

St. Louis Park Police Department



2019 annual report on use of force

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Introduction

The St. Louis Park Police Department is committed to providing a safe community through quality service, community partnerships and professionalism. Department leadership is dedicated to providing officers with the highest standard of training to emphasize de-escalation and crisis intervention techniques along with proper use of tactics and control.

This report was completed for the purpose of reviewing the St. Louis Park Police Department's use of force for the year 2019. The data collected for this report was generated from the department's response to resistance reports and a manual review of cases involving force. This report will be used to identify trends in the use of force by agency personnel to evaluate potential training modifications, equipment needs or policy revisions.

Use of force by police officers is governed by chapter 6 of the St. Louis Park Police Department Policy, which defines force as follows:

“Intentional actions by an officer that the officer knows, or reasonably should know is likely to cause a nonconsensual, harmful, or offensive bodily contact with another, or places another in imminent fear of non-consensual, harmful, or offensive bodily contact.”

Officers are directed by policy to use the least amount of force reasonably necessary to accomplish the intended objective, without impairing the safety of others. When force is used, police officers are required to complete a response to resistance report (RRR). This report is required any time force is used beyond routine handcuffing, or if the officer was present and observed the use of force. This standard is much higher than that of many police departments across the country that require only documenting the use of force when there is an incident involving injury to the subject of the force.

The report is reviewed by the duty supervisor who is required to evaluate if the officer's actions complied with St. Louis Park Police Department Policy. As a form of checks and balances, all response to resistance reports are further reviewed by two command staff members.

The response to resistance report is located in the St. Louis Park Police Department records management system. The report is customized and includes fill-in-the-blank and pull-down options that cover the following: incident information, officer information, subject information, tactics and/or weapon use, compliance, officer injury, subject injury and supervisor review. Officers also are required to complete an official police report documenting the incident, including the type of use of force employed.

Use of force definitions

De-escalation: Taking action or communicating verbally or non-verbally during a potential force encounter. De-escalation is an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force, or with reduced force. De-escalation may include the use of such techniques as command presence, verbal persuasion, dialogue, advisements, warnings and tactical repositioning.

Verbalization: Making conversation or issuing commands, orders or directions, given with the intention of informing, educating and controlling.

Soft hand techniques: Non-injury producing, weaponless control methods.

Chemical aerosol: non-lethal aerosol sprays.

Hard empty hand techniques: When an officer uses strikes to create temporary dysfunction, or a physical takedown for the purpose of gaining control of a combative individual.

Electronic control device - Taser displayed: When an officer points their Taser at an individual but does not discharge the Taser.

Electronic control device - Taser deployed: When an officer discharges their Taser at an individual to gain control of them.

Impact weapon: Less-than-lethal option, such as a projectile or baton, that is intended to create temporary dysfunction in order to gain control.

Service weapon displayed: A firearm is displayed by an officer but is not pointed at an individual.

Service weapon deployed: When an officer discharges their service weapon at an individual to protect themselves or another from death or great bodily harm.

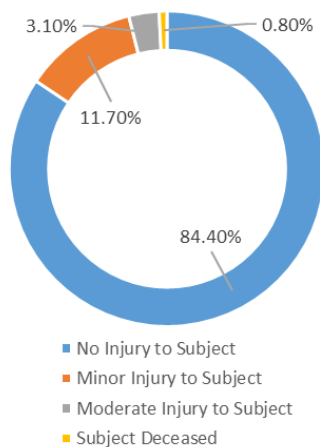
Deadly force: Any force that could potentially result in death or great bodily harm.

Response to resistance statistics for 2019

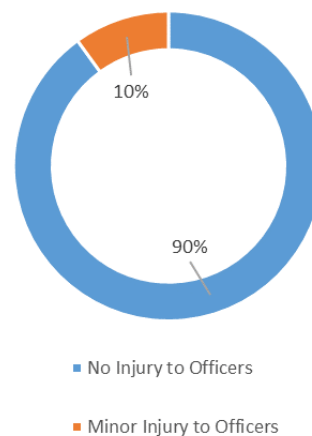
In 2019, the St. Louis Park Police Department responded to 46,580 calls for service. This number does not include voided or test calls. Of those calls for service, 128 cases resulted in response to resistance reports. This means that in 2019, 0.27 percent of the total calls for service resulted in some level of force being used. St. Louis Park Police Department Policy requires that every officer involved in the use of force incident, whether they used or observed force, is required to complete a response to resistance report. Therefore, some incidents in which multiple officers responded there may be multiple response to resistance reports. In 2019 304 response to resistance reports were completed for the 128 cases in which use of force was documented.

When evaluating use of force incidents, it's important to track injuries sustained by both the subject and the officer to gauge effectiveness and identify possible training or policy issues. Of the 128 cases where force was documented, 108 of the subjects involved reported no injury; 15 sustained minor injuries (abrasions, scrapes, bruises); four sustained moderate injury (lacerations, puncture wound, K9 bite); and one person died. Officers were injured 13 times, all of which were reported as minor injuries.

Incidents of Force Where Subject Sustained Injury

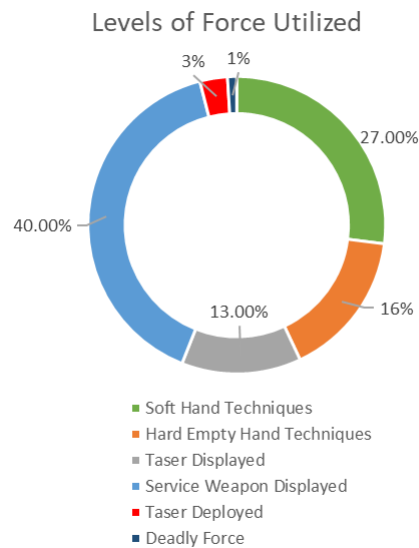


Incidents of Force Where Officer Sustained Injury



Levels of force used

The St. Louis Park Police Department's response to resistance report is designed to provide data on the level of force used on a subject. The report tracks the force option used based on a use of force continuum that includes verbal commands, soft empty hand techniques, hard empty hand techniques, Taser displayed, service weapon displayed, Taser deployed, and service weapon deployed. For purposes of this analysis, the highest level of force used during the incident is reported.



De-escalation

A check box in the case information section of the police report allows tracking of incidents when officers use de-escalation strategies. Officers are instructed to check this box each time they use de-escalation strategies and to further document their de-escalation efforts in their report. Officers are also required to document de-escalation strategies in their response to resistance report. Of the 128 response to resistance cases in 2019, de-escalation strategies were attempted and documented 82 times, which amounts to 64 percent of use-of-force incidents. It should also be noted that, of the remaining 46 cases, ten were high-risk traffic stops requiring immediate commands with little or no time for the use of de-escalation strategies. Read more about high-risk traffic stops in the next section.

About high-risk traffic stops

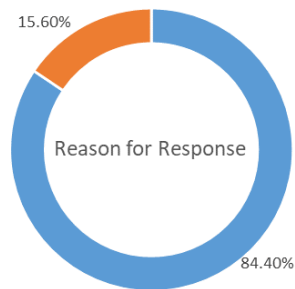
High-risk traffic stops are defined as posing a significant risk to the officer when dealing with the occupants of a motor vehicle. Situations that may fall into this category are known or suspected felons, stolen vehicles, an armed individual, or any potentially dangerous person.

When a police officer has a reasonable belief that a motor vehicle to be stopped contains an individual(s) falling into one of the above-listed categories, the officer must employ a set of tactics substantially different from those used in a routine traffic stop. The officer's reasonable belief can be based on the officer's observations, official communications and other sources of reliable information. Due to the dangerous nature of high-risk stops, it is a nationally recognized training standard to have a firearm at a ready position or pointed in the direction of the suspect vehicle. The goal of a high-risk traffic stop is to detain or arrest dangerous or potentially dangerous individuals in the safest manner possible for everyone involved. All high-risk traffic stops require a response to resistance report to document why the firearm was pointed in the direction of the suspect vehicle.

Self-initiated cases involving force

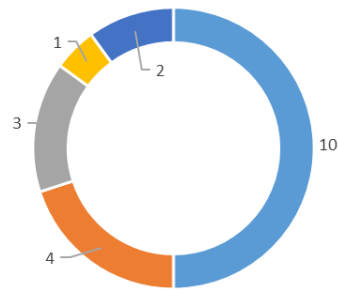
During an analysis of the 128 cases that involved some level of force, it's valuable to review if those cases were initiated by officers or if they were a response to a call for service. Out of the 128 cases involving force, 20 were self-initiated. Ten of those were a result of a high-risk traffic stop. None of the officer-initiated cases in 2019 resulted in an injury to the subjects or to officers. Below is a breakdown of the officer self-initiated traffic stops/contacts where force was used:

- High-risk traffic stops 10
- Subjects with felony warrants 4
- DWI suspect 3
- Stolen firearm in vehicle 1
- Directed patrol 2



- Officers Dispatched to Call
- Officer Initiated Call

Reasons for Officer Initiated Uses of Force



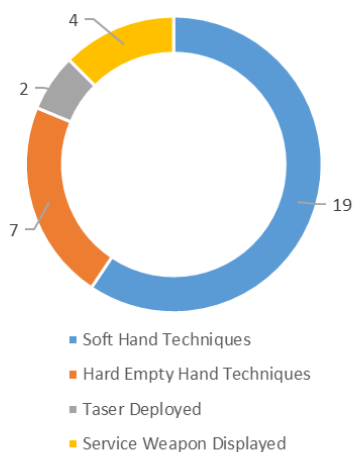
- High Risk Traffic Stops
- Subject with Felony Warrant
- DWI Suspects
- Stolen Firearm in Vehicle
- Directed Patrol

Mental health/crisis calls

In 2019, St. Louis Park police officers responded to 1,738 calls related to mental health, of which 411 were crisis/mental health/suicide calls, and 1,327 were welfare checks. Of those 1,738 calls, 27 (1.5 percent) resulted in response to resistance reports. Of the 27 cases, 21 resulted in a health and welfare hold on the subject. A health and welfare hold enables an officer to require a subject to be evaluated by a mental health professional when they are a danger to themselves or others. Of the six remaining cases, three crisis calls were to assist other departments on suicidal individuals and the disposition is unknown; one involved a juvenile who was released to their parent; one case resulted in fourth degree assault on the officer; and one intoxicated subject was released to a sober adult. It is important to note in 22 of those cases, the subject was not injured; three had minor injuries (abrasions, scrapes, bruises); and two received puncture wounds from Taser use.

In 2018, the police department participated in a strategic planning process. As a result, one of the department’s strategic initiatives is to address mental health concerns in the community. This effort has led to work with the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative, a partnership with Hennepin County and the Hopkins Police Department. As part of the initiative a Hennepin County licensed social worker works directly with police officers in St. Louis Park. Officers and the social worker partner together to effectively address the needs of community members who may have mental health, substance, medical and other social service needs. This partnership is anticipated to reduce the number of metal health related calls for service in the community.

Levels of Force Utilized on Mental Health/Crisis Calls

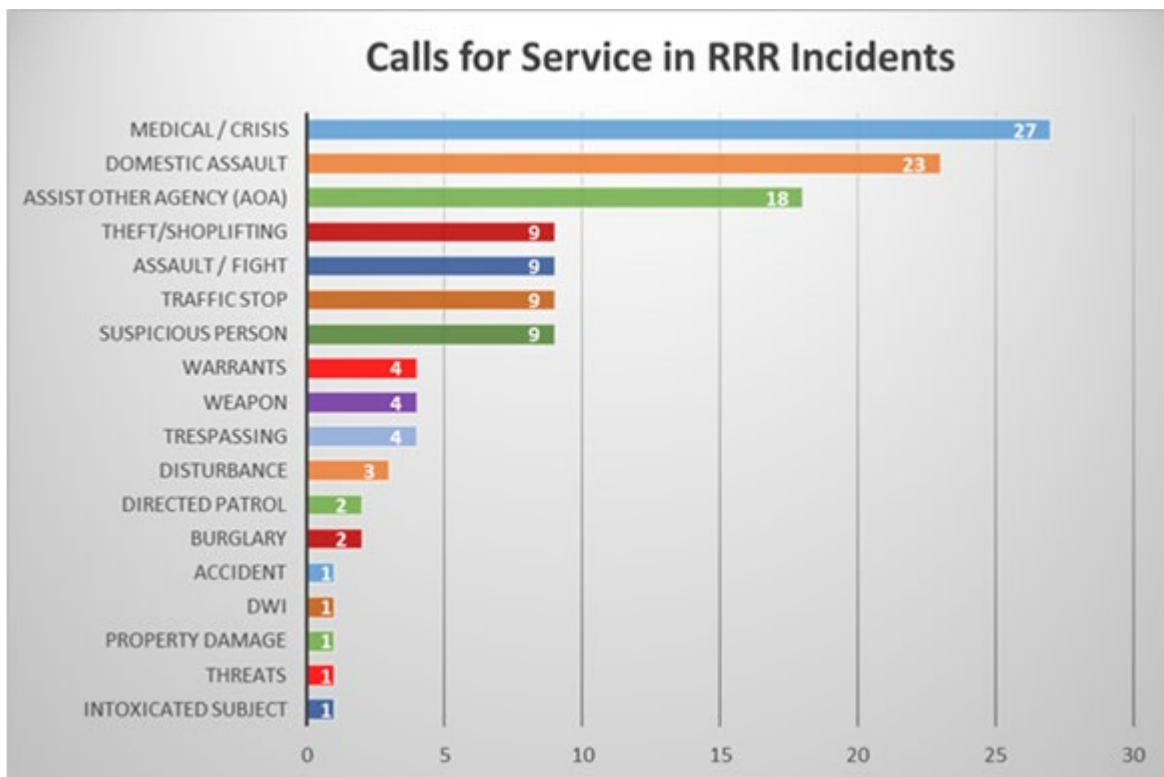


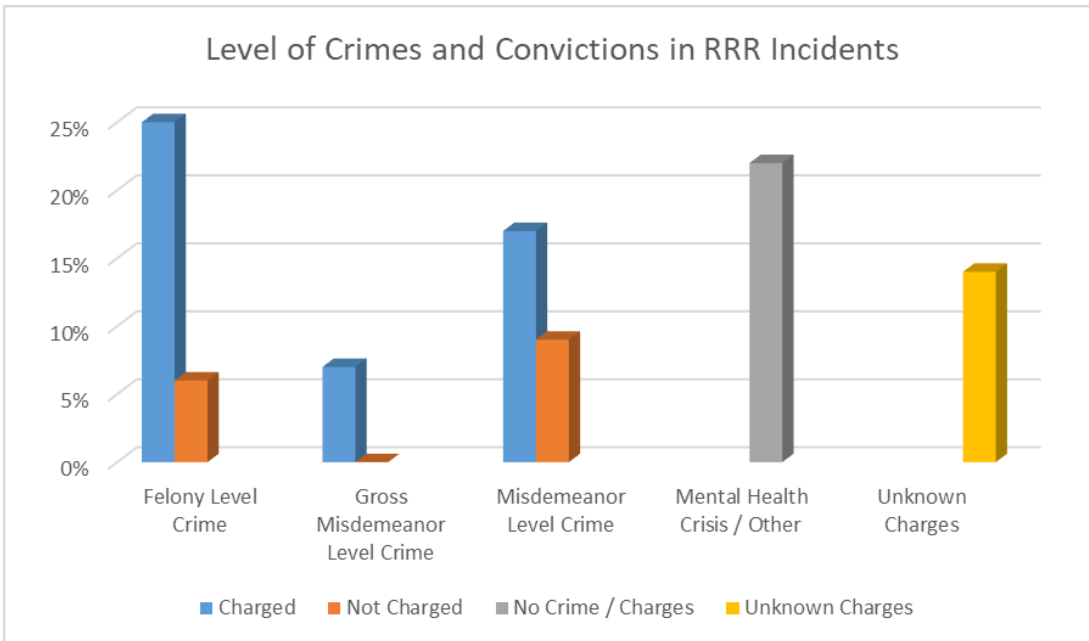
Crisis/Mental Health Calls



Charging data

In 2019, 128 cases resulted in completion of response to resistance reports. The graph below provides a breakdown in the types of calls for service for these 128 cases. Of those 128 cases, subjects were charged with crimes in 63 cases – 49 percent of the number of cases involving response to resistance reports. Thirty-two cases resulted in felony level charges, nine cases resulted in gross misdemeanor charges and 22 cases resulted in misdemeanor charges. Of the 128 cases, 29 were for mental health related calls for service, with no criminal charges. Additionally, 17 of the 128 cases involved officers assisting other agencies and the department was not able to obtain data on criminal charges for these cases.



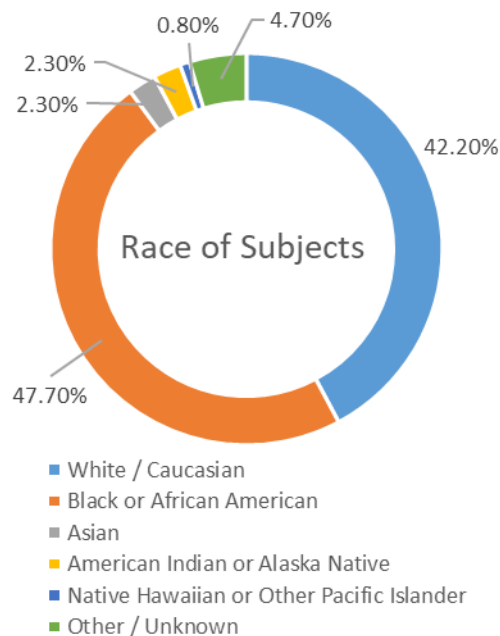


Race data

The St. Louis Park Police Department does not collect race data on all calls for service or on all police reports. However, race is recorded on a booking record during the arrest process and is required on the response to resistance report. Of the 128 cases, the following race data was collected:

- Black or African American 61
- White/Caucasian 54
- American Indian 3
- Asian 3
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 1
- Unknown 6

In all six cases where race is reported as unknown, St. Louis Park police officers were dispatched to assist other agencies and race data wasn't available for the response to resistance report.



In 108 of the 128 cases, officers were dispatched to the incident and responded based on a citizen complaint. Twenty officer self-initiated calls in 2019 resulted in the use of force. Of those 20 cases, 13 subjects were Black or African American, six subjects were white, and one subject was American Indian. In each of these 20 cases, there were no reported injuries to the subject or to the officers.

Electronic control device (Taser)

In 2019, a Taser was displayed by officers 26 times and a Taser was deployed four times. Of 46,580 calls for service, a Taser was displayed 0.05 percent of the time and a Taser was deployed 0.008 percent of the time.

Use of deadly force

The St. Louis Park Police Department Use of Deadly Force Policy is as follows:

1) It shall be the policy of the department, unless expressly negated elsewhere, to accord officers discretion in the use of deadly force to the extent permitted by Minnesota State Statute § 609.066, Subdivision 2, which authorizes peace officers acting in the line of duty to use deadly force only when necessary:

a) To protect the peace officer or another from apparent death or great bodily harm.

b) To effect the arrest or capture, or prevent the escape, of a person who the peace officer knows, or has reasonable grounds to believe, has committed or attempted to commit a felony involving the use or threatened use of deadly force.

c) To effect the arrest or capture, or prevent the escape, of a person who the officer knows, or has reasonable grounds to believe, has committed or attempted to commit a felony, if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or great bodily harm if the person's apprehension is delayed.

2) If feasible, an officer should give warning before using or attempting to use deadly force.

In 2019 the St. Louis Park Police Department used deadly force once. The case was investigated by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office and reviewed by the Hennepin County Attorney's Office. The county attorney's office determined that the level of force was justified under current legal standards. No criminal charges were issued. The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office investigation and the Hennepin County Attorney's Office report were reviewed by the St. Louis Park Police Command Staff for possible policy or procedure violations by the officers involved in the incident. No policy or procedure violations were identified.

