

Here is the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department [policy](#) (see page 11 in linked document) for shooting at or from moving vehicles:

*“Members shall not discharge their firearms either at or from a moving vehicle unless deadly force is being used against the member or another person. For purposes of this order, a moving vehicle is not considered deadly force except when it is reasonable to believe that the moving vehicle is being used to conduct a vehicle ramming attack. Members shall, as a rule, avoid tactics that could place them in a position where a vehicle could be used against them.*

*Definition: Vehicle ramming attack – form of attack in which a perpetrator deliberately rams, or attempts to ram, a motor vehicle at a crowd of people with the intent to inflict fatal injuries.”*

The Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department policy had previously completely prohibited shooting at moving vehicles but was changed in 2017 to carve out a well-defined narrow exception in the case of terrorist (vehicle ramming) attacks.

Here’s an excerpt from a Washington Post article discussing the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department policy revision creating an exception for terrorist attacks:

*Sam Sinyangwe, a data analyst and activist for the national group Campaign Zero, which calls for an end to police violence, said the group is concerned that any loosening of restrictions could embolden officers to pull their guns unnecessarily.*

*“What we’ve seen is a shift backward on this issue,” Sinyangwe said. He said the new policies, though made with the goal of combating terrorism, could cover incidents “that are not terrorist situations.”*

*Some law enforcement officials, experts on policing and chiefs say the new rules on police shootings should be tailored as narrowly as possible. A Washington Post database tracking shootings by police since 2015 shows that deadly shootings by officers number about 980 a year nationwide.*

*Even with the practice of shooting at moving vehicles largely banned, it has proved a difficult tactic to stop. Between January 2015 and May 2017, The Post found that police across the country fatally shot at least 193 people who were inside vehicles. In 76 of those cases, the person killed was not armed and only the vehicle was considered the weapon. Police acknowledged that in 17 of those cases, the person shot was fleeing.*

*Chuck Wexler, the executive director of the D.C.-based Police Executive Research Forum, which advises agencies on best practices, said that departments need to be “very careful about making adjustments that could be misinterpreted and potentially lead to bad shootings.” In 2016, PERF called for a prohibition on police shooting at moving vehicles unless those inside were using a weapon.*

*Charles H. Ramsey, who led the D.C. police department during its changes in the late 1990s and early 2000s and later headed President Barack Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, said later revisions make sense given the terrorist attacks. But he warned that departments need*

*to craft specific rules “so we don’t get back to the days of shooting at vehicles just because they are stolen.”*

Here’s the fundamental argument for a stringent policy prohibiting shooting at moving vehicles – excerpt from a 2017 Vox article:

*One thing we’ve known for decades is that this kind of shooting simply shouldn’t happen, because police officers should almost never shoot at moving vehicles. That’s been the policy in New York City, the country’s biggest local police department, for 45 years — and experts widely argue that it should be the policy for all police departments.*

*The argument for the change is straightforward: Shooting at a 4,000-pound vehicle is an ineffective way to stop it. Not only is the officer likely to miss the target (because real life isn’t Call of Duty), but she may actually hit someone else entirely. And if the officer gets or remains in front of the moving car in the course of shooting, she could get hurt even if she hits the driver.*

*“If you’re successful and shoot the driver, now you have an uncontrolled vehicle,” Geoff Alpert, a police tactics expert at the University of South Carolina, told me. “And it’s just as likely his foot is going to go on the gas as it is to not go on the gas.”*

*Yet these shootings continue to happen. According to a Washington Post database, police nationwide have killed nearly 200 people who were inside a moving car since January 2015. These are by and large shootings that violate what policing experts consider best practices, causing deaths that are unnecessary, even if they’re legal....*

*Experts said this policy is good for just about everyone involved: officers, the driver, and anyone else who may be around this kind of situation.*

*“No officers, to my knowledge, have been hurt as a result of it,” Wexler said, referring to New York City’s policy. “And many lives have been saved.” He added, “This policy, to me, is all about the sanctity of human life — both officer and the subjects they’re dealing with.”*

*To understand why, imagine a case in which an officer is in front of a car that’s speeding toward him. If the cop decides to shoot, that could put him in harm’s way, since, instead of getting out of the way, he’ll be focused on shooting. That could get the officer seriously injured.*

*The other issue is that shooting a moving vehicle is a very ineffective way of actually stopping it. Most of the time, officers will miss — since cops simply aren’t always the marksmen we see on television and in the movies. They might even hit the wrong target, like a passenger or a passerby near the car.*

*But even if they do hit the driver, that in no way guarantees that the car will actually stop. A wounded driver or dead body could lean into the pedal harder, causing the car to spiral out of control — and maybe hit more people and do more damage.*

A final relevant point I'll mention – as ex-ATF agent Julius Wachtel notes in his article "*An Illusory 'Consensus'*", the "*National Consensus Policy on Use of Force*" does not reflect a true consensus among U.S. law enforcement agencies. It was developed by a set of 11 law enforcement organizations led by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). It excluded key law enforcement organizations, such as the Police Foundation, the Police Executive Research Forum, the Major City Chiefs Association, the National Sheriff's Association, etc. The "*National Consensus Policy on Use of Force*" is basically the conservative response to the Police Executive Research Forum's *30 Guiding Principles on Use of Force*. IACP was particularly distraught at the *30 Guiding Principles* criticism of *Graham v. Connor* for giving officers too much leeway in deciding when to use force. PERF pressed for more stringent and precisely articulated controls on officer use of force. At the core of the "*National Consensus*" report is an emphasis on *Graham* and an orientation toward maximizing officer discretion on use of force. Organizations such as the Major City Chiefs Association appear to align more with PERF, and overall, tend to favor more progressive standards than IACP. Whenever there's fundamental social change that moves in a progressive direction (as with PERF's *30 Guiding Principles*), there will always be backlash (led in part by IACP in this case). Though this is not to say that the "*National Consensus*" is regressive in all aspects.