

Rules and Procedures

Rule 315

April 11, 1991

Rule 315 - HANDCUFFS

Rule 315 is issued to establish Boston Police Department policy regarding the use of handcuffs by members of the force in the performance of their duties. Because of the variety of circumstances which may be encountered by officers, no rule can suggest definitive methods for every situation in which the use of handcuffs may be appropriate. Rather, this rule will set certain specific guidelines to provide officers with a firm basis on which to utilize sound judgment in making reasonable and prudent decisions.

Sec. 1 General Considerations: Failure to use handcuffs or the improper use of them can result in embarrassing incidents to officers, and can create potentially dangerous situations for the officers and the public. The Department issues handcuffs to all sworn personnel as standard equipment to be used as a restraining device, not a mechanism for subduing prisoners. Officers should not, however, be lulled into a false sense of security after applying handcuffs. The subject can still kick and if the handcuffs have not been properly applied, they can become a lethal weapon on the wrist of a desperate person. Handcuffs issued by the Department are double-locking handcuffs and whenever they are applied the double-locking feature should be used if possible, since they are then more difficult to pick and will also prevent violent prisoners or persons restrained for psychological purposes from injuring themselves by the handcuffs tightening during a struggle.

Sec. 2 When Carrying Handcuffs: Your handcuffs are carried in a way so that they are easily accessible by either hand and in the loaded position so they are ready for immediate use.

Sec. 3 Maintenance: Handcuffs are a mechanical device which must be cleaned and lubricated periodically and inspected frequently to ensure their proper function when needed. Keep the ratchet and lockwork free of dirt, lint or other substances which may limit function. Periodically lubricate the ratchet with lead graphite.

Sec. 4 Handcuffs are to be used: Whenever a person is arrested or taken into custody, regardless of age or sex, in a manner which is consistent with this Rule, unless exigent circumstances exist which make it justifiable for an officer not to do so; in which case, the officer(s) responsible shall be prepared to justify his failure to use handcuffs.

Sec. 5 When Handcuffing a Suspect: There are various techniques and positions for controlling, handcuffing and searching suspects. Whether using the standing, kneeling or prone positions, the suspect is in an off balance position. When possible, the officer should approach a suspect from the side or rear with his/her weapon holstered and secured, gun side away from the suspect. Remain alert for any unpredictable moves. Handcuff the suspect with their hands

behind their back, thumbs up, palms out. Place the jaw of the handcuffs against the prisoners right wrist about 1 inch above the wrist bone. Press the jaws firmly against the check and re-engage. The suspect's other hand is then cuffed in a similar manner. Now both cuffs are adjusted one (1) inch above the wrist bone to the desired size with the palms out, thumbs up. Be careful that the skin is not placed in the jaws or that the circulation is impeded. When practicable, double lock the handcuffs after both cuffs are in place.

Note: For extra security, if the suspect is wearing a sturdy belt, this may be used to more securely contain the suspect. To do so, after applying one of the handcuffs pass the free end of the second handcuff under the suspect's belt and apply to the other wrist. As described above, be sure the keyhole is facing up. After both handcuffs are in place, double lock them if practicable.

Sec. 6 Officers shall thoroughly search the suspect after applying the handcuffs, unless exigent circumstances exist which make it justifiable for an officer not to do so; in which case, the officer(s) responsible shall be prepared to justify his/her failure to search. Officers may search for instruments which could be used to avoid arrest or effect an escape from custody and evidence of the crime for which the arrest is made. No matter how many times a prisoner is searched or how long he has been incarcerated or if a prisoner changes custody, always do a complete and thorough search.

Booking Search: A Booking Search may be made of any person being incarcerated. The purpose of a booking search is not to discover evidence. It is conducted in order to protect the owner's property, to avoid disputes over property, to avoid false claims, to assist in identification and to prevent suicides and other physical harm. Items of a sizable nature discovered during a booking search will be admissible under the plain view theory.

Periodically check the suspect's hands to see that they are in good condition and to foil any possible escape attempt.

Sec. 7 Two Prisoners With One Pair of Handcuffs: When circumstances require, two prisoners can be secured with one pair of handcuffs provided proper safeguards are taken. The right wrist of one prisoner is handcuffed, as described above. When practicable, pass the free end under the prisoner's belt, the right wrist of prisoner number two is secured by the other handcuff. The two prisoners are handcuffed right wrist to right wrist to limit mobility and the prisoners are in an off balance position. Now do a thorough search of the prisoners.

Sec. 8 Two or More Prisoners: As officers of this Department are instructed at the Police Academy, when multiple arrests have been made and several prisoners are to be transported, every precaution should be taken to reduce the likelihood of attempts be made to escape. Therefore, when two or more prisoners are being handcuffed, officers are advised to link on are of each prisoner through the arm of the first prisoner handcuffed before cuffing the second wrist of each prisoner to his first wrist.

Sec. 9 Handcuffed in Front of the Body: If the suspect is wearing a belt, turn the buckle to the rear and after cuffing one hand, pass the free end of the cuff under the belt before cuffing the second hand. Remember, only handcuff in the front if the person is suffering from a physical deformity, disability or if she is pregnant.

Sec. 10 When Removing Handcuffs: Keep the suspect off balance to discourage an escape attempt or attack. Having other officers present is highly recommended.

Under no circumstances are handcuffs to be removed while a prisoner is being transported or while in police headquarters or in any other place to which the prisoner is transported except for the purpose of fingerprinting, writing on forms as may be required or when absolutely necessary. Never let go of the handcuffs when one is still on the prisoner's wrist. The open cuff is an excellent weapon.

Sec. 11 Safe Custody of Prisoners: Officers having prisoners in their custody shall be held strictly responsible for the safe custody of the prisoners under their care and this responsibility is theirs at all times.

Sec. 12 When Practicable, Avoid:

- A.) Handcuffing a prisoner with his hands in front, except as noted in Section 9 of this rule.
- B.) Searching a prisoner before handcuffing.
- C.) Handcuffing a prisoner to a police officer.
- D.) Handcuffing a mentally disturbed person except as a temporary measure to allow him to be secured with proper restraining devices with which he cannot injure himself.

Sec. 13 Flexcuffs: Flexcuffs may be used during demonstrations or when multiple arrests are to be made. They are applied as handcuffs, behind the back, palms out, thumbs up.

Note: Once the flexcuffs have been applied they must be cut off. It is very easy to apply flexcuffs too tightly.

Sec. 14 Extra Handcuffs: Officers are authorized to carry an extra pair of handcuffs if they wish to do so provided they are Department issue or approved. To date, the only Department issue/approved handcuffs are the Smith & Wesson Model #100, Nickel Chain Handcuffs. However, the Department has now also approved the Peerless Standard Nickel Chain Handcuffs and the Peerless Standard Hinged Chain Handcuffs.

Notes:

Amended by SO12-022, issued 08/03/2012, which reworded the first sentence in the first paragraph of Section 6.