



Roll Call Training Bulletin

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Katherine Lester, Chief of Police
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Carry of Kirpans in City Council Chambers

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Current California State law and Sacramento City Code prohibit the possessing of any knife with a blade length of more than four inches, or any dirk, dagger or dangerous or deadly weapon as defined in Penal Code § 21310, in a public building or meeting (Penal Code § 171b, Sacramento City Code § 9.32.020).

On March 10, 2026, the Sacramento City Council amended City Code §12.74.030A.11(b) to permit individuals to carry a Sikh kirpan or other “bona fide religious articles of faith” within city buildings and during public meetings. This ordinance amendment will take effect on April 14, 2026, and will serve as written permission to possess these items in Sacramento City Council Chambers in accordance with Penal Code § 171b(B)(4).

Any such article must be:

- Secured in a protective sheath
- The entire length of the kirpan (blade and handle combined) cannot exceed ten (10) inches

The following are guidelines for kirpan inspection for entrance into City Council Chambers:

1. A kirpan is a mandatory Sikh article of faith and has been identified as a sacred religious symbol. Officers should remain mindful of the religious significance of the kirpan throughout the interaction and security screening process.
2. Individuals who state they are wearing a kirpan may keep it on their person during security screening.
3. Individuals may choose to voluntarily remove their kirpan/sheath and provide it to officers before entering the magnetometer, or they may proceed through the magnetometer with the kirpan on their person.





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4. If the kirpan is not removed before passing through the magnetometer, officers will conduct a secondary visual inspection to verify that the kirpan's total length is 10 inches or less, sheathed and secured. The individual will also be screened with a hand-held magnetometer to ensure there are no additional weapons.
5. A kirpan should not be forcibly removed unless absolutely required for safety.
6. If inspection of the kirpan is necessary, officers should politely request to view the kirpan and clearly explain the reason for the inspection. Handling of the kirpan should be minimized and limited only to what is necessary for measurement and security verification.
7. Larger bladed weapons, including swords or oversized blades, are not permitted, regardless of purpose.

Officer Safety:

Officers should maintain situational awareness and exercise sound judgment. The objective is to respect religious freedom while maintaining a safe environment for all attendees and staff.

What is a kirpan?

A kirpan is a mandatory Sikh article of faith resembling a knife or sword, carried by initiated (Amritdhari) Sikhs at all times. The kirpan is a religious article that must be worn sheathed, secured, and close to the body in accordance with established religious practice.

Background

Sikhism is a religion founded in the Punjab region of South Asia in the late 15th century and is the fifth largest religion in the world. The Sikh population in California is estimated to be at least 250,000 (about half the national Sikh population). Sikhs wear a religious uniform that is intended to identify them as members of the faith. All baptized Sikhs are required to carry five articles of faith at all times: **the Kesh** (uncut hair), **Kangha** (a wooden comb, sometimes kept in the hair), **Kara** (a bracelet on the right wrist), **Kachehra** (a special undergarment), and the **Kirpan** (a ceremonial item resembling a small sword, usually with a curved tip).

The kirpan reminds Sikhs of their duty to fight against injustice and oppression, and Sikhs believe the kirpan may be used as a weapon only for self-defense or to defend another innocent person from harm. The kirpan may be made of either steel or iron; it is typically worn in a sheath hung on a strap and slung over one shoulder or worn around the waist; it may be visible over the clothing or under a jacket; it is commonly between 3-9 inches in length; and may be blunt or sharpened. Usually, a kirpan can be identified as a religious item because the Sikh carrying it is also likely to be carrying the other four articles of faith. Sikhs are also required to cover their uncut hair with religious turbans.