National Police Public Order
Training Curriculum

Module E4 – Water Cannon in Public Order

Version 1.1
## Control Page

### Distribution list

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<thead>
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<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Water Cannon Tactical Manual</td>
<td>Room G7 Knowledge Centre</td>
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<td>Mike Ismay</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2012-05-18</td>
<td>Approval to publish</td>
<td>Bryan Spence</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>29/04/13</td>
<td>Rebranded</td>
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<th>Revision</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

Core Group ........................................................................................................ 5  
Module Summary ............................................................................................... 5  
Learning Outcomes .......................................................................................... 5  
Content ............................................................................................................... 5  
Rationale ............................................................................................................. 6  
Content ............................................................................................................... 5  
Delivery Method ................................................................................................ 17
Core Group

This Module is intended for all officers who may be required to support the deployment of water cannon and their tactics. This module is to support the National Police Public Order Training Curriculum.

Module Summary

This module outlines the guidance for the use and tactics of water cannon and is designed to set the appropriate standards for deployment and use of such equipment.

Learning Outcomes

1. Outline the modes of use of a water cannon
2. Identify the operational considerations for deployment of water cannon
3. State the criteria for the use of water cannon
4. Explain the tactics for water cannon supported by foot and vehicles

Content

ACPO Guidance on the Deployment and Use of Water Cannon

Water Cannon Tactics

- Show of Force
- Static Support
  - Cordon Support (Foot)
  - Cordon Support (Vehicles)
- Moving Support
  - Cordon Advance (Foot)
  - Cordon Advance (Vehicles)
- Withdrawal Support

Rationale

The aim of this module is to prepare forces and train staff with the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills required to be deployed with water cannon.
This will ensure that there is a capability for all forces to have interoperability when deployed in pre-planned public order and public safety events.

**ACPO Guidance on the Deployment and Use of Water Cannon**

1. **Introduction**

   a) The purpose of these guidelines is to facilitate an understanding, and to provide practical guidance concerning the deployment and use of vehicle mounted water cannon.

   b) The guidelines have been audited to ensure the content is in compliance with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the provisions of the United Nations Basic Principles on Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

   c) Managing conflict and responding to violence are core police functions. Police response is underpinned by Human Rights and in particular the obligation under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to uphold the right to life. Article 2 of the UN Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms states that:

   ‘Governments and law enforcement agencies should develop a range of means as broad as possible and equip law enforcement officials with various types of weapons and ammunition that would allow for a differentiated use of force and firearms.’

   d) Vehicle mounted Water Cannons can be used in a variety of modes and therefore provide the police service with an additional, flexible and graduated means of responding to situations where use of force is considered necessary. The modes of operation are:

   - Spray or Diffused Mode.
   - Short bursts of water jets.
   - Continuous water jets.
e) The design and use of the vehicle mounted water cannon system are subject to strict criteria. Only water cannon that have undergone a full technical evaluation and consideration of the medical implications of its operation may be used within in the United Kingdom. The 'RCV9000 Vehicle Mounted Water Cannon' is currently approved for use within the UK.

f) The deployment and use of water cannon will be informed by reference to the ACPO National Decision Model. The availability or deployment of the Water Cannon should not however be considered as a replacement for other less lethal weapons but rather provide a tactical and less lethal response in other situations where a use of force is required.

g) The deployment and use of water cannon is required to be documented as soon as practicable thus providing an audit trail of decision making in respect of command and operational decisions. Rationale may include Human rights considerations, course of actions adopted and options considered and rejected. This is in line with guidance given in Authorised Professional Practice.

h) The legal governance and framework for policing public order is set out in the Authorised Professional Practice. It states that the police use of force is governed by common law, the Criminal Law Act 1967, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the rights and freedoms contained within ECHR.

i) A unique characteristic of water cannon is the ability to graduate the delivery of water from a diffused spray to a directed jet and at varying pressures. Thus water cannon provide a graduated and flexible application of force ranging from use of the water cannon in spray or diffused mode to forceful water jets.

k) Water cannon are intended to complement the existing range of tactical options and equipment. Size, weight and manoeuvrability may place constraints on their use. Therefore, whilst water cannon may be an appropriate option in certain circumstances, the topography of the area and
ground conditions may negate their use and other appropriate tactical options should be considered.

l) Nothing in these guidelines should be construed so as to constrain the police service in its fundamental responsibility to save life, protect property and maintain the peace. Police officers shall at all times fulfil the duty imposed upon them by law, by serving the community and by protecting all persons against illegal acts, consistent with the high degree of responsibility required by their profession.

2. Description of the RCV9000 Vehicle Mounted Water Cannon

a) The RCV9000 water cannon vehicle consists of a six wheel drive chassis on which is mounted a superstructure consisting of a crew cabin; a pump compartment and a water tank. Water Cannon may only be operated by officers who are currently trained in their use.

b) Within the cab there is a comprehensive set of controls and recording equipment to capture data from sensors monitoring water pressure, date and time of use. Each vehicle has two water cannons mounted on the roof of the cab.

c) The vehicles are each equipped with a public address system, distinctive audible sirens and blue flashing lights. A high intensity light bar is fitted to the front of the cab above the windscreen.

d) Due to their size and weight water cannon should normally be deployed at least in pairs to provide mutual support and immediate recovery capability in the event of a mechanical failure.

3. Considerations for Deployment and use of Water Cannon

a) Certain considerations such as the following should also be considered

- Displacement of risk
- Exit routes
• Crowd response
• Public perception

b) As with the use of any vehicle in areas where there is a large crowd of people there is a risk that moving the vehicle could result in a collision and injure individuals. The provision and of use the public address system, distinctive audible sirens and blue flashing lights system will provide a means to warn persons present of impending use.

c) The ability to discharge jets of water in differing modes and at varying pressures is a unique characteristic of water cannon representing a use of force option that may be considered appropriate in a wide range of situations.

d) The Water cannon is intended to be a less lethal use of force option. The method of delivery and use is intended to avoid causing serious or permanent injury. However as with any use of force there is a potential for unintended or unforeseen injuries being caused. In respect of water cannon the following potentials for injury have been identified:-

• Direct injury from water jet. In particular the application of two jets on individuals will increase the risk to subjects.
• Running, tripping or falling when trying to evade water cannon.
• Being pushed onto hard sharp objects or glazing by the force of the jets (Tertiary Impact).
• Being knocked off walls or other high positions.
• Secondary missiles being propelled from the ground or dislodged from buildings or other structures.

e) Training will address these considerations and other potential risks from: -

• Jets directed at the ground in front of crouching/sitting persons where there may be debris on the ground;
• Jets striking the head, even peripherally;
• Jets striking, even peripherally, persons using optical equipment or with the equipment (cameras etc) directly;
• Persons adjacent to obstacles such as walls, barricades and vehicles, or lying on the ground where the pressure of water may cause them to fall against such objects;
• Persons who may be thrown into the path of moving vehicles by the jet:
• Children, the elderly or small adults being struck by the jet.

f) Water cannon should be supported by other public order tactical options and equipment and should not ordinarily be deployed as a standalone option.

g) Water Cannon will only be deployed following the appropriate threat and risk assessments. The Silver Commander will formulate a tactical plan within specific tactical parameters agreed with the Gold Commander to be implemented by the relevant Bronze Commander(s).

h) Given the flexibility in use of the water cannon it is impossible to provide a definitive list of situations or precise criteria for their deployment and use but the following principles should taken into consideration:

• The physical presence of water cannon may act as a deterrent.
• The physical presence may inflame a situation and the decision to move water cannon forward and into view must rest with Bronze and Silver Commanders at the time.
• The public address system, high intensity lights, flashing blue lights and distinctive sirens can all be used to provide warnings and alert a crowd of the presence of water cannon and police intentions.
• Water cannon may be considered as an alternative tactical option in situations of serious public disorder, where there is the potential for loss of life, serious injury, or widespread destruction and where such action is likely to reduce that risk, which would otherwise require the intervention of officers at close quarters, thus placing police and others at potentially greater risk.
• The modes of use (diffused or directed jets of varying duration) and level of water pressure used on any given occasions must be necessary and proportionate to situation being encountered.
• Use of the water cannon is likely to result in more than one person being affected and the use of the water cannon may have a direct or indirect effect on the whole crowd hence the importance of providing warnings as outlined at paragraph six of these guidelines.

4. Criteria for use

The Authorised Professional Practice sets clear criteria for use. These are laid out below:-

• When conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed or, because of the circumstances are unlikely to succeed if tried.
• In situations of serious public disorder, where there is the potential for loss of life, serious injury, or widespread destruction and whether such action is likely to reduce that risk.
• Must only be used by trained officers.

5. Authority Levels for Deployment and use of Water cannon

Authorised Professional Practice sets clear authority for use. These are laid out below:-

• Authority level to deploy and make available for operational purposes
  o Officer of at least rank of Assistant Chief Constable/Commander.

• Authority level to use

  o Once the authority to make water cannon available for operational purposes has been granted, the authority to use the equipment lies with the Silver Commander.
  o The Silver Commander will keep the authority to use water cannons under constant review and liaise with Bronze commanders and personnel operating the equipment.
6. Deployment and Use of Water Cannon

Deployment of Water Cannon

a) The deployment and use of water cannon in situations of serious public disorder, where there is the potential for loss of life, serious injury, or widespread destruction should only be considered where it is believed that their use (in conjunction with other methods of policing disorder) is appropriate in order to achieve lawful objectives.

b) A Tactical Adviser, who is specifically trained in the characteristics and use of water cannon, should be consulted prior to any deployment. The Tactical Adviser should also be consulted in the planning phase and during the operation on any potential deployment and use of water cannon.

c) **Pre-Planned Deployments** - for pre-planned operations, the Gold Commander in consultation with the Silver Commander must make an assessment of the threat to public order and the need to deploy water cannon. Where the Gold Commander is not an Assistant Chief Constable/Commander, a written request for the deployment of water cannon, based upon this assessment, will be made to the relevant Assistant Chief Constable/Commander by the Gold Commander.

d) Water cannon vehicles will be deployed under the overall command of the Water Cannon Commander. The Water Cannon Commander will liaise with the appropriate Bronze Commander to ensure co-ordination in achieving tactical objectives.

e) In reviewing the strategy the Gold Commander may also review the tactical parameters and identify tactics which may not be used. This may include the deployment of Water cannon. Silver Commanders will review and coordinate the tactical plan in order to achieve the strategy set by the Gold Commander within the set tactical parameters. This may well include the use of Water Cannon. If the Water cannon is made available as a tactical option for a Bronze Commander, its use must be included in the deployment plan.
Use of Water Cannon

Water Cannon can be used in the following ways:

- Stationary
- As part of a forward moving police line.

7. Warning Message

a) The use of the public address system, high intensity lights, flashing blue lights and distinctive sirens can all be used to provide warnings and alert a crowd of the presence of water cannon and police intentions. RCV9000 water cannon vehicles are equipped with a powerful public address system and distinctive audible sirens that can be used to give audible warnings. Blue flashing lights mounted on the front and on the roof will provide a visual warning of their presence.

b) The warning message(s) should be given on as many times as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances, ensuring that police intentions to deploy tactical options and/or use force are clearly communicated, prior to use.

Warning Message

“Attention, attention, this is a police warning. Disperse immediately or (Tactic) Will be *....................”
*(deployed) (used) (used again)

When the use of specific tactical options/force is imminent, a final warning message should be given, ending with the words:

”No further warning will be given.”

c) Warnings should be repeated, as frequently and as often as is necessary to ensure that all of those engaged in the serious disorder and bystanders
may or can hear the warning(s) and have had an opportunity to disperse. The police objective should be to ensure those who choose to remain are left in no doubt of the police intentions.

8. Useful Definitions

In the course of reading these guidelines the following definitions will be of assistance:

- **Deployment** – Water cannon is deployed when it has been made available for operational purposes.
- **Authority to Deploy** - the authorisation by an officer of Assistant Chief Constable/Commander rank to make water cannon and trained personnel available for operational purposes.
- **Use** – Water cannon is deemed to have been used when it has been discharged at any person in pursuit of police operations.
- **Authority to Use** – The authorisation given by the Silver Commander (Inspecting and Superintending ranks) to discharge water cannon, in accordance with the principles set out in these instructions. The authority to use water cannon is not an order to discharge it. It is a decision that is made, based upon all of the information available, that water cannon may be a necessary and proportionate response to public protest or disorder.
- **Assistant Chief Constable/Commander** - an officer of substantive ACC or Commander rank or an officer of Superintending rank who is specifically designated to perform the role of ACC/Commander in the absence of the relevant ACC/Commander.
- **Serious disorder/riot** - An escalation into wide spread violent behaviour. This may take the form of violent protest, rioting, criminal damage, looting, and may include the use of weapons. (Disorder Model - APP)
9. Trained Officers - Water Cannon Crew Roles and Responsibilities

a) Role of Crew Commanders

- Crew Commanders are responsible for the safety of the entire crew and that of the vehicle. A Crew Commander has overall command of their respective vehicle.
- Crew Commanders will set a water pressure for any period of use that is a proportionate response to the serious public disorder, where there is the potential for loss of life, serious injury, or widespread destruction being encountered. They will also determine the appropriate mode of use (diffused or directed jets). Whilst this will be the overall water pressure individual water cannon operators have the ability to reduce the pressure in their respective cannons by 5 or 10 bar or can close their cannon if appropriate.
- Once a decision has been made to use water cannon the Crew Commanders will be responsible for directing and commanding their respective water cannon vehicle whenever their use has been authorised. The Crew Commander must also issue orders to cease the use of water cannon when the tactical objective has been achieved or when ordered to do so by the Water Cannon Commander.
- A Crew Commander (nominated by the Water Cannon Commander) will cause a warning(s) to be given to the crowd using the on-board public address system when available. Details of date, time, method and wording of the warning(s) should be recorded by the person issuing the warning.
- Crew Commanders will ensure records are kept in respect of the use of water cannon, including records of date, time place of authorisation and use.
- Crew Commanders will be responsible for ensuring that water cannon crews wear protective clothing and equipment appropriate to the level of threat pertaining to the circumstances.
- The Crew Commander is responsible for the filling of the water cannon with water. To this end he will ensure correct procedures are followed at all times.
b) Role of Water Cannon Commanders

- When two or more water cannon vehicles are deployed the senior Crew Commander will act as the overall Water Cannon Commander unless an additional officer has been specifically appointed. When authority for the use of water cannon has been given, the Water Cannon Commander will brief and instruct the Crew Commanders and crews as to the tactical objective(s) determined by the Bronze Commander for the sector in which the vehicles are then operating (Territorial Bronze). A record of authorisations, times etc. must be made at the time or as soon as possible thereafter (by the Water Cannon Commander, Crew Commanders and the relevant Bronze Commander) for evidential purposes.

- The Water Cannon Commander is the person in charge of the water cannon vehicles deployed and his or her status in terms of the command structure is that they are in charge of a resource in a similar fashion to that of a PSU / TSG Inspector. The Water Cannon Commander’s role is therefore subordinate to the relevant Bronze Commander.

- The Water Cannon Commander is responsible for the overall safety of the water cannons, any escort and support vehicles and their crews.

- Water Cannon Commanders / Crew Commanders are trained to provide Tactical Advice to Gold, Silver and Bronze Commanders. If an additional Water Cannon Commander has been appointed he or she can operate from within the vehicle or in close proximity outside the vehicle, providing communications can be maintained by the use of radio / intercom.

c) Water Cannon Operators

- Water Cannon Operators control the use of the jets and must be appropriately trained and qualified.

- In undertaking this role the operators must take account of the considerations set out in section this guidance (ACPO Guidance – Deployment and use of Water Cannon)
**d) Water Cannon Drivers**

- Drivers must be trained in driving water cannon and hold appropriate driving licences and internal police service qualifications for this category of vehicle.
- Drivers have a great responsibility for the safety of the crew and the public when moving to and from deployments and during operational use and must therefore drive in a safe, responsible manner appropriate to road conditions, crowd conditions and general traffic legislation.

**Water Cannon Tactics**

If requested under FOI – S31 exemption would be engaged.

**Public Order Core Themes Specific Considerations**

As with all of the tactics in the National Police Public Order Training Curriculum there are a number of considerations and objectives when deploying / using the tactics outlined in this module.

- Consideration must be given to the European Convention on Human Rights, The Human Rights Act 1998 and the wider use of force
- The ‘Ten principles of the use of force’ and the ‘collective use of force’
- Officers are responsible for their individual use of force and should record its use and all supporting evidence as soon as practicable.
- The level of potential threat and the environment into which the PSU is advancing should be considered along with any potential points of danger
- Any interventions made using these tactics may effect the overall crowd dynamics and produce hostility towards the officers and officers should maintain an awareness of this

**Delivery Method**

E4 Water Cannon v.1.1
When delivering the outcomes of the National Police Public Order Training Curriculum the content of this module must be taken into account to ensure success at achieving interoperability.

The following methods should be used:

- Knowledge check questions
- EDIP at accredited centres
- Scenario based training testing Students application of knowledge
- Referral to reference books (recommended reading)

The delivery and training at each Public Order Training Centre will be by accredited trainers complying with module G2, units 1-5 of the National Standards for Public Order Trainer, or staff working towards the standards outlined in Module G2.

**Assessment**

Each force will use a competency based framework for quality assurance of trainers and training delivery to ensure that the outcomes of this module are achieved.

Oral examination and Practical application – Group work, walkthrough and demonstration.

**Performance Criteria**

At the end of this unit the student must be able to achieve the below performance criteria:

1. Explain the modes of use of a water cannon
2. Identify the operational considerations for deployment of water cannon
3. State the criteria for the use of water cannon
4. Demonstrate the tactics for water cannon supported by foot and vehicles
Reading List

Required Reading

The following publications contain knowledge considered essential to the role; personnel are required to read them to enhance the achievement of the outcomes.

- HMIC (2009) Adapting to Protest
- HMIC (2009) Adapting to protest-Nurturing the British Model of Policing

Recommended Reading

The following best practice/doctrine contains knowledge considered relevant to the role; personnel are encouraged to read them to enhance the achievement of the outcomes.

- Authorised Professional Practice
- HMIC (2009) Adapting to Protest
- HMIC (2009) Adapting to protest - Nurturing the British Model of Policing

Pre / Co-requisites

- Officer Safety Training in accordance with the ACPO Personal Safety Manual of Guidance
- COLLEGE OF POLICING  First Aid Module 2 First Aid Skills Police, Emergency First Aider
- Modules A1 Core Public Order themes
- Module B1 and /or B2 Core Practitioner (Where relevant this is identified in the learning outcome)
• Officers will need refresher training in line with Strategic Threat and Risk Assessments by the force or region

Role Profile
Skills for Justice have not yet created a role profile specifically for this role

National Occupational Standards
Though there are no specific National Occupational Standards for a Public Order trained officer there are links to the following occupational standards:

• Unit 1A1 Use police actions in a fair and justified way
• Unit 2B7 Prepare for, monitor and maintain, policing operations
• Unit 2C1 Provide an initial police response
• Unit 4D1 Lead the work of teams and individuals to achieve their objectives
• Unit 4D2 Manage the performance of teams and individuals
• Unit 4G2 Ensure your own actions reduce risks to health and safety
• Unit GC8.1 Help to prevent disruptive and obstructive behaviour
• Unit GC8.2 Deal with disruptive and obstructive behaviour
• Unit GC10.1 Apply conflict management skills and techniques
• Unit GC10.2 Use personal safety skills and equipment
• 333 – Awareness of safety issues when in charge of a vehicle

Legislation
• Equality Act 2006
• Equality Act 2010
• Public Order Act 1986
• Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
• Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Sec 117
• Criminal Law Act 1967 Sec 3(1)
• Licensing Act 2003
• Police Reform Act 2002 Section 50
• Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 Section 27
• Human Rights Act 1998
• European Convention on Human Rights and Freedoms
  o Article 2 – The right to Life
Article 3 – The prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
Article 5 – The right to liberty and security
Article 8 – The right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence
Article 9 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
Article 10 – Freedom of expression
Article 11 – Freedom of assembly and association
Article 14 – Prohibition on discrimination
Protocol No.1 - Article 1 Protection of Property

**Variances for Scotland and Northern Ireland**

Scottish and Northern Ireland legislation should be used as appropriate where English equivalents are given; the main differences are listed hereafter.

**Scotland**

- Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006
- Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004
- Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
- Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003
- Criminal Law Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1995
- Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2003
- Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- Police (Scotland) Act 1967
- Public Order Act 1986
- Public Meeting Act 1908
- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984
- The Land Reform (Scotland Act) 2003
- Police (Conduct) (Scotland) Regulations 1996

**Northern Ireland**

- Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998,
- Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987,
- Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989,
- Public Order Act 1994 which extend to Northern Ireland
- Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 Sec 3
- Terrorism Act 2000
- Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
- Royal Ulster Constabulary (Conduct) Regulations 2000.
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 extended to Northern Ireland