



April 29, 2021

Interim Chief Adrian Diaz
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Diaz:

Please see the below Management Action Recommendation.

Case Number

- 2020OPA-0495 & 2020OPA-0644 / 2021COMP-0017

Topic

- Use of Force – Blast Balls

Summary

- It was alleged in two separate incidents that officers deployed blast balls into crowds, striking and injuring protesters that did not pose a threat to officers.

Analysis

- In 2020OPA-0495, the named employee (NE) observed as a projectile was thrown at officers from within a crowd. Thirteen seconds later, the NE made the individual decision to deploy a blast ball in an underhand throw towards the crowd. Shrapnel from the blast ball explosion struck and injured a peaceful demonstrator.
- In 2020OPA-0644, the NE observed officers attempting to pull a tarp away from demonstrators. At the time, the crowd was not complying with an order to disperse. The NE deployed a blast ball in a low sidearm throw in the vicinity of the crowd. The blast ball bounced, injuring the complainant's ankle and striking him in the chest.
- OPA recognizes that the Department has addressed some of its concerns in recent updates to [SPD Manual Title 8](#) and [Policy 14.090](#).
 - Officers may use blast balls only “to protect against a specific imminent threat of harm to officers or identifiable others or to respond do specific acts of violence or destruction of property.” (8.300-POL-9 #3)
 - “When feasible, officers will direct blast balls towards an open space near the person(s) engaged in the threats of harm or acts of violence or property destruction.” (8.300-POL-9 #4)
 - Overhand deployment of blast balls “will be highly scrutinized.” (8.300-POL-9 #5)

Recommendation(s)

- OPA extends its previous [recommendation](#) issued in January 2021:
 - Unless to prevent imminent serious bodily harm, prohibit officers from deploying blast balls in an overhand/sidearm throw or other method which increases creates a likelihood that the blast ball will skip or bounce into an unintended target.
 - Define “specific imminent threat of harm” and “serious imminent physical harm” as used throughout [SPD Policy 8.300](#) and provide concrete examples.



**Seattle Office of
Police Accountability**

- Ban the use of blast balls in crowd control unless there is compelling evidence that the tool can be used in a safe, non-indiscriminate manner that eliminates the risk of harm to non-violent parties.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

AM

Andrew Myerberg
Director, Office of Police Accountability