

# SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

## TRAINING BULLETIN

*"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"*

### Use of the Life Hammer Tool

#### Purpose

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide officers with procedural information regarding the use of the Life Hammer Tool. It will familiarize Department personnel on how the Life Hammer Tool should be used, the circumstances under which it can be deployed and the requirements for supervisor approval and documentation of use.

#### Introduction

The Life Hammer Tool can provide officers with a quick and effective way to gain entry into a locked vehicle in life threatening situations which involve vehicle accidents or when an emergency entry of a vehicle is necessary. A Life Hammer Tool will be mounted on the inside of the trunk hoods of every marked unit, placed in all CSI vehicles and issued to each motor officer. Although the Life Hammer is a safe and effective tool, there are still safety precautions that must be taken when using it.

#### Description

The Life Hammer Tool weighs just over 3.5 ounces and is 6.75 inches in length. The hammer portion, with its two steel points, can be used to shatter side vehicle windows. The protected blade can be used to cut through seat belts. The plastic mounting device will ensure easy accessibility and will be mounted to the trunk hoods of every patrol unit. A luminescent pin on the holder helps locate the tool in the dark.

#### Policy

The Life Hammer Tool can be used to gain entry into a vehicle, when all other reasonable means of entry are exhausted. Circumstances that are likely for the Life Hammer Tool to be used would be to rescue a person from a vehicle accident or to provide medical aid where entry cannot be made through the door, to remove a child from the inside of a locked vehicle or when a suspect refuses or is incapable of opening the door. The tool can also be used in the event that a seatbelt must be cut to extract a person from a vehicle.

The Life Hammer Tool shall be used in the manner described in this Training Bulletin. All necessary precautions shall be taken to minimize the risk of injury to the individual being removed from the vehicle, as well as to the officer utilizing the tool. The Life Hammer Tool

is **ONLY** designed for use on **SIDE VEHICLE WINDOWS** and *shall not* be used on residential or building windows.

In situations where an emergency does not exist, you are required to receive approval from a supervisor prior to use. When exigent circumstances do not allow time to contact a supervisor, no advance approval to use the Life Hammer Tool is necessary.

## I. Instructions for Use

When circumstances permit, the officer shall take personal safety precautions by wearing proper eye protection and gloves, prior to using the Life Hammer Tool. A pair of safety glasses and latex gloves are supplied in the first aid kit in the trunk of all patrol units.

To remove the Life Hammer Tool from the holder, simply grab the top of the tool and pull down. Whenever possible, you should break a side window as far away from anyone in the vehicle as possible. Stand as far away from the entry point as possible and swing your hand in an arcing motion so that the impact tip comes in contact with the glass. The window should shatter upon contact. Larger side windows or windows covered with tint film, may need several taps to break. Use the opposite end of the Life Hammer Tool to remove or push the remaining pieces of glass out of the way. Use caution reaching into the vehicle to unlock the door since broken glass will be present on the windowsill and door area.

Side windows provide the easiest entry point and are designed to completely disintegrate when broken. Front and rear windshields do not disintegrate easily, require multiple hits to put a hole in them and often necessitate manual removal of the remaining glass, which can be hazardous. The Life Hammer Tool is designed **ONLY for use on side vehicle windows** and *shall not* be used on residential or building windows.

If a seatbelt must be cut to extract a person from a vehicle, the officer shall take necessary precautions to minimize injury to the individual. Pull the remainder of the seatbelt out from the retractor until it is taut and place the blade of the Life Hammer against the edge of the belt and cut the belt by pulling the blade towards you, not the victim. A simple slicing motion should be sufficient to cut through any restricted or jammed seatbelt. (Blade replacements are available should the blade become dull.)

## II. Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors shall document the use of the Life Hammer on their daily log outlining the facts that led to using the tool. However, if the supervisor completes an administrative report on the incident, details on the use of the Life Hammer can be documented in this report.

## Summary

The Life Hammer is a valuable tool that will allow us to respond more effectively in life threatening situations that involve vehicle accidents or when an emergency entry of a vehicle is necessary.

Using the Life Hammer Tool is simple and straightforward. However, protection of the victim and/or suspect is paramount and safety precautions must be followed to ensure safe entry into a vehicle. Using the Life Hammer Tool in situations presenting officer safety risks should involve careful analysis of the tactical situation to ensure that the extraction of a resisting suspect is conducted in a safe and efficient manner.

**Acknowledgment:** This training bulletin was researched and prepared by Corporal Vivian Tabb 12-00.

**Reviewed By:** Cpl. K. De Deaux

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