

***VENTURA COUNTY***

***SHERIFF'S OFFICE***



***MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT***

***STANDARD OPERATIONS  
PROCEDURES***

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Sheriff***

Revised May 2019

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**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT**  
**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Mounted Enforcement Unit</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Revised:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To provide horse mounted law enforcement in a variety of situations while promoting the objectives and goals of the Sheriff's Office through a positive public relations image.

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**Mission Statement:**

Keep the peace with reasonable force, promoting citizen awareness, support and safety.

**Organization Structure:**

The Mounted Enforcement Unit (MEU) shall be under the direction of an appointed Commander. The Commander shall designate the unit Captain for the MEU.

Once deployed, the MEU may be divided into squads if called for by the mission. A squad leader shall be appointed for each squad by the MEU Captain or his designee. The squad leader shall be responsible for carrying out squad assignments and for the overall safety of squad members. The squad leaders and members shall answer to the Unit Operation's Sergeant in all tactical matters relating to the MEU operation. Once activated, the incident commander shall determine the MEU mission. The Operation's Sergeant determines the tactics used for the mission.

**Membership Criteria:**

The MEU is comprised of sworn and reserve deputies of the Sheriff's Office. MEU team members shall have access to or possess a MEU approved horse. The MEU Captain will make member selections. Selection is based on law enforcement experience, demonstrated riding skill and horsemanship. The horse and rider are judged as a team and must pass a documented standardized series of tests and exercises geared to judge the team's skills under adverse conditions prior to working a detail.

**Horse Criteria:**

Selected horses must be suitable for use in a variety of law enforcement situations. Although there are no restrictions regarding breed, horses must be proportionate to the rider (specifically, the rider must not be too large for the horse). Mares will be considered on a case by case basis. MEU horses shall be well-groomed and serviceable, weight proportionate to their size, and possess no traits that might present a danger to the public, other MEU members or horses. Emphasis will be placed on the horse's temperament, willingness and obedience exhibited during the training process.



**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Request/Call-Out/Deployment</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Revised:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To establish guidelines for the Mounted Enforcement Unit.

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**Reference:**

Sheriff Lexipol Policy 330 Mutual Aid and Outside Agency Assistance

**Organization:**

1. The Mounted Enforcement Unit (MEU) shall be under the direction of a Patrol Commander. The Patrol Commander, or the designated Patrol Services Commander, shall designate the unit Captain.

**Team Activation:**

1. Whenever a member of the Sheriff's Office receives a request for the MEU, the request shall be forwarded to the MEU Captain or their designee, or if requested by an outside agency, as directed in deployment section.

A. Deployment

The MEU shall not be deployed until the arrival of the MEU Captain or designee. Upon arrival at the scene, the MEU Captain or designee shall report to the incident commander. The incident commander shall brief the MEU staff and provide them with their assignment and request them to deploy (Note: MEU tactics may not be universally known and the MEU staff will be the one to select

the appropriate tactic(s) to be deployed and shall direct the actual physical deployment and movements of the MEU team.

#### B. Request by outside Agencies

It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office to assist other agencies in time of need provided that such agency has made an independent effort to resolve the incident. All requests for the MEU made by outside agencies may be made during normal business hours by contacting the MEU Captain or after hours by contacting the Sheriff's Watch Commander. The Watch Commander shall notify the MEU Commander.

MEU team members shall operate in a manner consistent with their training and within the policies of the Sheriff's Office. In the event of a disagreement or dispute with the outside public safety agency concerning operational tactics, the policies of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office and the SOP's of the MEU shall take precedence.

#### C. Event Planning

The MEU Captain or designee shall be included in event planning for pre-planned events and final approval.



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Scheduling/Special Details</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Revised:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To inform Sheriff Office members of the proper procedures for scheduling the Mounted Enforcement Unit.

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**Procedure:**

1. When feasible, requests should be received at least three weeks prior to the event. All event requests shall be forwarded to the Unit Captain for review and approval. The Unit Captain will then forward the information to the MEU Sergeants or his or her designee for dissemination
2. All details will be a minimum of four (4) hours, inclusive of one hour of tack and travel time on each side of the actual detail.
3. All details are to be worked using the issued equipment, unless otherwise approved by the Unit Captain or designee.
4. Once assigned to work a detail, it is the responsibility of the MEU member to find a replacement if unable to fulfill the obligation.
5. If the MEU member is not available to work for an extended period of time (i.e. vacation, injury, etc.) the MEU member shall notify an MEU Captain or Sergeant (same as above) in writing.
6. All details require the completion of a Game plan / After Action Report by an MEU member. The Game plan / AAR will be approved prior to the event by the

MEU Captain or his designee and submitted within (5) days following the event to the Administrative Sergeant along with copies of all overtime slips.

7. All team members and their horses assigned to a detail or operation are to be at the approval of a MEU Sergeant or their designee.





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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Training</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To establish consistent training guidelines for the MEU team.

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**Frequency:**

MEU shall train at least once a month, or more often at the direction of the MEU Captain. Although training is mandatory for all members, it is recognized that due to the collateral nature of the unit, it may not be possible for a member to attend a given training. However, the reasons for missing a training session are no less stringent than missing a shift at one's primary assignment (e.g., sickness, vacation, court, etc...).

Members shall notify either the MEU captain or an MEU Sergeant in writing if that member is unable to attend training prior to the session. Unexcused absence from training or work details is cause for progressive discipline, up to and including termination from the MEU.

**Requirements:**

- The training uniform shall be worn at all trainings unless otherwise specified
- The rider shall supply tack and equipment for the horse which is similar in purpose to issued equipment
- MEU members shall complete the 40-hour basic mounted school
- MEU members that have a responsibility to train other members must have attended the 40-hour Instructor course of Mounted Officers

- The Administrative Sergeant shall complete and maintain the MEU training and unit records which shall include the following information:
  - Frequency of Department mounted training sessions
  - Frequency and type of outside training (attendee must provide the Administrative Sergeant with a copy of the training certificate to be placed in the MEU training file)
  - Game Plan / After Action Reports detailing any problems encountered during work details
  - Record of horse baton training (2 hours per year minimum)
  - Record of any other training attended, whether private or departmental, which may have some bearing on the suitability of the horse and rider to work details
  - Annual statistical information, which shall include: law enforcement related actions taken, a list of events / details attended along with the number of hours for each, and any significant MEU related activity.

#### **RIDER RESPONSIBILITY:**

Due to the unique nature of police horses interacting with the public, it is incumbent upon all deputies to keep an MEU Sergeant apprised of any problems or issues they may encounter with their horses. Therefore, it shall be responsibility of each deputy to inform an MEU Sergeant of any problems with their horse.

Once advised, an MEU Sergeant or assigned training staff member shall assist the rider in correcting the problem. If the deputy is unable to correct the problem, the training staff will document the issue for MEU records. If the magnitude of the problem is such that the horse has become unsuitable for public work, the horse shall be disqualified from the MEU. The horse may be re-qualified at a later date if the deputy can demonstrate that the initial problem has been successfully corrected.



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Proficiency Evaluation</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To establish a consistent evaluation policy for horse and rider teams requesting acceptance to the unit.

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**Policy:**

Those personnel who work with the MEU shall be evaluated as a team (horse and rider) and shall be able to successfully complete proficiency testing prior to working any detail with the unit. Further, each horse and rider team shall be continually evaluated in order to demonstrate continued proficiency. Horse and rider teams which have not met proficiency standards may be deployed on a detail in a training capacity at events which are commensurate with the level of proficiency they have developed, in order to further the depth of training of that team. Such assignment will only be made with the agreement and concurrence of a MEU Sergeant or designee and the Unit Captain.

When teams are deployed to details that may be generally assumed to include policing actions, one member of each two-man team must be a field-trained deputy. Non-field trained deputies, at the discretion of a MEU Sergeant, may fill "show and tell" details. There are two parts in the testing process:

- 1) General riding and equitation skills
- 2) Adaptation of the team to specialized law enforcement situations.

A. General Riding & Equitation

- Properly saddle and bridle the horse
- Mount the horse properly

- Ride the horse around the arena at the walk, trot and lope
- Holding the horse in a lope while riding in a circle on the proper lead.
- Ride the horse to the center of the arena and stop him smartly
- Back the horse 5 yards in a straight line
- Side pass the horse 5 yards to the left, stop then side pass back 5 yards to the right
- Perform a 180 degree turn, on the forehand and hind, to the right and the Left
- Dismount the horse and lead him at the walk and trot
- Lead the horse to the rail and properly secure him
- Load and unload the horse from a trailer without difficulty

B. Specialized Law Enforcement:

1) Gauntlet

- Noise of all sorts
- Sign / flag waving
- Balloons
- Overhead obstacles
- Umbrellas

2) Firearms / fireworks

- Discharge of blanks / fireworks while mounted

3) Emergency equipment

- Flashlights
- Sirens

4) Smoke grenades

5) Flares

6) Helicopter

7) Crowd control

- Maintaining formation
- Crowd clearing
- Moving through crowds

8) Arrest techniques

- Suspect apprehension
- Handcuffing
- Escorting a suspect

9) Horse baton

- Proper baton use
- Hitting solid objects while mounted



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Equitation</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins  <b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992
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**Purpose:** To provide an understanding of the proper approach to horsemanship necessary for operating in a tactical environment. Proper technique is a necessity for the rider and mounts to maintain control in a variety of riding situations and necessary for team uniformity and command presence.

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**Riding:**

A. The Seat

1. Sit square in the saddle with the weight evenly divided on the buttock. Never sit leaning to one side, forward or back.
2. Your thighs should extend downward and slightly forward. They should clasp the horse evenly with the inner thigh.
3. Your knees should be slightly bent. When standing in the stirrups with your legs straight, your groin area should be two to four inches above the seat of the saddle.
4. Your lower legs, below the knees, should extend downward. Your calves should be in light contact with the horse.
5. The upper part of your body should be erect but not stiff.
6. Your upper arms should fall naturally at your sides, elbows bent, with a straight line between your elbow and the bit.

7. Your rein hand (one handed reining) should be above the withers, just in front of the pommel.
8. Your head should be kept up, shoulders back and square.
9. The ball of your foot should rest easily upon the tread of the stirrup; your heel should be slightly lower than your toe.

## B. Riding Aids

1. Voice - Your voice should be used on all instructions. The horse will associate the word with the movement. For instance, if you want your horse to trot, you say, "trot" while gently squeezing with your calves.
2. Reins - The reins control the horse by:
  - i. bringing the horse to attention before starting,
  - ii. guiding the horse in the direction you want to go,
  - iii. bringing the horse to a slower gait, and
  - iv. halting the horse or backing the horse
3. Legs - The pressure you apply by squeezing your legs will instruct the horse to move forward, move faster, move to one side, or alert the horse that you are going to ask him to do something.
4. Spurs are to be worn by all riders. They are to be used sparingly and according to instruction given at training.
5. Seating position should communicate to the horse what you are asking; such as turning and looking the direction you are going, sitting back as you slow prepare to stop.



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Uniform and Equipment</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Captain Ferguson
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Sgt. King August 2017 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To maintain a professional uniformity in appearance, the uniform requirements identified in this section shall be worn during MEU events and/or training exercises. Uniform requirements specifically related to the MEU are at the discretion of the MEU Commander.

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### **Uniforms and Equipment**

- Members shall be required to maintain all uniforms and equipment used in the performance of their duties regardless of whether the equipment is issued or personally owned.
- All uniforms will be clean, unsoiled, and well-maintained when worn on-duty.
- All equipment will be maintained in serviceable condition.
- All members shall wear the same uniform as dictated by the assignment. The uniform for the assignment will be determined by the Operations/Administrative Sergeant or their designee. Factors in selecting the uniform include, but are not limited to: Heat, sun exposure, deployment environment (civil unrest, backcountry), public perception, rain, operational mission, etc....

### **References:**

Sheriff Lexipol Policy: Uniform Regulations



## **Color Guard / Class A Uniform:**

### Hat:

- Felt campaign hat, green with Department issued cap piece, black or gold acorns.
- Silver or Black felt Stetson rancher style cowboy hat (Original or Cavalry shaped) (Black or Gold acorns if specified).

### Jacket:

- Department Approved "Ike" jacket described in Sheriff's Lexipol 1046

### Shirt:

- Long Sleeve Class A uniform with appropriate color shoulder braid worn on the right shoulder (in lieu of whistle chain).
- A gold color whistle chain worn on the right shoulder (in lieu of shoulder braid).

### Ascot / Tie:

- Appropriate color (Ascot).
- Department approved tie and tie bar.

### Pants:

- Wrangler dress jean, Class A green.
- Department Class A uniform pants.

### Boots:

- Black western boot, lace up / pull on, highly polished.

### Gun Belt:

- Approved black basket weave style, polished leather. Magazine pouch, holster, (1) handcuff case, knife, and radio (as needed, no shoulder mic).

### Firearm:

- Department approved.

### Gloves:

- When specified to be worn, black in color, no gauntlets or fringe.

### Spurs:

- Plain silver/chrome western type with black leather straps. Western spurs with no longer than 3 inch shank and no larger than a 1 inch rowel.

## **Standard Duty / Operational Deployments:**

### Hat:

- Clean white rancher style 4 inch brim straw cowboy hat, with a plain black or brown hat band.
- Green baseball-style hat (as described in Lexipol Addendum A).
- A black knit beanie style cap (as described in Lexipol Addendum A).
- Military "boonie" hat, green, may be worn depending on the operational environment (i.e. SAR deployments, training, etc...)

### Shirt:

- The standard uniform for patrol duty will be the Department authorized utility uniform. The shirt shall have a cloth badge affixed to the upper left chest and the deputy's name (first initial, last name) embroidered on the upper right chest in black.
- For Public Relation Events or other related details, the standard uniform for patrol with metal badge, name plate, approved pins, shall be worn.
- Military BDU shirt with subdued shoulder patches, rank insignias, sewn on badge, nametape above right breast pocket.

### Pants:

- Specialized trousers are authorized. A six-pocket trouser, similar in specification to the utility trouser described in the Sheriff's Lexipol 1046.10, shall be worn as the standard field uniform trouser.

### Boots:

- Black western style

### Spurs:

- Western style (no slip on style spurs)

### Firearm:

- Department approved or issued duty weapon
- AR-15 & Shotguns – Rifles / Shotguns will conform to current department policy listed in Lexipol. Long guns will only be deployed on horseback with approval of a MEU Sergeant and shall be carried on the deputy's person by a sling [three point (across the chest) or 2 point (across the back)].

**Duty Belt:**

- Department issued or approved. With prior approval of the MEU Unit Commander, members may request approval to utilize the tactical gun belt for mounted patrol operations.

**Tactical Gun Belts:**

- Members may purchase tactical gun belts for use on designated MEU operations. The gun belt and items are to be black in color, with no shiny or bright colored snaps or fixtures. Tactical ballistic nylon equipment and drop leg type holsters must be equipped to carry the duty sidearm, magazines, OC, Taser, radio, handcuffs, and baton ring. The purpose of the drop leg platform is to move the holster off the rider's hip so it does not act as a fulcrum point in the event of a fall and landing on it. The length of the drop should only be long enough to move the gun off the hip for safety and not so long as to make control and retention more difficult.

**Gloves:**

- Plain brown, tan or black leather (optional)

**Jacket:**

- Department approved patrol jacket

**Taser:**

- Deputies issued a Taser shall carry it on their person when working patrol related assignments.

**Training:**

**Hat:**

- Headwear listed under Standard Duty / Operational Deployment
- Members may select to wear an equestrian riding helmet

**Shirt:**

- Shirt listed under Standard Duty / Operational Deployment
- Short sleeve polo shirt or the black / OD green "under armour" unit T-shirt approved by the Unit Commander are authorized. The polo shirt shall have an embroidered badge affixed to the upper left chest and the deputy's name (first initial, last name) embroidered on the right chest, embroidered shoulder patches on each sleeve, and "SHERIFF" silk screened on the back.

Pants:

- Pants listed under Standard Duty / Operational Deployment.
- Blue denim jeans

Boots:

- Western style

Spurs:

Western style (no slip on style spurs)

**Knife**

- Deputies are authorized and required to carry a folding blade knife or a fixed blade knife while on duty. All knives shall be carried in a secure manner on the deputy's person using the attached clip or in the manufacturer's recommended sheath. All knives shall be consistent in color (black handle with black or silver colored blade), and blade length between 3 inches and 6 inches. Carrying a knife attached to the saddle, which is visible to, and potentially accessible to the public is prohibited.

**Tactical External Ballistic Vest**

- US Armor or equivalent, OD Green, molly configuration. User selected pouches colored to match.

**Body Worn Cameras**

- When body worn cameras are utilized by MEU deputies, it will conform with Sheriff's Lexipol Section 430.1, titled "Body Worn Camera Policy."

**Horse Tack and Equipment**

- Horses will be healthy and sound prior to participation in any detail or training assignment. Horses will be well groomed whenever they are being used for assignments; training or otherwise.
- All issued unit or member purchased equipment shall be clean and in serviceable condition. Equipment will be inspected by a MEU instructor, MEU supervisor, or designee, prior to the beginning of a training exercise. MEU members shall not use department issued equipment for non-department related riding, unless approved by the MEU Captain or MEU Sergeant.
- Damage to Department issued equipment will be reported in writing to a MEU sergeant as soon as practical.
- The MEU maintains a fleet of Truck/Trailer combinations. Members utilizing trucks/trailers for details shall ensure they are cleaned and fueled at the conclusion of their assignment.

### **MEU Issued Equipment:**

- Western saddle and cinch
- Saddle pad- Issued pad or saddle blanket
- Leather breast collar with issued badge securely attached
- Headstalls, halter and rein combination with bit (bit supplied by rider)
- Halter and lead rope
- 40-inch horse baton
- Saddlebags and pommel bags
- Reflector leg wraps
- Face shield and nose guard
- Knife
- Helmet with face shield and communication equipment
- DERMO issued items
- Horse sheet
- Saddle and bridle bags
- Green nylon breast collar
- Bridle conchos
- Hand held radio



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Grooming</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson -May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To establish consistent guidelines for the proper care and grooming of horses working with the Mounted Enforcement Unit.

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**Standards:**

A. Cleanliness:

On-duty appearance shall be inspected at each detail. Horses shall be bathed with attention paid to treatable stains on the coat, mane and tail. In unusually cold or inclement weather, exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis. At the very minimum, horses will be thoroughly groomed, whether or not they are bathed. Areas such as the nostrils, eyes, ears, underbelly, sheath, buttocks, and lower legs should not be overlooked.

Regular grooming is required for the general health and overall coat conditioning. Dull or unsightly coat conditions are an indication of poor maintenance, and can point to poor nutrition and/or lack of care. This is not an acceptable image for the MEU team to project.

B. Trimming:

Areas to be neatly trimmed include:

- Ears along the edges
- Facial whiskers, including eyebrows, nostrils and muzzle
- Jaw line from throat to muzzle

- Fetlocks, down to and including the coronet band/Feathers on some breeds are acceptable
- Bridle path, to a minimum of 2”
- Hooves need to be neatly trimmed and may be either barefoot or without loose or missing shoes

The mane and tail do not need to be trimmed to any particular length. It is recommended that the mane be maintained in a neat and presentable fashion, which may include “pulling” or “roaching” the mane and neatly combing it to one side. The mane and tail shall be free of all tangles and debris.

#### C. General Health Considerations:

Warts, scars, wounds and blemishes of a cosmetic nature are acceptable as long as they are not offensive to the public or adversely affect the horse.

No bandages of any nature may be worn, excluding bandages applied to wounds suffered during the course of that exact detail, if the injury is minor in nature.

Any lameness, including arthritic conditions, is unacceptable.

#### D. Saddles, Tack & Accessories:

- Leather gear shall be cleaned, polished or oiled
- All nylon or other fabric shall be clean and free of tears or loose threads
- All metal parts shall be clean, rust free and polished
- All gear shall be used in its proper manner, and shall fit the horse upon which it is used



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Use of Force, Documentation</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To define for the Department and MEU members the threshold required for initiating a use of force report regarding enforcement contacts between a horse and a member of the public.

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**References:**

Sheriff Lexipol Policy: Use of Force 300

**Procedure:**

The purpose of this policy is to define the general parameters of what constitutes a use of force involving a horse. Use of force in relation to this policy is understood to mean the intentional use of the horse as a law enforcement mechanism that is designed to gain compliance with a directive from law enforcement personnel, which contact results in injury or complaint of pain. It does not include casual contact between a horse and a member of the public during benign interactions. Benign contacts that result in injury will be documented in an incident report.

If use of the horse as a law enforcement mechanism during the course of duty results in injury or complaint of pain as a result of contact between mount and citizen, the deputy responsible for that mount shall complete all necessary documentation as outlined by Use of Force Policy 300 and shall notify his or her immediate field supervisor or incident commander of the incident. The deputy shall ensure that notification is made to an MEU



Sergeant and Captain. This shall include any law enforcement action (exclusive of riotous conditions).

The on scene MEU Sergeant will complete the Patrol/Field Operations Use of Force Notification Form

If serious physical injury-causing contacts are made during riot or civil unrest conditions with hostile crowds, all deputies involved with the injury causing contact shall, to the best of their recollections, write post-action incident reports detailing those uses of force and the persons involved.



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>40-Inch Horse Baton</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Revised:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To provide MEU members with guidelines to assist them in the use of the 40-inch baton.

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**Reference:**

Sheriff Lexipol Policy 302 Control Devices and Techniques

**Description:**

The horse baton is a 40-inch one-handed baton. It is made of hardwood or polycarbonate. The length, shape and balance make the baton ideal for mounted use. This one-handed baton allows the rider to maintain control of the horse, as the rein hand is free.

**USE:**

The baton is used only as a defensive weapon. If a person should take hold of the horse's bit, or any part of the horse's reins between the rider's hands and the bit, that person is in control of the horse. A baton strike enables a MEU member to affect the release of the reins or bit without them having to lean forward in the saddle, possibly causing them to lose their balance or control. MEU riders may use the baton to defend themselves, their horse or in the assistance of other officers or persons being attacked.

For MEU deputies and reserves, many physical control options are eliminated due to the need to maintain control of the horse. For the uncooperative suspect, the intimidation factor of the horse is used to solicit cooperation. Only when a suspect resorts to an overt act which threatens the safety of the MEU horse and rider (or in defense of another officer or person being attacked), or when a suspect attempts to

gain control of the horse by grabbing any part of the headstall or reins, may the rider use the horse baton.

### **Reporting Procedures:**

Refer to Sheriff Lexipol Policy: Control Devices and Techniques

### **Techniques:**

#### A. Balance

- Never reach to deliver a strike due to risk of being pulled from or falling off of the horse
- Control of the horse must be maintained at all times

#### B. Drawing the Baton

- Drawn with the strong hand and placed in the ready position
- Hand should grip the baton where it is comfortable for the deputy
- Control of the baton is maintained with the middle and ring fingers, the index and little fingers should have a light grip, but be able to flex with the motion of the baton

#### C. Side strikes

- Reverse strike—delivered with the long portion of the baton from the crest of the horse's head in a downward motion
- Butt end jab—delivered in a sweeping motion toward the intended target
- Front strike—delivered from the point of the deputy's shoulder in a forward and downward motion
- Forward strike—delivered with the long portion of the baton from the rear of the horse in a downward motion
- Butt end strike - Delivered in a sweeping motion toward the intended target with the butt end of the baton

## Training:

Members of MEU shall receive a minimum of two hours of basic training in the use of the horse baton. Ongoing proficiency training will occur in conjunction with the monthly-required MEU training. An experienced instructor shall conduct the initial training, and such training shall be documented and said documentation placed in the MEU training records.



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<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Tactical Response Team, Operation with</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Revised:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To provide guidelines for tactical responses to situations involving both the Mounted Enforcement Unit (MEU) and the Tactical Response Team (TRT).

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**Background:**

The MEU actively trains with the TRT in order to offer the option of a coordinated mounted / foot officer tactical response to civil disturbances. The two groups provide a coordinated response that no other group can provide, allowing departmental command personnel flexibility in responding to large-scale incidents. This includes standard mounted crowd movement, standard foot based officer crowd engagement, and a combined mounted and foot operation that can provide a skilled and mobile force capable of dealing with hostile crowd situations.

It is critical to the effectiveness of the integrated operations that the TRT and the MEU maintain regular combined trainings. This is both a tactical and an officer safety requirement, as members of each unit can thus understand the strengths of each unit, and understand how to work together for the greatest effect.

**Training:**

The MEU should train annually in integrated tactics with the TRT. Trainings should include the following:

- Safety briefing
- Acclimation
- Skirmish line movement

- Skirmish line transitions
- Arrest wedge and arrest team transitions
- Pincer movement and cover
- Arrests from pincer movement
- Crossbows right, center, and left
- Sensory related issues

### **Deployment:**

Prior to any work detail involving both units, supervisory and administrative staff shall meet and confer to discuss incident specific facts, and to help describe the missions both units will be asked to handle. Any patrol or agency representatives involved in the area of operation shall be included, if possible.

Missions shall be described and detailed by the operational staff of the particular incident, and deployment of the MEU shall be at the discretion of the incident commander. Given the specialized nature of both mounted enforcement work and the interactive tactics between the MEU and the TRT, selection of the tactics to be used to carry out cooperative mission(s) shall be jointly decided by and at the discretion of the MEU Captain and the TRT Captain, or their designees.

When TRT and MEU are to be deployed as a combined unit, the following procedures should be followed;

- The MEU personnel shall be under the direct control and direction of the MEU Captain or his / her designee.
- The TRT personnel shall be under the direct control and direction of the TRT Captain or his / her designee.
- The TRT team leader and the MEU team leader shall maintain adequate communication in order to coordinate the movement and tactics of the two units.
- The units may be deployed as separate operational units, or may be combined into an integrated force.
- No chemical agents will be used when horses are deployed on scene.
- Generally, if mounted officers identify and restrain an arrestee, TRT personnel or TRT arrest team members shall take physical control of the arrestee as soon as it is safe to approach.
- When the MEU is positioned to the front of the integrated force, TRT members and TRT arrest teams are responsible for the arrest of any subjects who breach the line of horses.

- In any case where the MEU is positioned with their backs to a crowd (i.e., pincer maneuver, arrest wedge) TRT will take positions to cover and protect the MEU personnel from being flanked by crowd members.
- Depending on crowd behavior, either the TRT or the MEU can be positioned to the front of the integrated force. Transitions between the units should be accomplished with the TRT personnel moving to and from the front position around the flanks of the MEU.
- In some situations, the integrated force could have the following components with a leader assigned for each;
  - MEU
  - TRT
  - Gunners
  - Arrest team
- Due to the nature of integrating MEU and dismounted TRT personnel, non-TRT personnel should not be integrated into these operations for the safety of the non-trained personnel. In these cases, non-TRT personnel should be utilized in separate supporting positions that do not put them in direct contact with the MEU horses.



**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT**  
**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Formations</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To provide a guideline regarding the need for and use of formations.

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**Background:**

Trends in controlling civil disorder have placed an emphasis on the mounted officer working in well-disciplined squads or as units, as opposed to the traditional method of individual police action. As a result, teamwork has become the key to successfully handling masses of friendly or unfriendly people.

Members of the MEU must remain calm and composed, should maintain self-control and refrain from becoming personally involved with individuals during crowd control exercises.

The Unit or Squad leader is directly responsible for the success of the MEU during tactical crowd control. It is imperative that the mounted leader be able to make rapid decisions based on available intelligence and personal observations. The leader must determine the best tactical formation and the tactics to use in order to accomplish the objectives and protect the deputies and their horses. The leader must be capable of taking command of the MEU and issuing clear and concise commands.



## **Tactical Formations:**

The primary purpose of the tactical formation is to control or move a crowd or mob with a minimum amount of force. The MEU must be of sufficient numbers to handle the problem before they are committed – this assessment should be made prior to engagement. Two factors serve to accomplish the control of an unruly crowd:

### **A. Psychological impact:**

The development of fear often develops among members of a crowd or mob who find themselves confronted with a well-disciplined, determined and organized formation of mounted deputies, and;

### **B. Physical presence and strength:**

Superior police power exercised by the mounted unit in the face of direct physical contact and resistance. The standard tactical formations that have been found to be effective are discussed in the following appendix on formations. These movements enable a mounted unit to be flexible under field conditions and are employed by the Ventura County Sheriff's MEU.

## **Commands:**

### **A. Verbal commands:**

Verbal commands must be heard and understood by all members of the unit. Commands may be aided by utilizing whistle or hand signals. Verbal commands are given in two parts:

1. Command of preparation: Given in a loud, clear voice. Includes the movement or formation to be performed by the unit or squad, and all necessary details regarding the movement. This would include the basic movement desired (i.e., "Column of twos"), where the motion begins (i.e. "from the right"), and the direction the movement is supposed to proceed (i.e., "to the right"). The speed of the movement is usually understood to be a walk. If the formation is moving at a greater pace than a walk, the movement should proceed at the existent pace. If a different pace is desired from the current pace, a modifier needs to be included as to speed (i.e., "at a walk"). This command is always followed by a short pause, followed by the:

2. Command of execution: After the preparatory command comes the command of execution. The Ventura Sheriff's MEU uses the word "Yo" as our command of execution.

B. Whistle commands (which consist of three parts):

1. Command of preparation: Two short loud blasts of the whistle. This may be repeated to assure that all unit members are paying attention.
2. Command of execution: One short loud blast of the whistle indicating execution of the movement.
  - a. Hold position / stop movement command: One long loud blast of the whistle.

C. Hand signal commands:

These can be used in conjunction with verbal or whistle commands. They should be broken down into two parts: 1) preparatory and 2) execution, when practical. They are a good aid when dealing with a loud boisterous crowd. Before the command of execution is given, the unit or squad leader must insure they have the attention of all riders.



**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT**  
**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Formation Movements</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Dowd
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson -May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To have uniform commands, direction and action by the MEU team.

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**REDACTED**



**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT**  
**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Forms</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> January 1992

**Purpose:** To establish a uniform method of tracking MEU events and training.

**See attached documents**

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Game plan/After action report

Monthly Training





VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT  
**OPERATIONAL PLAN / AFTER ACTION REPORT**

**DISPOSITION**

NARRATIVE:

HOSPITAL:		W/C Notified:
ADDRESS:		Locals Notified:
BOOKING LOCATION:		
COMMUNICATIONS / RADIO CHANNEL:	SECOND RADIO CHANNEL:	MAP COORDINATES:
APPROVED BY:		



VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT  
**OPERATIONAL PLAN / AFTER ACTION REPORT**

**Attach Diagram or Map:**

# MOUNTED POSSE TRAINING

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

OBJECTIVE:

NOTES:











**VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**MOUNTED ENFORCEMENT UNIT**  
**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Mounted Volunteer Defined, Lines of Authority, Training Expectations and Uniforms</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> Commander Watkins
	<b>Reviewed:</b> Capt. Ferguson May 2019 <b>Issued:</b> 05/22/2018

**Purpose:** To define mounted volunteers, outline training expectations and uniform appearance. The uniform requirements identified in this section will be worn during events and/or training exercises.

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**Sheriff Mounted Volunteer Defined:**

The Mounted Volunteers are men and women that volunteer time to ride-a-long on horseback with sworn members of the Mounted Enforcement Unit (MEU), provide ground support to the sworn members of the MEU, assist in search and rescue (SAR) missions on horseback and on occasion appear at public events throughout the county as directed.

**Qualifications:**

- Complete and pass Sheriff's Office background investigation
- Possess Sheriff's Office identification card
- Maintain a valid CPR/First Aid card
- Maintain a valid Disaster Service Worker card
- Complete and pass equine compatibility and sensory evaluation between horse and rider (ground support volunteers exempt)
- Attend Sheriff MEU training on horseback or as ground support
- Attend Sheriff Search and Rescue training
- Available for call outs for SAR missions and/or for law enforcement support

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**Lines of Authority:**

The Sheriff's Mounted Volunteers will be under the direction of the MEU Captain or, if the MEU Captain so delegates, the MEU Sergeants. Sheriff's Mounted Volunteer selection and appointment will be at the MEU's Captain discretion.

While on deployment at any MEU or SAR operation, Sheriff's Mounted Volunteers will be supervised and coordinated by an MEU member.

**Minimum Training Standards:**

Attend a minimum of (4) MEU trainings per year

- MEU trainings occur 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month/Subject to change
- Attend a minimum of (1) SAR training per year
- Training occurs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month at various locations in and out of the County of Ventura. Training months are designated as March, June and September and are subject to change

**Uniform:**

Maintain proper uniform(s) as needed for events and search and rescue deployments

MEU Operation(s):

- Approved green polo shirt with SMV embroidered logo
- Blue jeans
- Authorized Cowboy hat or green ball cap with "Ventura County Sheriff" on front panel
- The standard issue green jacket with the approved markings and patches

No part of the uniform, which would identify the wearer as a volunteer of the department, or which displays association with the department, shall be worn in a nonofficial capacity without the knowledge of the MEU Captain or his designee

The MEU Captain or their designee may direct a specific uniform as needed for any event or situation.