



Security Safety Advice For Security and Close Protection Officers

Body armor has saved the lives of many security and close protection officers. However, in order for body armor to live up to the 'hype', certain factors need to be taken into consideration. The wrong vest can be just as detrimental to a security or close protection officer's wellbeing as not wearing a vest at all. [Within excess of 310 million guns](#) (both legal and illegal) in the United States and all though the UK has some of the toughest laws on firearms there were [9,803 firearms offences in England and Wales](#) in one year, on the streets of Britain's inner cities. It's estimated that there could be figures that range from [500,000 to a million illegal weapons](#) or more in the UK. It goes without saying, that ballistic protection should be considered for security and close protection officers working in a high risk environment.

In this pack that [SafeGuard](#) has produced, you'll find information on the style of vests available, the different levels offered and how to choose the right vest for different threats.

Body Amour Styles

Body armor is available in 3 different styles. It's important to carefully analyze the scenarios one may encounter prior to deciding on the style of vest.

Covert

Covert gear is perhaps the most popular option amongst security personnel and close protection officers. Its lightweight feature, coupled with the high degree of conceal ability offered are the two main factors that make covert vests so popular. Being lightweight means that covert vests can easily be worn for long durations of time without becoming bothersome, making it the ideal choice for security and close protection officers who see long hours on the job.

Typically consisting of a cotton exterior, covert gear can be worn directly against the skin, heightening not only the level of conceal ability but also the level of comfort offered. The Coolmax feature, incorporated into most covert vests is another feature that promotes comfort. In higher temperatures, those wearing the vest will be able to [take advantage of the Coolmax's moisture wicking technology](#) which transfers moisture onto a larger surface area for rapid evaporation- the result of this is the wearer staying cool in warmer temperatures.

Overt Gear

Overt gear is most commonly seen donned by military personnel. A heavier vest and bulkier vest than the covert vest, it's not intended for concealed protection but instead, is worn above clothing. The advantages of overt gear lie in the higher degree of protection offered. Whereas covert gear is only available up to a level III, overt armor can be fitted with plated up to a level IV.

Covert/Overt

Covert/Overt vests are best suited for those security and close protection officers whose jobs call for a variety of scenarios to be encountered. Bulkier than covert armor, but not as bulk as overt armor,



covert/overt vests can still be concealed, while offering a higher level of protection than a covert vest is designed to.

Ballistic Levels

Choosing the right level is paramount to the safety a security or close protection officer has while on the job.

The first thing that needs to be taken into consideration is that the higher the level, the heavier the vest. Prior to deciding on a particular level, it is imperative that a risk assessment is carried out, where the most likely threats are taken into consideration and prepared for.

The two main levels that security and close protection officers should look at, include levels II and IIIa. These levels are available in covert gear and will protect against the most common threats such as those from handguns.

Level III vests are available in overt gear and offer protection against higher caliber rounds, such as those of a 7.62 mm full metal jacketed round.

The highest level of ballistic protection available comes from the Level IV vest which is designed to withstand 30.06 M2 AP 166 gram calibre rounds. This level is most commonly donned in warzones and are not typically necessary for security officers or close protection officers.

Outside of Ballistic Protection

In the case that a risk assessment has shown that guns are an unlikely threat and knives or other sharp items are more likely to be faced, edge or spike blade protection should be opted for.

These vests are offered in the covert style and thus, can easily be concealed as well as worn for long periods of time without becoming irritable to the wearer.

Edge Blade Protection

Edge blade protection is available in two main levels- level 2 and level 3. The difference in levels is based on the ability to protect against a varied number of joules. The level 2 vest offers protection against attacks carried out with up to 33 joules, while level 3 vests can stand strong to up to 43 joules.

Spike Protection

Where spiked weapons such as needles, ice picks and long nails are the most likely threat, spike protection is necessary. Tightly woven fabrics make it difficult for such projected weapons to pierce the vest and cause harm to the wearer's body. As with edge blade protection, spike protection is available in levels 2 and 3 with the latter being able to withstand an attack carried out with a higher number of joules.



The Fit of Protective Gear

Because of differences in body type and size, it's important to note that a vest that fits one, may not fit the other. When selecting body armor, be sure to take advantage of the size guides available as this will make it easier to determine the best fit. Female security officers as well as female close protection officers should opt for a vest designed for her body type as the shape of these vests are designed with a woman's curves in mind.

The vest worn should not:

- Leave the wearer's vital organs unprotected
- Be too baggy
- Be too restricting
- Hang below the navel region

A proper fitting vest will allow the wearer to carry out the following action without difficulty:

- Running
- Jumping
- Crouching
- Sitting
- Bending over

Damaged Vests

Once a vest has been struck, it's important to realize that the level of protection offered will be jeopardized. These damaged vests should, therefore, be brought to a superior and not be worn on another job. Vests that show heavy signs of wear and tear should also be looked at by a professional before being worn.