



SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT
Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

Policy 1-08

Policy Title: Strip and / or Body Cavity Searches

Date of Issue: March 14, 2023

Rescinds: Policy 1-08 dated December 1, 2022

By Authority of:

Chief of Police

I. Purpose

These guidelines establish procedures for personnel of the Springfield Township Police Department to conduct strip searches and body cavity searches upon individuals who are in custody pursuant to an arrest.

II. Policy

The use of post-arrest strip searches and body cavity searches may, under certain specific conditions, be necessary to secure concealed evidence and to insure the safety of police officers, civilians, other prisoners, and the security of the detention facility. Accordingly, when conditions require such searches, it is the policy of the police department to conduct such searches in a reasonable manner which upholds the privacy interests possessed by arrestees under the law, while satisfying the safety interests of the police department.

III. Definitions

- A. Strip Search – The removal or rearranging of some or all of an arrestee’s clothing, including the under garments of such person, so as to permit a visual inspection of the outer person of the arrestee. This may include the lifting of the breasts and genitalia, or bending at the waist for a visual inspection of the buttocks area.
- B. Body Cavity Search – Any search involving not only the visual inspection of the skin surface, but also the internal physical examination of the body cavities and in some instances, organs such as the stomach cavity.

IV. Procedures

A. Strip Searches

1. Individuals arrested for traffic violations and other minor offenses of a nonviolent nature shall not be subject to strip searches unless the arresting officer has probable cause to believe that the individual is concealing contraband or weapons. Probable cause may be based upon but is not limited to, one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. The nature of the offense charged.
 - b. The arrestee's appearance and demeanor.
 - c. The circumstances surrounding the arrest.
 - d. The arrestee's criminal record, particularly past crimes of violence and / or narcotics offenses.
 - e. The discovery of evidence of a major offense in plain view or in the course of a search incident to a lawful arrest.
 - f. The detection of suspicious objects beneath the suspect's clothing during a field search incident to an arrest.
2. Field strip searches of prisoners will be conducted only in the rarest of circumstances under exigent circumstances, such as when the life of officers or others may be placed at risk and only with the explicit approval of the Chief of Police.
3. Where probable cause exists to conduct a strip search at the police station, the arresting officer shall make a request for such action to the Chief of Police and the officer must clearly define the basis for the suspicion.
4. When authorization is given by the Chief of Police, strip searches may be conducted only as follows:
 - a. In conformance with current infectious disease precautions, approved hygienic procedures and professional practices.
 - b. In a room where privacy can be maintained. This room shall be Cell D within the detention area. Prior to the room being used for a strip search, the officer who shall perform the strip search shall ensure that the security camera monitoring Cell D is covered to ensure no recording of the strip search is made. The same officer shall ensure that the camera covering is removed once the search is completed and the strip searched person is wearing clothing again.
 - c. By the least number of personnel necessary and only performed by those of the same sex.

- d. In such a manner that the search cannot be observed by persons not physically conducting the search or not absolutely necessary to conduct the search.
 - e. Video recordings of strip searches are prohibited.
5. The officer who performed the search will be responsible for including the following information in the incident report:
- a. The date, time, and place of the search and the probable cause leading to the request for a strip search.
 - b. Identity of the officer requesting and conducting the search and of the person searched.
 - c. Those present during the search.
 - d. A detailed description of the nature and extent of the search.
 - e. Any weapons, evidence or contraband found during the search.
- B. Body Cavity Searches
1. Should a visual examination of a suspect during a strip search and / or other information lead an officer to believe that the suspect is concealing a weapon, evidence, or other contraband within a body cavity, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. The officer will consult with the Chief of Police to determine whether probable cause exists to seek a search warrant for a body cavity search. The decision to seek a search warrant shall recognize that a body cavity search is highly invasive of personal privacy. It is reasonable only where the suspected offense is of a serious nature and / or poses a threat to the safety and security of the officers or other department personnel.
 - b. If probable cause exists for a body cavity search, an affidavit for a search warrant will be prepared. It will clearly state and define the nature of the alleged offense and the basis for the officer's probable cause. It will be presented to the assistant district attorney on call for approval.
 - c. Upon approval of the application for a search warrant and issuance of the search warrant, a body cavity search will be performed. The body cavity search will be performed only by an authorized physician or other authorized medically-trained personnel at the physician's direction at an approved medical facility.
 - d. The search will be performed with recognition of privacy and hygienic concerns previously addressed in this policy.
 - e. Video recordings of body cavity searches are prohibited.

2. Following the search, a written report will be submitted as explained in the previous section under strip searches.