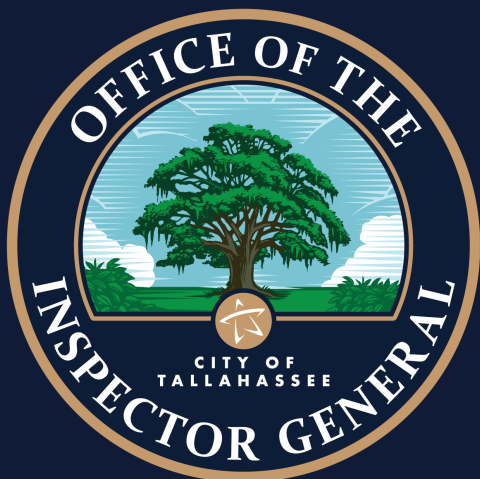


Audit of TPD Operational Training



**Report AR-2601
November 13, 2025**

Dennis R. Sutton, CPA, CIA, CIG
Inspector General



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CITY OF TALLAHASSEE

DENNIS R. SUTTON
INSPECTOR GENERAL



TO: Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Dennis Sutton, Inspector General 
DATE: November 13, 2025
SUBJECT: Audit of TPD Operational Training (AR-2601)

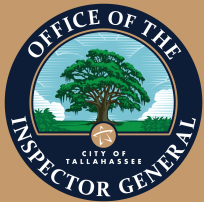
We have completed the Audit of TPD Operational Training. We submit this report which contains our observations and response from the City Manager.

We thank applicable City staff for their assistance and cooperation during this audit. Please contact me if you have any questions or need a more detailed briefing on this audit.

SM/md

Attachment

cc: Appointed Officials
Executive Team
Members of the Audit Committee
External Auditor



Audit of TPD Operational Training

Executive Summary

#AR-2601

November 13, 2025

Why we did this audit

In the wake of high-profile incidents involving use of force by law enforcement outside Tallahassee, the City Commission directed the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct an audit of Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) General Order 60 – Response to Resistance (GO-60, known as its “use of force policy”). The policy guides officers on appropriate actions when an individual fails to comply with a lawful order. Our prior audit (Report AR-2402) concluded the policy was in alignment with best practices in policing and incorporated the “8 Can’t Wait” policy measures.

This subsequent audit evaluated training TPD provided to officers on GO-60. The OIG included this audit as part of the 2024 Annual Audit Plan based on the belief that in intense high-pressure moments, officers will respond to the situation based on their training because they may not have the luxury of time to stop and think about what relevant policies require.

To view the full report, go to
<https://www.talgov.com/transparency/inspectorgeneral-reports>.

For more information, contact us by email at inspector.general@talgov.com or by telephone at 850.891.8397.

What we concluded

Based on our audit procedures, we concluded TPD training related to GO-60 aligned with the policy and included guidance on officer response when use of force is necessary or when officers encounter individuals who refuse to comply with lawful orders. Specifically, we found the training curriculum addressed response-to-resistance topics, including evaluating appropriate force options, utilizing verbal de-escalation techniques, and accurately documenting incidents.

We also identified strengths in TPD training related to GO-60, including structured training for newly-hired officers, annual refresher training for current officers, and specialized training based on specific operational needs.

However, we also identified areas where improvements to the training process should be considered. Specifically, we noted one instance of a delay in updating training materials following a policy revision. We also identified an opportunity to further clarify policy provisions related to what should occur when officers do not attend mandatory training. The areas noted where improvement should be considered do not impact the TPD history of meeting state law enforcement and accreditation standards.

What we recommended

To ensure policy changes are timely incorporated into training materials and to enhance officer preparedness for instances where changes in laws, policies, techniques, or equipment are made between training cycles, we recommend that TPD management:

- Communicate those changes in a timely manner using mechanisms deemed most appropriate.
- Revise the process for updating training curricula to ensure changes in laws, policies, techniques, or equipment are timely incorporated.

To enhance compliance with policies and accreditation standards, we recommend TPD management:

- Develop formal procedures specifying deadlines and expectations for completing missed annual defensive tactics (DT) refresher training.
- Establish criteria for determining operational duty restrictions (if any) for officers missing DT refresher training.

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I. Introduction

In the wake of high-profile incidents involving use of force by law enforcement outside Tallahassee, the City Commission directed the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct an audit of Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) General Order 60 – Response to Resistance (GO-60, known as its “use of force policy”). The policy guides officers on appropriate actions when an individual fails to comply with a lawful order. Our prior audit (Report AR-2402) concluded the policy was in alignment with best practices in policing and incorporated the “8 Can’t Wait” policy measures.

This report provides an objective assessment of training.

This subsequent audit evaluated training TPD provided to officers on GO-60. The OIG included this audit as part of the 2024 annual audit plan based on the belief that in intense high-pressure moments, officers will respond to the situation based on their training because they may not have the luxury of time to stop and think about what relevant policies require.

The report provides an objective assessment of the training framework, including design, delivery, and responsiveness to policy changes. It highlights strengths that support officer preparedness and compliance, while also identifying areas where improvements would further reduce risk and strengthen accountability. By doing so, this audit is intended to provide both City leadership and the public with assurance that officer training in Tallahassee reflects established standards of professional policing.

II. Background

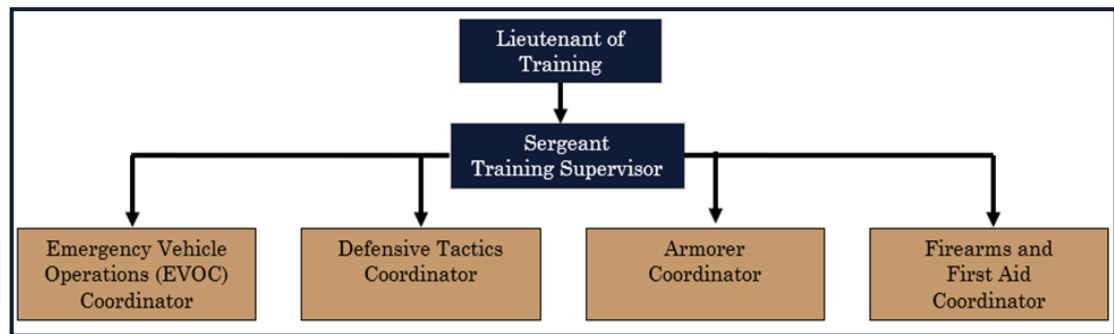
TPD provides structured training to ensure the approximately 400 sworn officers are prepared to perform their duties. Effective training equips officers to make sound, split-second decisions that protect both public safety and officer well-being. Ongoing professional development also strengthens community trust by demonstrating Department commitment to adherence to established standards of policing. To fulfill these responsibilities, TPD maintains a dedicated Training Unit that develops and delivers programs that help the Department maintain officer credentials, comply with accreditation standards, and support the effective delivery of law enforcement services.

Training Unit

TPD has a specific unit tasked with providing officer training to 1) maintain officer law enforcement credentials, 2) comply with accreditation standards, and 3) support department delivery of law enforcement services consistent with internal standards. That unit, the Training Unit, consists of four training coordinators, one training supervisor, and one lieutenant.

The position descriptions and the departmental organization within TPD establish formal lines of authority and accountability within the Training Unit. Each of the coordinators are assigned to areas of training based on experience or qualifications relevant to the subject matter. Below is the organizational chart of the Training Unit.

Figure 1: Training Unit Organizational Chart



Source: OIG

Training Development

The TPD Training Committee reviews and recommends training curricula and priorities. The lieutenant of training chairs this internal advisory body. Committee members include representatives from major TPD bureaus, including Patrol Operations, Criminal Investigations, High-Risk Offenders, Operational Support, and the Field Training Program. Members are appointed by the bureau commanders and the committee meets at least quarterly. The committee evaluates department-wide training needs, reviews training outcomes for compliance, relevance, and accreditation compliance, and recommends changes and improvements for consideration by TPD leadership and the Training Unit.

All lesson plans used by TPD are prepared by training coordinators considering 1) statistical data, 2) incident reports (including use-of-force incidents), 3) departmental training priorities, and 4) changes related to laws and policies, equipment used by officers, and best practices. Before use, the training sergeant and training lieutenant formally review and approve lesson plans.

The training program provided by the Training Unit addresses training needed by 1) newly hired officers, 2) existing officers in annual refresher sessions, and 3) specific units or teams that require specialized training that may not be necessary for all officers. Training for newly hired officers is intended to build upon any training officers received before joining TPD and educate them on departmental policies, procedures, and departmental standards regarding behavior and approaches to enforcing the law. The annual refresher training for current officers included GO-60, defensive tactics, firearms proficiency, emergency vehicle operations, and de-escalation techniques.

III. Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The purpose of the audit was to assess whether TPD officer training aligned with GO-60.

The purpose of this audit was to assess whether TPD officer training aligned with GO-60, focusing on training materials used and training activities conducted during calendar year 2024. The objective of this audit was to enable the OIG to determine whether the training curriculum adequately addressed GO-60 requirements, thereby helping ensure officers respond to resistance in the manner expected by TPD leadership. To accomplish that objective, we 1) gained a thorough understanding of the training process for TPD officers, 2) reviewed relevant training materials and attendance records, 3) cross-referenced GO-60 requirements to applicable training materials, and 4) conducted interviews of key TPD personnel involved in the training process.

Figure 2: Audit Methodology Snapshot



Source: OIG

Standards

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General is to advance integrity, accountability, transparency, and efficiency and effectiveness within City government by providing professional, independent, and objective audit and investigative services.

We conducted this audit in conformance with *generally accepted government auditing standards*. Those standards require we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives.

Authority and Role

The authority to perform this audit is established in the City of Tallahassee Charter, which provides the OIG with the power and duty to review programs of City government in order to identify any inefficiencies, waste, and potential for misconduct, and to promote economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in the administration of City programs and operations. The role of the OIG is to review City operations and make recommendations for improvement.

City management is responsible for establishing and maintaining processes to ensure that City programs operate economically, efficiently, effectively, and with integrity.

Relationship to the City Strategic Plan

This audit supports implementation of the City Strategic Plan by evaluating operations that contribute to established organizational goals and relates to Priority Area 5: *Public Safety*, Objective 5.3, Enhance Training and Readiness of Public Safety Employees. Target 5.3.2 of the Strategic Plan establishes a benchmark of at least 50 training hours annually per police officer. Although this audit did not directly assess achievement with that target, it examined defensive tactics and response to resistance training, both of which are included in the in-service hours reported toward the Strategic Plan goal. By addressing the adequacy of these training requirements, the audit aligns with the City's broader objective of ensuring officers are well-prepared for their service to the community.

IV. Observations

Audit observations present the results of comparing conditions observed during the audit against established criteria such as laws, regulations, policies, or best practices. Each observation typically includes the criteria used for assessment, the condition observed, the cause of the condition, and the effect or potential effect on operations. Observations are not limited to identifying deficiencies; they can also demonstrate when processes and controls are functioning as intended. In both cases, the purpose of reporting observations is to provide management with clear, evidence-based information to support accountability and improvement.

Observation 1: TPD Training Aligned with GO-60.

TPD training activities supported policy implementation.

Our audit procedures showed the TPD training program aligned training with GO-60 and established best practices. The policy and associated training aligned with the "objective reasonableness" standard established by the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), which provides foundational criteria for evaluating whether an officer's use of force is justified.

Our audit included a detailed review of TPD training lesson plans to verify TPD incorporated requirements of GO-60 into those plans. Figure 2 summarizes training elements and highlights how each was addressed within the TPD training program.

Figure 3: Elements of Response to Resistance Training

GO-60 Element	TPD Training Program
Use of Force (Objectively Reasonable Standard)	Officers are trained to recognize suspect resistance and respond appropriately with policy and scenario-based exercises, reinforcing the use of the least amount of force necessary.
Definitions of Resistance Levels	Resistance levels—from passive noncompliance to life-threatening aggression—are clearly defined to guide officer responses.
Specialized Equipment	TPD trains officers on specialized tools, including ballistic shields, less-lethal launchers, and impact projectiles, with instruction on deployment procedures that comply with department safety protocols.
De-escalation and Verbal Communication	TPD emphasizes de-escalation and communication skills. Through role-play and lectures, officers practice using communication strategies and techniques to calm individuals, build rapport, and resolve situations without force when feasible.
Medical Aid Protocols Post Use-of-Force	Officers are trained to assess injuries, provide immediate medical aid, and request emergency medical services when necessary following force incidents.
Emergency Vehicle Operations	Specialized training in advanced driving techniques for routine and emergency response, including pursuit management and termination, emphasizing public and officer safety.
Deadly Force Guidelines	Deadly force is emphasized as a last resort, permissible only to prevent imminent threats of serious injury or death.
Physical Control	Comprehensive defensive tactics training in restraint methods, handcuffing, deployment of pepper spray and other control tools.
Less-Lethal Force Options	Officers demonstrate proficiency in deploying less-lethal tools (such as batons and “Tasers”), including instruction on appropriate use and decision-making criteria.

Source: City records

During the course of the audit, we identified several activities of the TPD training unit that warranted recognition. These activities support officer preparedness, maintain operational readiness, and help TPD respond to the evolving needs of law enforcement personnel. Specifically, the Training Unit:

Training infrastructure supports compliance with departmental policies.

- Coordinated structured training sessions for 35 new officers covering defensive tactics, emergency vehicle operations, CPR, firearm proficiency, and policy education.
- Facilitated 60 in-service training classes addressing competencies such as defensive tactics, vehicle operations, firearm proficiency, scenario-based training, and deployment of a new “Taser” model.
- Conducted firearm range sessions to meet State mandated semi-annual qualification requirements.
- Delivered specialized emergency vehicle operation training.
- Provided remedial training to officers identified as needing additional skill reinforcement.

These efforts reflect a training infrastructure that supports compliance with departmental policies and best practices.

Observation 2: TPD can improve operating processes by timely updating training materials.

General Order 2 (GO-2) - *Chain of Command-General Management* requires the Training Section to “keep members up-to-date with new laws, technological improvements, and revisions in policy and procedures.” Additionally, the U.S. Department of Justice states that policy changes should be promptly integrated into law enforcement training programs.

This audit identified an instance where a change to GO-60 was not timely incorporated into training materials, specifically, the revision to GO-60 that recognized the risks of *positional asphyxia*.¹

Figure 4 outlines the implementation timeline for incorporating these revisions into training. The policy change required that “officers must be vigilant in monitoring a detainee’s breathing and promptly responding to any distress signals. It is crucial to avoid prolonged or excessive pressure on a person’s chest, neck, or back, as these actions can heighten the risk of positional asphyxia.”²

¹ Positional asphyxia is defined as “death as a result of body position that interferes with one’s ability to breathe,” and it can occur during restraint, including confrontational encounters involving law enforcement officers. (U.S. Department of Justice, *Positional Asphyxia—Sudden Death*, June 1995, p. 1)

² Tallahassee Police Department, General Order 60, “Response to Resistance,” dated July 25, 2023, Section VI(A)(4), Page 13.

Figure 4: Implementation Timeline

Action	Date
Policy Change (GO-60)	July 25, 2023
Issuance of Training Bulletin	December 16, 2024
Incorporated Into All Lesson Plans	2025 Training Year

Source: City records

Training bulletins are one of the mechanisms used to communicate policy changes to officers. As shown in Figure 4, the policy update was not formally communicated to all officers until December 16, 2024, approximately 17 months after the change was made. Our review also found the policy revision addressing positional asphyxia had not been integrated into all TPD 2024 training materials. Specifically, we noted TPD incorporated the policy revisions into training lesson plans for all newly hired officers in the middle of the 2024 training year and fully incorporated the policy change into all training materials for the 2025 training year.

While there was a delay in including the policy change into all training materials as described above, many other TPD policies already addressed and provided for mitigation of the risks associated with positional asphyxia. For example:

- General Order 59 - *Transporting and Booking Procedures* required monitoring of detainees for signs of medical distress and placing them in an upright position when possible,
- Earlier versions of General Order 60 - *Response to Resistance* provided for placing individuals in a recovery position when appropriate, and
- General Order 46 - *Rules of Conduct* established a duty to intervene when officers witness another officer taking actions that could cause injury to another person.

By not timely incorporating policy changes into all officer training materials, there is an increased risk officers will not be aware of or act in accordance with those policy changes.

Recommendation: To ensure policy changes are timely incorporated into training materials and to enhance officer preparedness for instances where changes in laws, policies, techniques, or equipment are made between training cycles, we recommend that TPD management:

- 2.1 Communicate those changes in a timely manner using mechanisms deemed most appropriate.
- 2.2 Revise the process for updating training curricula to ensure changes in laws, policies, techniques, or equipment are timely incorporated.

There is an increased risk officers will not be aware of policy changes in a timely manner.

Observation 3: TPD should enhance procedures for managing missed mandatory training.

TPD procedures should be strengthened to address instances where officers miss or do not attend mandatory defensive tactics (DT) training. While reviewing DT training rosters, we noted limited instances, 2 of 399 officers (0.5 percent), where officers did not obtain the annual DT training in 2024 as required by departmental policy.

The TPD training requirement establishes the framework for officer proficiency in weaponless control techniques and response to resistance.

TPD Policy Requirements

- TPD Standard Operating Procedure TRN 5 – *Training Programs* mandates annual participation in DT training to demonstrate proficiency in responding to resistance to lawful orders.
- GO-2 requires annual refresher training in defensive tactics, described as “weaponless control techniques” and response to resistance.

TPD directives require annual training in certain subjects.

TPD training in defensive tactics is an intense training session and, in some instances, officers may be physically unable to complete the training (e.g., assigned to light duty due to physical injury). Accordingly, there was a policy requirement for officers’ training to be rescheduled. However, there was no direction in policy for instances when officers were unable to attend/complete the DT course within the training window.

To address this policy gap, TPD should enhance procedures to more clearly define the required actions (e.g., waiver approved by the Chief or attend similar training for newly hired officers) when officers miss their annual DT training and do not complete a make-up session within a specified period. Additionally, policies did not address whether operational duty restrictions should be considered for officers who did not complete the mandatory training.

This policy gap could impact officer safety and increase legal liability.

Recommendation: To enhance policy compliance, we recommend TPD management:

- 3.1 Develop formal procedures specifying deadlines and expectations for completing missed annual DT refresher training.
- 3.2 Establish criteria for determining operational duty restrictions (if any) for officers missing DT refresher training.

If adopted, these recommendations will support compliance with department policy and help mitigate officer safety concerns and potential legal risks.

V. Conclusion

We concluded the TPD training program aligned with GO-60 and provided reasonable assurance that training materials instructed officers to respond in accordance with departmental policy when individuals do not comply with lawful orders or when use of force becomes necessary. Training curricula included instruction on response-to-resistance topics such as appropriate force options, verbal de-escalation, and incident documentation.

However, we identified areas where improvement could be made to enhance the training program by improving the timeliness of incorporating policy changes into training materials and strengthening procedures for documenting and completing missed mandatory training. Addressing these areas will support officer readiness and compliance with departmental policies.

TPD management reported that all actions to address our audit recommendations were completed by October 13, 2025. These proactive steps demonstrate management's commitment to strengthening training oversight. In accordance with our standard audit practices, a follow-up audit will be scheduled as part of the March 2026 audit follow-up process to validate TPD management's assertion that all actions were completed prior to the issuance of this audit report.

VI. Appointed Official Response

City Manager:

We appreciate the work of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in conducting this audit of the Tallahassee Police Department's operational training. As noted in the report, all recommended action steps have been completed. TPD staff continue to evaluate and implement improvements based on best practices. I would like to thank the staff of the OIG for their professional review and ongoing efforts to strengthen our City controls and processes.

VII. Management Action Plan

OIG Recommendation	Management Action Plan Step	Responsible Party	Completion Date
Observation 1: TPD training aligned with GO-60. Our audit procedures showed the TPD training program aligned with GO-60 and established best practices.	No action required.	N/A	N/A
Observation 2: TPD can improve operating processes by timely updating training materials. Recommendation: To ensure policy changes are timely incorporated into training materials and to enhance officer preparedness, for instances where changes in laws, policies, techniques, or equipment are made between training cycles, we recommend that TPD management: 2.1 Communicate those changes in a timely manner using the mechanisms deemed most appropriate. 2.2 Revise the process for updating training curricula to ensure changes in laws, policies, techniques, or equipment are timely incorporated.	The Accreditation and Inspection Unit (AIU) has been designated as the responsible entity for ensuring that all statutory updates and policy changes are communicated effectively. When statutes are distributed through PowerDMS and when policy changes are issued that require training adjustments, the AIU will immediately notify by email the Training Unit Chain of Command. Upon notification, the Training Unit will either (a) issue a Training Bulletin for immediate officer awareness, or (b) incorporate the revisions into the next scheduled training cycle, ensuring integration into lesson plans and training curricula.	Jason Laursen (Operational Support Bureau) and Maurice Holmes (Accreditation and Inspection Unit)	10/13/25
Observation 3: TPD should enhance procedures for managing missed mandatory training. Recommendation: To enhance policy compliance, we recommend TPD management: 3.1 Develop formal procedures specifying deadlines and expectations for completing missed annual DT refresher training. 3.2 Establish criteria for determining operational duty restrictions (if any) for officers missing DT refresher training. If adopted, these recommendations will support compliance with department policy and help mitigate officer safety concerns and potential legal risks.	A provision has been added to departmental policy, General Order 57 (Training Protocol) that all members shall attend in-service and other department-mandated training unless their absence is approved by the Bureau Commander or designee. This creates a formal expectation and establishes accountability for missed training sessions. Operational Duty Restrictions: Policy has been updated to clarify that: Members on light/limited duty status are still required to attend mandatory training and will participate in all portions of training that they are physically capable of completing. When necessary, the Training Unit may provide modified in-service training during the cycle to ensure these members receive required instruction consistent with FDLE standards.	Jason Laursen (Operational Support Bureau) and Maurice Holmes (Accreditation and Inspection Unit)	10/13/25

VIII. Acknowledgements

We sincerely appreciate the Tallahassee Police Department, particularly the Training Unit, for their prompt responses to our inquiries and timely provision of requested documentation. Their cooperation and professionalism significantly contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the audit process.

Project Team

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Senior IT Auditor

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Deputy Inspector General



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