

Law Enforcement Bullet Proof Vest Important Information

As law enforcement officers often encounter dangerous individuals in the line of duty, taking the proper safety precautions is paramount. For these men and women, facing various threats – gunfire, blades, improvised weapons – is all part of the job, and to maximize their personal safety, they need the best protective clothing available. Firearms continue to pose the biggest threat to officers, and bulletproof vests are widely used in day-to-day operations, covering such applications as: patrolling high-crime neighborhoods, attending armed sieges, and engaging in tactical operations (among others).

Officers with years of experience behind them may already be familiar with bulletproof armor, but if you're new to law enforcement, the range of options may seem overwhelming. This guide is designed to help officers at all levels of experience understand their protective gear a little better.

Understanding Ballistic Protection Levels



Bulletproof vests are designed to absorb a round's energy on impact, and redistribute it throughout the multiple layers of Kevlar, flattening the tip; while this stops the bullet penetrating, severe swelling and bruising may still occur.

To help you find the right armor to defend yourself against the gunfire you expect to face, bulletproof vests are produced in various types – each of these is tested by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), to evaluate the amount of protection it offers against specific ammunition. According to their current standard, five levels of protection are available: IIA, II, IIIA, III, and IV, encompassing soft and hard armors.

IIA vests stop 9mm rounds (with an impact-speed of 373 m/s) as well as .40 S&W rounds, while level II armor has enough stopping power to protect against 9mm rounds of a higher velocity (398 m/s) and .357

Magnum rounds. Vests at level IIIA offer protection from .357 SIG rounds and .44 Magnum rounds. All of these vests are lightweight enough to be concealed under your uniform or civilian clothes for undercover assignments.

In the hard-armor category, level III defends against 7.62mm rifle rounds (which strike with a velocity of around 847 m/s, with level IV vests featuring ballistic plates (typically made of ceramics or steel) to resist armor-piercing bullets. These are typically only worn for the most extreme situations, in which severe gunfire is believed to be a potential risk; [SWAT teams](#) will combine these with ballistic helmets and additional body protection.

Bullet Proof Vests and Longevity

How long will your bulletproof vest last? This may vary by the manufacturer, but generally, Kevlar vests include a five-year warranty; however, provided you take proper care of your armor, and ensure you keep it out of direct sunlight and away from water (both of which can cause damage to the protective fibers), it should last far longer.

Choosing the Right Vest for Varied Assignments

Working in certain areas of law enforcement may mean that you are more exposed to specific risks than in others: for example, specializing in tactical operations will place you at greater threat of injury from high-caliber gunfire than, say, working within a prison, where assault with a sharp object is more likely.

However, regardless of the role you work in, you may never know the exact risks you'll encounter on any given shift, so you have to be prepared: performing a proper risk assessment for each situation will help you understand which threats you're most likely to encounter.

The level of visibility a particular assignment demands may also dictate your choice of armor: will you need to maintain a low profile, or convey a clear presence? Working undercover, you'll be unable to wear the bulkiest vest – if you believe you're likely to encounter high-velocity gunfire, you may have to forego discretion for effective protection; conversely, if you're free to wear armor over your uniform, then you can choose to wear any vest you need. Covert vests such as the ones you can see online on [Safeguard](#), are designed to fit underneath clothing (with thinner, more lightweight materials), while overt vests are the standard design, worn over other layers.

Never underestimate the importance of body armor: always make sure you have the [right level of protection for any threats you expect to face](#). Working in law enforcement is a challenging, often dangerous job, and being prepared to deal with any potential risks is essential to staying as safe as possible.

