



Personal Protective Equipment – Stab Vest Policy

1. Purpose

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all patients, visitors, and workers at all of its sites and services whilst recognising the diversity of health care provision and the challenges faced by staff in providing care.

WACHS recognises that the safety and health of its staff is of prime importance and acknowledges its legislative obligations under Western Australia's [Work Health and Safety Act 2020](#) (WHS Act) to provide its staff with personal protective equipment (PPE) where it is not practical to avoid the presence of the hazards in the workplace.

2. Policy

This policy is applicable to those work areas that have been risk assessed and warrant the issuing of stab vests. The purpose of this policy is to provide WACHS staff that have been issued and trained in the use of stab vests, with mandatory instructions for the proper use and care of the stab vests.

WACHS seeks to minimise harm to staff through the use of stab vests in combination with prescribed safety procedures. While the stab vests provide a level of protection, they are not a substitute for the observance of safety procedures and risk mitigation strategies.

Stab vests are to comply with current relevant Australian Standards (e.g. NIJA - 0115.00 Australian Standards).

Where a risk assessment has determined protective clothing is required for specialised tasks, it is to be provided by the Health Service. If provided by the Contractor, staff are to only wear stab vests that are approved by WACHS for consistency. When a risk review using the [Risk Matrix \(Appendix A\)](#) has shown patient interaction may be at a high or extreme risk of harm to staff, consideration is to be given to risk mitigation including protection available by wearing the stab vests as part of their PPE. This risk assessment is to include consideration of the risk of harm which may occur from wearing the vest.

Stab vests are to be issued to Security Officers (SOs) and made available for other staff working within high risk areas as determined by the Health Service (refer to [Appendix A: Risk Matrix](#) and [Appendix B: Application process for the supply of stab vests](#)).

Stab vests are to be stored appropriately as to maintain their integrity, quality and security.

2.1 Usage of the stab vests

Wearing of stab vests:

- Staff are to only wear stab vests that are approved by WACHS. WACHS and/or the Contractor are to ensure the stab vest is fitted to personal requirements.
- The line manager/supervisor/coordinator is to train staff in the use, care and maintenance of stab vests prior to use.
- Sites that have identified the requirement for stab vests (refer to [Appendix A: Risk Matrix](#) and [Appendix B: Application process for the supply of stab vests](#)) are strongly recommended to use them at all times.
- SO accoutrements can be worn on the vests.
- Stab vests are to be replaced if the vest becomes unusable for wearing (e.g. due to damage, tears, rips, holes or severe deformation).

Exemptions from the wearing of stab vests

An exemption from the wearing of a stab vest is to be provided when WACHS has accepted written medical advice that details sufficient medical grounds that prevent the staff member from being able to safely wear the stab vests in the delivery of their assigned duties. An exemption may require a fitness for work assessment to validate capacity to complete the role as a Security Officer within WACHS.

Exemption requests are only to be considered where the written medical opinion is provided as per the WACHS [Fitness for Work Policy](#).

Maintenance and care of stab vests

Assigned or nominated staff members/persons who use stab vests are responsible for:

- routinely storing, maintaining, caring for and cleaning their stab vests in accordance with training provided and the manufacturer's instructions
- prior to wearing/donning, routinely inspecting stab vests for signs of damage and for general cleanliness
- where a stab vest has come in contact with bodily fluids or biological material it is to be either cleaned (see [Appendix C: Stab Vest Inspection, Cleaning and Storage](#)) or taken out of service until it can comply with infection prevention guidelines
- reporting signs of damage and/or any other matters that give rise to concern that the stab vests may be compromised, to their manager at the soonest practicable opportunity
- where hazards exist with the usage of the stab vests these are to be reported immediately to the manager, the electronic security database (for incidents involving security officers) and recorded on a [Safety Risk Report Form](#).

The Supervisor/Manager of staff issued with a stab vest is responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with this policy.

2.2 Post Incident

The staff member is responsible for the following post incident:

- following any incident in which the stab vest has been exposed to an impact, an immediate inspection is to be conducted prior to any further use
- if the incident is a ballistic or stab impact, the stab vest is to always be inspected and the internal armour panels replaced
- if the stab vest is submerged in water, it is to be dried naturally away from sunlight or a direct heat source until all moisture has evaporated prior to further use
- if the stab vest is exposed to chemicals, an inspection is to be carried out in accordance manufactures advice. please contact the manufacturer for further advice
- where the stab vest is exposed to bodily fluids then the carrier is to be removed following the incident and cleaned as per the recommendations in [Appendix C: Stab Vest Inspection, Cleaning and Storage](#)
- report any adverse event arising from the use of the stab vest through the electronic security database (for incidents involving SOs) and a [Safety Risk Report Form](#)

2.3 Records

When a Stab vest is issued or supplied to a wearer, internal records are to be kept detailing, at a minimum:

- manufacturer
- armour model
- protection level(s)
- batch number
- serial number
- staff members name
- location of issued stab vest (i.e. for stab vests located at emergency departments, the area and not an individual may be applicable); and
- date of issue.

These records are to be used in any inspections or in the event of a recall or request for in-life monitoring of stab vests. In the event of any changes, these records are to be updated. The issuing department is to maintain these records.

2.4 Inspections

Inspections of stab vests are to be conducted at regularly scheduled intervals of no greater than 12-month periods, based upon the records generated when armour is issued.

Inspections of the stab vests are to be conducted after any wearer has been involved in an interaction where the stab vest has been subject to force and pressure or has received physical damage.

Inspections are to be conducted with the vest both on and off the body.

During such inspections, the following assessments are to be performed:

- **non-destructive checks:** visual and tactile assessment of signs of damage or significant wear on the stab vest

- **carriers and covers:** visual and tactile assessment of signs of damage or wear significant enough to inhibit its primary function; if the damage is limited to these elements, they may be replaced independent of the protective panels
- **label:** is the label still attached to the stab vest and, if so, is the text still clearly readable; if not, the manufacturers are required to provide a replacement label at their own cost, as specified in the standard
- **fit:** the fit of the stab vest is to be assessed, and physical attributes are to be compared to those measured at the time of original fit; if the armour no longer fits, it is to be replaced to afford the wearer with adequate protection.

A method and guideline for inspections has been provided in [Appendix C: Stab Vest Inspection, Cleaning and Storage](#).

In all instances if, following inspections, there are concerns about the serviceability of the stab vest, advise the Ward or Area Manager who is to seek further information and guidance from the manufacturer.

2.5 Hygiene

The following instructions are to be adhered to when cleaning the stab vests:

- protective panels of the stab vest are not to be laundered in a washing machine under any circumstances.
- if a panel requires cleaning it is to be conducted carefully with a damp sponge and allowed to dry naturally away from a direct sunlight or heat source.
- do not fully submerge panels in water. If the carrier requires washing, the protective panels are to be removed beforehand.
- in all instances, please consult the manufacturer's guidelines (see [Appendix C: Stab Vest Inspection, Cleaning and Storage](#)) for washing and handling instructions.

2.6 Storage

Stab vests are to be stored in line with manufacturer's guidance within the Manufacturer 'Use and Care' Guidelines (see [Appendix C: Stab Vest Inspection, Cleaning and Storage](#)).

It is the responsibility of departments which supply stab vests to ensure suitable secure facilities are in place. These are to comply with the Manufacturer 'Use and Care' Guidelines.

WACHS SOs are to store their individually fitted stab vests in their individual lockers or designated areas.

Stab vests are to be stored vertically, hung from the shoulders or laid flat away from direct sunlight, heat sources and excessive humidity when not in use, as shown in [Figure 1](#).

Figure 1 - Storage

(a) Recommended storage conditions



(b) Unacceptable storage



Vertical Storage:

- The stab vest is not to be creased or bunched in any way.
- Ensure that you have allotted the proper amount of space to avoid the vest getting creased. The vest is to be hung evenly, without any constrictions.
- It is also recommended to use a heavy-duty hanger that is designed to properly distribute the weight of the vest, to ensure the vest holds its form.

Horizontal Storage

- Ensure the stab vest is lying flat and that no objects are placed on top of it.
- The stab vest is to be not creased or bunched in any way. Creasing or bunching of the stab vest may cause damage to the armour panels.

2.7 Disposal

WACHS is to arrange the responsible disposal of stab vests at the end of their usable life. Consideration is to be given to whether the armour may be recyclable.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Direct line managers/supervisors are responsible for ensuring that:

- stab vests are provided, where the risks have been identified via completion of the [Risk Assessment Tool to determine requirement for the supply of stab vests](#) (Appendix B) and the provision is appropriate for the intended work tasks and that it can be easily adjusted to suit the requirements of staff

- records are kept of the issuing of stab vests
- line managers/supervisors provide appropriate instruction and ensure information is readily available in the correct use of and the protection provided by stab vests, information can be sought via the vendor
- stab vests are maintained, in a condition which ensures their continued effective operation
- stab vests are to be stored in a safe and secure storage facility inaccessible to persons outside the scope of this policy
- hazards relating to use of stab vests at their workplace are appropriately assessed and controlled with minimum delay and in consultation with staff
- incidents, hazards and injuries relating to the use of the vests are reported, investigated and corrective actions implemented as required
- maintaining statistics and investigations and reports on incidents where stab vests have or have not protected officers from harm. These reports are to be entered as part of the [Safety Risk Report Form](#) (SRRF) incident reporting process.

Staff who use PPE are to ensure that they:

- are familiar with the PPE provided
- have been instructed how to use/wear, store and clean it correctly
- notify their line manager of any education required, damage, malfunction or the need to clean or sterilise the equipment as soon as possible.

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. Guidelines are the recommended course of action for WACHS and staff are expected to use this information to guide practice. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Compliance of this policy is to be monitored through Safety Risk Report Form reporting and electronic security incident reporting systems. WACHS Work Health and Safety and Security Services are to monitor all reported incidents and provide trending reports to all relevant committees. The site delegated authority or direct line manager is to ensure compliance with this policy. Each WACHS hospital/campus is to demonstrate compliance with this policy by providing evidence that all audit/monitoring requirements outlined in this policy are met. Completed audit/reports are to be submitted to the relevant WACHS site-based Governance Committee(s) in accordance with their reporting requirements.

5. References

Nil

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Personal Protective Equipment	Personal protective equipment (PPE) and / or clothing is used / worn to act as a barrier to the hazard to stop a hazard from causing harm to a person.
Stab vest	A reinforced piece of body armour, worn under or over other items of clothing, which is designed to resist knife or penetrative weapon attacks to the chest, back and sides.

7. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS - wide
Audience	Staff who are issued and use stab vests
Records Management	Non Clinical: Records Management Policy Clinical: Health Record Management Policy
Related Legislation	Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA) Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP 0180/23 Work Health and Safety Management Policy • WA Risk Management Policy • Work Health and Safety Framework
Related WACHS Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness for Work Policy • Work Health and Safety Policy
Other Related Documents	Nil
Related Forms	WACHS Safety Risk Report Form
Related Training Packages	Stab Vest use training by site delegated person
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 2743
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	1.29, 1.30, 1.31
Aged Care Quality Standards	Nil
Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care	Nil
Other Standards	NIJA - 0115.00 Australian Standards

8. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
1.00	24 October 2024	24 October 2024	New policy.

Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director, People Capability and Culture
Co-approver	Nil
Contact	Manager Security
Business Unit	Work Health Safety and Wellbeing
EDRMS #	ED-CO-24-110017
<p><i>Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.</i></p>	

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Appendix A: Risk Matrix

			Consequence				
			1 Insignificant First aid or equivalent only	2 Minor Routine medical attention required. Max. 1 week incapacity / time lost. No disability	3 Moderate Increased level of medical attention required. 1 week to 1 month incapacity /time lost. No significant permanent disability	4 Major Severe health crisis and/or injuries, Prolonged incapacity or absence 1 month +. Significant permanent disability	5 Catastrophic Death or permanent total disability
Likelihood	1	Rare Once in more than 10 years	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
	2	Unlikely Once in 5-10 years	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	3	Possible Once in 3-5 years	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
	4	Likely Once in 1-3 years	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme
	5	Very Likely More than once per year	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme

Appendix B: Application process for the supply of stab vests

Following the initial supply of Stab vests to specified departments the following process ensures that any future needs by additional departments is assessed against risk levels by WHS.

The completion of this tool is required prior to any review commencing to identify the risk level of a department. The table below is an indication of the minimum information that is to be presented to the Work Health and Safety Department. Additional information may be requested.

Risk Assessment Tool to determine requirement for the supply of stab vests			
Site:		Manager Name:	
Department:			
Head of Dept. Approval to request: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Head of Dept. Name:	
		Additional Data Provision:	Overall Risk Rating (Appendix A)
Is there a likelihood of ongoing threats to staff or visitors from injury caused by a weapon?	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Please contact Work Health Safety Dept. via phone for escalation of likelihood of immediate threat.	
Has there been a recent incident involving a weapon?	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify:	
Number of Code Blacks for workplace aggression and violence for past 6 months, as per site security database logs.		Please advise number of Code Blacks that involved weapons:	
Number of SRRFs submitted by staff for workplace aggression and violence for past 6 months.		Please describe mitigation efforts completed to date and residual risk rating:	
Number of Police attendances for workplace aggression and violence for past 6 months as per SRRFs submitted/site security database logs.		Please advise any requirements for Police attendance after Code Black Security Attendance:	
Number of Stab vests requested.			
Please forward this application to your regional Work Health and Safety Department email.			

Appendix C: Stab Vest Inspection, Cleaning and Storage

In addition to the instructions below, follow the manufacturer’s instructions issued with the Stab vest, and any instructions on the vest.

PASSING INSPECTION

Regular inspection of each vest is also vitally important for proper performance. We recommend that complete inspections be performed at regularly scheduled intervals. Inspections are to be conducted with the vest both on and off the body and are to include the following:

Inspect the impact side and body side of each multi-threat panel for:

- holes, tears, rips or damage to the multi-threat panel covering
- creases, wrinkles or unintended contours
- soiled appearance
- presence of moisture.

Inspect the impact side and body side of each carrier component for:

- holes, tears, rips or damage to any component
- damage or excessive wear on the fasteners
- damage or excessive wear on the side fastener components
- damage to stitches or seams.

If any of the following conditions are observed at any time, the vest is to be evaluated by the supplier’s representative:

- multi-threat panel or seams are damaged or torn, exposing any portion of the multi-threat panels
- carrier is severely bunched; lumps or bunching cannot be removed
- any hook-and-loop fastener is damaged or unserviceable
- panels have been ballistically hit, punctured, creased or damaged
- panels are patched in a makeshift fashion using duct tape or other materials.

MAINTENANCE

No multi-threat vest can do its job if it is not maintained and cared for properly. To save lives, vests are to be maintained according to the owner’s manual included with each new vest. **If these procedures are not followed, the warranty could be null and void but more importantly, it could result in loss of life.**

CLEANING THE MULTI-THREAT PANELS:



PANELS AND SOFT TRAUMA

INSERT/SPECIAL THREAT PLATE

1. Remove the armour panels, trauma inserts and special threat plates from the carrier.
2. Gently wipe the armour panels with a damp sponge and a mixture of cool water and mild laundry detergent or antimicrobial soap.
3. Wipe off excess soap with clean water and a damp sponge.
4. Lay flat and wipe dry. **DO NOT HANG OR LINE DRY. DO NOT PLACE IN THE SUN.**
5. Ensure panels are completely dry before reinserting into the carrier.
 - Make sure the panels are reinserted properly with the “Body Side” side label facing toward your body.
 - Be sure to engage the shoulder suspension patches which secure the armour panel to the carrier garment.

DO NOT dry clean armour panels.

DO NOT commercially launder armour panels.

DO NOT expose armour panels to bleach (liquid or vapour).

STAB VEST CLEANING

Cleaning The Carrier:

Covert Carrier

The Covert Carrier is coated on the back side with Polyurethane, making it hydrophobic (waterproof) and is also impregnated with fluorocarbon (water, oil and dirt resistant).

1. Remove all armour panels, trauma inserts and special threat plates from the carrier.
2. Detach any removable shoulder and/or waist straps.
3. Spot cleaning with warm water antibacterial wipes and a mild soap is recommended
4. Ensure active ingredients in their chosen cleaning solution, does not contain bleach, hypochlorite or peroxide
5. **If unable to be spot cleaned or if carrier is heavily soiled, please advise your Manager who is to arrange for professional cleaning.**
6. Lie carrier on a flat surface and allow to air dry.
7. Make sure the carrier is completely dry before reinserting armour panels, trauma inserts and special threat plates.
 - Make sure the panels are reinserted properly with the “Body Side” label facing toward your body.
 - Be sure to engage the shoulder suspension patches which secure the armour panel to the carrier garment.

Over Carrier

The Delinova 150 Cordura is coated on the back side with Polyurethane, making it hydrophobic (waterproof) and is also impregnated with fluorocarbon (water, oil and dirt resistant).

1. **DO NOT** spot clean.
2. If carrier is soiled, please advise your Manager who is to arrange for professional cleaning.

3. Prior to sending carrier for cleaning:
 - remove all armour panels, special threat plates, pouches and ID patches
 - detach any removable shoulder and/or waist straps.
4. Make sure the panels are reinserted properly with the Stab vest “Strike Face” side facing away from your body.
5. Be sure to engage the shoulder suspension tabs which secure the armour panel to the carrier garment.

PRODUCT	DAMP CLOTH	HAND WASH	PROFESSIONAL CLEANING
Armour Panel	•		
Covert Carrier		•	•
Strap System		•	
Overt Carrier	•	•	•

DAILY USE VS PROPER STORAGE

Like almost any item of equipment, stab vest panels can be damaged if subjected to excess force or pressure. Such force or pressure may cause and be described as deformation of the armour panel such as tearing, set-creases or wrinkles, forced-curling or folding.

If the force or pressure is great enough, or applied over a prolonged period of time, such deformations may be permanent. In such a circumstance, the vest has suffered “damage”. Damage may be minor or major, but none the less, damage has occurred. Such damage may affect the protective performance of the armour.

The stab vest supplier provides storage instructions to describe an environment that is to prevent the stab vest experiencing force and pressure. The stab vests are to be stored in the specified manner for the warranty life of the vest.

RECOMMENDED STORAGE

STORE THE VEST CAREFULLY! The resistance and performance of ballistic panels are known to change with time and wear, especially when exposed to extreme environmental conditions.

This vest is not to be stored in places where it is exposed to high temperatures and/or in combination with high humidity for long periods of time. Exposure to such extreme environmental conditions may negatively impact the vest’s ballistic performance.

The goal of proper storage is to prevent a situation resulting from storage or other reasons, if a vest develops any set wrinkles, creases or unintended contours, the Security Supervisor is to be advised.

Vertical Storage

When storing vertically, be sure to only use the provided hanger, while making sure that the vest is not creased or bunched in any way.

In addition, when hanging your vest, ensure that you have allotted the proper amount of space to avoid the vest getting creased. The vest is to be hang evenly, without any constrictions. It is also recommended that you use the supplied heavy-duty hanger that is designed to properly distribute the weight of the vest, to ensure the vest holds its form.

Horizontal Storage

When stored horizontal make sure the vest is lying flat and that no objects are placed on top of the armour. Make sure the armour is not creased or bunched in any way. Creasing or bunching of the armour causes damage to the ballistic materials.