hands pulled underneath them. These techniques include using pressure points and manipulating the subject’s arms to get them out in a controlled manner, when there is no imminent risk perceived by the officer. Sgt Panamaroff contributed to the last revision of the Provincial Defensive Tactics manual in 2014. At the beginning of 2020, he, along with his RPS counterpart and the curriculum development staff member from the Saskatchewan Police College began another revision of the defensive tactics manual.

Recruits receive the following training while attending the Saskatchewan Police College:

- A full Verbal Judo course consisting of three, 8 hour days.
- De-escalation training is part of the Defensive Tactics training including scenario training.
- De-escalation training is also part of their CEW training and is a component of the final certification.
- Public and Officer Safety Training includes scenarios where de-escalation is utilized.

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- Once back at the SPS, recruits are put through scenarios as part of their In-Service Training.

The annual NCO course includes material regarding a supervisor’s role in reviewing use of force incidents. This was last delivered in February 2020.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Some of the guiding principles listed in the Use of Force Model state that:

- The primary responsibility of a peace officer is to preserve and protect life.
- The primary objective of any use of force is to ensure public safety.
- Police officer safety is essential to public safety.

In the interest of public safety, officers have been given the lawful authority to use force, when necessary, but are responsible for any force that is excessive. The Use of Force Model directs our officer’s decision making process and their actions when determining if force is required and what form that force should take. SPS officers were successful in upholding their public safety obligations while only using force in 1.97% of arrests. The Use of Force Model also guides the review process that occurs afterwards. The Use of Force Committee strives to ensure that the principles of this model and the law are adhered to, and in so doing, reinforces the Saskatoon Police Service’s commitment to public safety.

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**Submitted by:**   
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**Dated:** May 12, 2020