

- VEST FIRST RESPONDER -

HELP FOR HEROES

ARIZONA

Self-Defense Law Reference Guide

Stand Your Ground | Justification Statutes | No Duty to Retreat | First Responder Protections | Police Use of Force

CERTIFIED TRAINER SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENT

Intended exclusively for VEST Certified Trainers. Not a substitute for legal counsel.

Arizona's self-defense laws are organized under Chapter 4 (Justification) of Title 13 of the Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.). When conduct is 'justified,' it is not a crime under Arizona law. Arizona effectively operates as a Stand Your Ground state through A.R.S. S. 13-405, which imposes no duty to retreat anywhere a person is lawfully present.

STATUTE	SUBJECT MATTER
A.R.S. S. 13-404	Justification - Use of Physical Force (Non-Deadly)
A.R.S. S. 13-405	Justification - Use of Deadly Physical Force (Stand Your Ground)
A.R.S. S. 13-406	Justification - Defense of Third Person
A.R.S. S. 13-411	Justification - Crime Prevention (Expanded Castle Doctrine)
A.R.S. S. 13-418	Defense of Occupied Residence or Vehicle (Castle Doctrine)
A.R.S. S. 13-419	Presumption of Reasonableness in Occupied Residence/Vehicle
A.R.S. S. 13-1204	Aggravated Assault - Enhanced Penalty for Attacks on EMS/Fire
A.R.S. POST Standards	Police Use of Force - Neck Restraint Framework

PART I: THE ARIZONA SELF-DEFENSE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

A.R.S. S. 13-404 - Physical Force (Non-Deadly)

A person is justified in threatening or using physical force when and to the extent the person reasonably believes that physical force is immediately necessary to protect themselves against the other's use or attempted use of unlawful physical force. 'Immediately necessary' is operative.

A.R.S. S. 13-405 - Deadly Force (Stand Your Ground Core Statute)

"A person is justified in threatening or using deadly physical force against another if such person would be justified in threatening or using physical force against the other under section 13-404, and when and to the degree a reasonable person would believe that deadly physical force is immediately necessary to protect themselves against the other's use or attempted use of unlawful deadly physical force." - A.R.S. S. 13-405(A)(1)

"A person has no duty to retreat before threatening or using deadly physical force pursuant to this section if the person is in a place where the person may legally be and is not engaged in an unlawful act." - A.R.S. S. 13-405(B)

FOR FIRST RESPONDERS:

A.R.S. S. 13-405(B) applies at every location where an EMS or fire provider is lawfully deployed. A paramedic or firefighter has no obligation to retreat before using justified deadly force at any scene - residential, commercial, roadway, or public. The 'lawfully be' and 'not engaged in unlawful act' conditions are met by any on-duty first responder operating within the scope of official duties.

A.R.S. SS. 13-418 & 13-419 - Castle Doctrine Presumption

Arizona codifies the Castle Doctrine presumption in SS. 13-418 and 13-419. A person is presumed to have a reasonable belief that deadly force was necessary when defending against someone who unlawfully and forcibly entered or remained in an occupied residence or vehicle. This creates a presumption the prosecution must overcome.

- Occupied Residence - home, apartment, condo, or any occupied dwelling.
- Occupied Vehicle - any motor vehicle where the defender is present, including an ambulance.
- Presumption applies when: entry was unlawful and forcible; actor knew or had reason to know; actor was not the initial aggressor.

A.R.S. S. 13-411 - Crime Prevention Justification (Expanded Castle Doctrine)

Arizona allows force - including deadly force - to prevent commission of arson, burglary, kidnapping, manslaughter, murder, sexual assault, or armed robbery. No duty to retreat in these situations, with a presumption that a reasonable person would have reacted similarly. This section applies to property including business and leased property - operating as a broad Castle Doctrine for workplace scenarios.

PART II: DUTY TO RETREAT - ARIZONA'S POSITION

Arizona has NO duty to retreat. A.R.S. S. 13-405(B) explicitly states there is no duty to retreat before threatening or using deadly force anywhere a person may lawfully be. This provision has been part of Arizona law for decades - Arizona effectively operated as a Stand Your Ground state before that term became widely used.

- No retreat required anywhere a person is lawfully present, including any EMS or fire scene.
- Must be lawfully present and not engaged in unlawful activity.
- Initial aggressors who provoked the confrontation cannot claim the S. 13-405 justification unless they clearly withdrew.

PART III: FIRST RESPONDER ASSAULT - ENHANCED CRIMINAL PROTECTIONS

A.R.S. S. 13-1204 - Aggravated Assault on EMS/Fire/Emergency Personnel

Arizona elevates assault to Aggravated Assault when the victim is a peace officer, firefighter, or emergency medical technician engaged in official duties. The attacker must know or have reason to know the victim holds one of these designated roles. Aggravated assault against a designated official is a Class 4 Felony (minimum 1.5 years, up to 3.75 years for first offense). When the assault involves serious physical injury or a deadly weapon, the offense escalates to Class 3 or Class 2 Felony with mandatory prison time.

- Firefighter or EMT engaged in official duties - victim qualifies for enhanced protection.
- Class 4 Felony minimum for aggravated assault on these designated persons.
- Escalates to Class 3 or Class 2 Felony with serious injury or deadly weapon involvement.

TRAINER EMPHASIS:

Arizona's aggravated assault provisions create felony exposure for any physical attack on an on-duty firefighter or EMT. The 'knows or has reason to know' standard is practically satisfied by operating in uniform or in a marked emergency vehicle.

PART IV: POLICE USE OF FORCE & NECK RESTRAINT FRAMEWORK

Arizona does NOT have a statewide statutory ban on chokeholds or carotid restraints. The Arizona Legislature has not enacted chokehold-specific legislation. Policy is governed by AZ POST (Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board) and individual agency policies.

- NO statewide statutory chokehold or carotid restraint ban as of 2024-2025.
- AZ POST training classifies neck restraints as high-risk techniques subject to the deadly force justification standard.
- Many Arizona departments have administratively prohibited chokeholds.

FIRST RESPONDERS VS. LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Arizona's law enforcement use-of-force standards do not apply to civilian first responders. An EMS or fire provider using a defensive technique in lawful self-defense is evaluated under the civilian S. 13-405 framework only. There is no statutory prohibition on civilian Arizona first responders using any defensive technique in genuine life-safety self-defense.

PART V: APPLYING VEST PRINCIPLES UNDER ARIZONA LAW**1. You Have the Legal Right to Stand Your Ground - Everywhere**

A.R.S. S. 13-405(B) removes the duty to retreat from every lawful location. An Arizona EMS provider or firefighter has no obligation to flee before using justified force. VEST training reinforces this right through scenario-based decision-making and the graduated force continuum.

2. Your Ambulance Carries a Presumption of Reasonable Fear

Arizona's Castle Doctrine presumption (S. 13-419) covers occupied vehicles. VEST compartment security and vehicle lockdown protocols support the factual record for this protection.

3. Crime Prevention Justification Covers Workplace Scenarios

A.R.S. S. 13-411 authorizes force to prevent listed forcible felonies on one's property or business, with no duty to retreat and a presumption of reasonableness. This extends the Castle Doctrine concept to fire station and EMS base defense scenarios.

4. Partner Defense Is Fully Covered - Act and Document

A.R.S. S. 13-406 authorizes force to defend a third person under the same standards as self-defense. VEST Level III partner defense training is directly grounded in this statute.

5. De-Escalation Is Professionally Essential

Arizona's 'immediately necessary' standard requires genuine necessity. VEST Level I de-escalation curriculum creates the evidentiary record that force became necessary only after alternatives were exhausted or unavailable.

6. Know When Force Ends

Force must be 'immediately necessary' - once that threshold passes, the justification ends. VEST's continuous threat reassessment is both tactically and legally essential. Continuing force after the threat is neutralized converts a justified defense into criminal conduct.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

This document is produced by VEST First Responder LLC for educational and trainer development purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice. Arizona Revised Statutes Title 13 statutes are subject to legislative amendment, and individual incidents are always fact-specific. VEST Certified Trainers and their agencies should consult with a licensed attorney, their medical director, and agency legal counsel before developing or delivering formal use-of-force or defensive tactics policies.

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