

Policy 673 - Security Use of Force

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of force by security personnel at Lower Columbia College (LCC) that ensure the safety of students, staff, faculty, and visitors while also protecting the rights and dignity of individuals. This policy aims to define appropriate circumstances under which force, including using Oleoresin Capsicum (also known as O.C. or pepper spray) as a self-defense tool, can be used to de-escalate dangerous situations and prevent harm.

1. Policy Statement

Security personnel at Lower Columbia College are committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment. To this end, force shall only be used when absolutely necessary to protect individuals from imminent harm. The amount of force used must be reasonable to the situation at hand, ensuring minimal harm to all parties involved.

All uses of force must comply with state and local laws, including RCW 9A.16.020, as well as college policies, and must be appropriately documented and reviewed. Nonviolent methods of conflict resolution and de-escalation will always be prioritized before resorting to the use of force.

2. Definitions

- **De-escalation:** Actions taken to reduce the intensity of a conflict or potentially dangerous situation without the use of force.
- **De Minimis Physical Force:** Physical force meant to separate, guide, or control without the use of control techniques that are intended to or are reasonably likely to cause any pain or injury.
- **Force:** The power, violence, compulsion, or constraint exerted upon or against a person or thing.
- **Necessary:** No reasonably effective alternative to the use of force appeared to exist, and the amount of force was reasonable to effect the lawful purpose intended.
- **Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray:** An inflammatory agent that causes an intense burning sensation of the eyes, nose, mouth, and skin and is designed to temporarily incapacitate a person.
- **Physical Force:** Any act reasonably likely to cause physical pain or injury or any other act exerted upon a person's body to compel, control, constrain, or restrain the person's movement.

3. Authorization to Use Force

Security guards at LCC are authorized to use force, including OC spray as a self-defense tool, in the following situations:

- To protect themselves or others from imminent physical harm or threats of violence.

- To prevent the commission of a violent crime or to detain individuals who pose a threat to the safety of the campus community.
- To control individuals exhibiting violent, aggressive, or otherwise dangerous behavior when verbal commands and de-escalation techniques have been ineffective.

4. Use of Force Guidelines

Security guards must evaluate each situation to determine whether the use of force is necessary and, if so, the appropriate amount of force to apply. The following principles must guide all use of force actions:

- **De-Escalation:** Whenever possible, security guards should attempt to resolve situations through verbal communication and conflict resolution techniques before using force.
- **Necessity:** Force must only be used when there is no reasonably effective alternative to prevent imminent harm or de-escalate the situation.
- **Reasonable:** The amount of force is reasonable to effect the lawful purpose intended.
- **Minimization of Harm:** Security guards must take all reasonable steps to minimize injury or distress to individuals, bystanders, and themselves.

5. Types of Authorized Force

- **Non-Physical Force:** This includes verbal commands, warnings, and other non-physical methods to gain compliance or de-escalate a situation.
- **Physical Force:** When necessary, security guards may use reasonable physical force to restrain or detain individuals who pose an imminent threat.
- **OC Spray:** Authorized security guards may use OC spray under the specific conditions outlined in Procedure 673.1A.

Any use of force must be in accordance with training and college policies.

6. Reporting and Accountability

- All uses of force must be reported in writing as soon as practicable. The report should document the circumstances of the incident, the type of force used, and any injuries or medical treatment provided.
- A supervisor will review all use-of-force reports to ensure compliance with college policies and applicable laws.
- Any use of force resulting in injury or significant physical contact will be subject to a detailed investigation to determine whether the force used was appropriate.
- Unauthorized or improper use of force may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

7. Training and Certification

All security guards authorized to use force or deploy OC spray must undergo comprehensive training on the legal, ethical, and practical aspects of force. Training will include:

- Annual recertification on the use of force, de-escalation techniques, and the appropriate use of OC spray.
- Specialized training on the use of OC spray, including effects, legal requirements, and first aid measures, if the security guard chooses to carry OC while on shift.
- Security guards are not required to carry OC spray. OC spray may be made available to any security guard who chooses to carry it. Any security guard wishing to carry OC spray must undergo training as described in this policy.

Historic Information

- 1/28/2026 - approved by the Executive Leadership Team
- 1/5/2026-1/16/2026 - Campus Review
- 12/3/2026 - reviewed by Governance Council
- 11/18/2025 - reviewed by UMCC (and via email 11/19/2025)
- 11/12/2025 - reviewed by Governance Council
- 11/5/2025 - reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team

Resources

Resource/Reference/Procedure (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/_assets/documents/673.1A.pdf)	Unit Responsibility (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/_assets/documents/673.1A.pdf)
Procedure 673.1A Use of OC (Oleoresin Capsicum) Spray (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/_assets/documents/673.1A.pdf)	Safety & Security