



OAKLAND
POLICE DEPARTMENT
455 7TH ST., OAKLAND, CA 94607

OPEN LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY FROM THE
OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT AND
INTERIM POLICE CHIEF SUSAN MANHEIMER

Dear Oakland Community,

Over the past two weeks, the Oakland Police Department joined our community in outrage over George Floyd's murder. The men and women of the Department helped facilitate and manage the many inspiring and peaceful protests throughout our City.

Unfortunately, like many departments throughout the Bay Area and the Country, OPD also responded to assemblies disrupted by violence, requiring crowd management to control physical attacks on officers and threats to public and officer safety. In addition, individuals engaged in widespread looting, vandalism, and arson that damaged our City's most vulnerable merchant corridors and communities.

We are grateful to the Northern California agencies that provided mutual aid to the City. Their presence enabled us to provide calm and security to our neighborhoods during this period of unrest.

During some of the demonstrations, the safety and security of our community was compromised. OPD took active steps to control the violence and provide presence and security for our already exposed businesses. Here are some statistics:

- Approximately 200 businesses were looted and vandalized.
- 137 arson fires were set throughout Oakland.
- Resources were additionally stressed responding to violent crime throughout the city. During this time period, five homicides and numerous shootings occurred.
- One of the homicides and shootings was related to the incidents of looting.
- Four people within the crowd reported injuries.
- Two federal protective services uniformed officers were shot; one was killed.
- More than 30 first responders were injured of which 21 were Oakland Police Officers and two were Oakland Firefighters.
- Mutual Aid was enacted, providing additional resources to manage the large and disruptive protests.
- More than 300 individuals were arrested with more investigations pending.
- More than 700 calls for service were delayed of which 100 were priority calls.

The City of Oakland, aligned with our County and the region, adopted a curfew as another tool for crowd management. Our department only enforced the curfew as a last resort to calm unruly gatherings. Once the series of violent demonstrations abated, the curfew was lifted quickly in alignment with the County and others in the region.

The Department utilized crowd management strategies in deploying smoke and gas to disperse crowds to stem assaults on officers. All gas deployments will be investigated and reviewed as a use of force.

Throughout the County and the region, the law enforcement tactics and strategies on crowd management are being questioned. We understand and are committed to transparency and thoroughly reviewing our operations, ensuring accountability, and improving as an organization.

Below we outline some of the Oakland Police Department's initial efforts to review our practices. We recognize the importance of rebuilding trust in this period of unrest while the nation focuses on police brutality, most recently exemplified by the horrific incident in Minneapolis. We are evaluating the principles and policies proposed by various groups and organizations calling for changes in police practices. We have some of these practices in place now and commit to reviewing more of these proposals.

Department Review

The Department has mandated systematic reviews of use of force and is preparing an After-Action Report on its response to the demonstrations. This will provide an assessment of the Department's response to the protests and present findings and recommendations. Further, the Department is reviewing all the uses of force consistent with our policy and as part of our oversight and Federal Monitoring.

In addition, a dedicated Internal Affairs team and the Community Police Review Agency are receiving and investigating misconduct complaints. These investigations will be completed within 180 days in compliance with our policy.

Crowd Management Policy Considerations

Under the provisions of our Negotiated Settlement Agreement and after many years of federal oversight, we have adopted robust policies, practices, and accountability systems. Our Use of Force policies emphasize de-escalation. Tear gas may be used to disperse unlawful assemblies only under the authority of an incident commander when other techniques have failed or will not be effective, or under exigent circumstances, for example, when an officer confronts an immediate public safety threat. Specialty Impact Munitions (SIM) may be used against a specific individual who is engaging in conduct that poses an immediate threat of loss of life or serious bodily injury; or who is engaging in substantial destruction of property which creates an immediate risk to the lives or safety of other persons.

Smoke, gas, and SIMs were used on May 29, 30, 31, and June 1, 2020, during unlawful assemblies and in exigent circumstances. We will be conducting a thorough review and assessment of our Crowd Control and Crowd Management Policy operations as referenced above in an After-Action Report and via our Use of Force Investigations. All reviews and assessments will be reported to the Federal Monitor and our Police Commission. Transparency and minimal force are our goals.

Police Reforms

USE OF FORCE:

Currently, there is an initiative encouraging departments to align with the policy guidelines articulated in reform movements such as the "8CantWait" principles <https://8cantwait.org/>.

In collaboration with the Oakland Police Commission, we have spent more than eight months revising our Use of Force Policy and many of the proposed revisions are in alignment with the 8CantWait” principles. With the full support of Mayor Libby Schaaf, we are proposing a Special Order to the Police Commission this week to remove the carotid restraint hold as a use of force option. The Department has already removed chokeholds as a use of force option. We are committed to evaluating the rest of these principles and will work in collaboration with our Police Commission Use of Force Committee to consider the best practices associated with them.

IMPLICIT BIAS AND RACE NEUTRAL POLICIES:

In alignment with the 21st Century best practices, the Oakland Police Department has developed and implemented very progressive policies to reduce implicit bias and address racial disparities. We work with leading experts in this field such as Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt of Stanford University, who recently referenced our innovative strategies in a Time Magazine article.

<https://time.com/5849172/police-racial-bias/>

The Oakland Police Department, working with our federal monitoring team and civilian oversight has been making systemic, proactive and progressive changes to our policies and practices for more than 20 years to transform the department’s impact on the community we serve. We are committed to deepening this critical work throughout all our practices, evaluating our recruitment and hiring processes, taking innovative steps to reduce implicit bias, collecting data about who we pull over and why, and partnering with the Police Commission to enact measurable and lasting change.

We recognize it’s not just about changing policy; it’s about changing police culture. To take the next steps, we have established an internal Race and Equity Impact team to evaluate our internal culture and evaluate the external and internal impacts of our practices and policy changes.

The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis is the latest tragedy to shine a spotlight on the need for police reform across the nation. OPD is committed to advancing this work in Oakland, in collaboration with our City leadership, our Departments of Race & Equity and Violence Prevention, and most importantly, in consultation and partnership with our community.

Yours in Service,

Susan E. Manheimer

Interim Chief of Police

