



Taser Policy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to establish guidelines for Officers in the appropriate use of force and deployment of the Taser.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLE

A. Consistent with the Department's philosophy of utilizing the minimum amount of reasonable force to control a combative person, the Taser is to provide a means for less- than-lethal use of force. The Taser is considered an additional police tool and is not intended to replace the use of firearms or self-defense techniques.

B. The Taser may be used to **gain control of** a dangerous or violent subject or an uncooperative subject who is potentially dangerous or violent, when attempts to control the subject by other tactics have been, or likely will be ineffective; or there is a reasonable expectation that it is unsafe for Officers to approach within contact range of the subject; or it is indicated that Officers, offenders or others would be endangered by the use of close contact/hands on physical force. The decision to use less- than-lethal force is predicted upon the immediate danger posed by the subject confronted by the police rather than the nature or category of the offense.

C. Only sworn Departmental personnel who are Taser trained by the Department, and current in certification with the use of the Taser will be authorized to possess it as well as implement its use.

D. Only Tasers issued and approved by the Department will be utilized.

E. Officers will only carry their Taser in an approved holster, and it must be worn on the opposite side of their firearm. No changes or modifications to the Taser are authorized.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. TASER – An **Electronic Control Device (ECD)** - a device that is less than lethal and propels wires to conduct energy that affects the sensory and motor functions of the central nervous system.

B. LESS THAN LETHAL – Force applied with the intention to subdue or render a subject non-threatening, with a lower probability of producing serious physical injury or fatal results.

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C. DRIVE STUN – When the Taser is applied directly to the pressure points *and/or approved parts of the body as a* pain compliance technique.

D. TASER DEPLOYMENT - When the Taser is used as a result of probe discharge, drive stun techniques and/or a combination of the two.

IV. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. The Taser fires two probes from a disposable cartridge. ***With the exception of training, Officers will be issued 21 or 25 foot cartridges.*** The probes are connected to the cartridge by insulated wires. When the probes make contact with the target, an electrical discharge pulses runs through the wires and into the body. The probes can penetrate up to two inches of clothing; however, clothing is the top reason for failure when utilizing the Taser. The probes do not have to penetrate the flesh to be effective and the most effective range for the issued cartridge is between 7 and 15 feet.

B. It is not the voltage that is dangerous, it is the amps. The Taser X-26 uses 50,000 Volts which is high but the amperage is very low, 0.0021 amps. This ***Electronic Control Device*** technology uses a 26 Watt electrical signal to *temporarily* override the central nervous system and directly control the skeletal muscles. This causes ***involuntary*** contraction of the muscle tissue, allowing for physical debilitation regardless of pain tolerance, drugs or mental focus.

C. The Taser is programmed to give a 5 second electrical current which the operator can shorten or extend the time. The probes should never be touched during this time, as the same electrical current would be passed on.

D. Every time an Taser cartridge is fired, it disperses 20-30 Anti-Felon Identification (AFID) tags. These tags are printed with the serial number from the cartridge and can be used to determine who fired the cartridge.

V. USE OF FORCE ISSUES

A. The deployment of the Taser constitutes a Use of Force. The Taser is placed on the Use of Force Continuum at the same level as chemical agent, oleoresin capsicum.

B. Due to the flammability of alcohol based chemical agents, Deputies will only be authorized to carry ***chemical agents*** that is issued by the Department. The chemical agent issued by the Department will be in accordance with Taser's recommendation.

C. Each deployment cycle is considered a separate Use of Force. Officers administering more than one cycle of operation will complete a separate Use of Force form (RPD Form 72).

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VI. PROCEDURES

A. A Taser may be used in those instances where:

1. A subject is threatening harm to themselves, Officers or others and no other means of control would be unreasonable or could cause harm or injury to the Officer, the subject or others.
2. Attempts to control the subject by conventional tactics are inappropriate or ineffective.
3. There is reasonable and articulate expectation it will be unsafe for the Officers to approach within the contact range of the subject.
4. A subject is combative or resistant to arrest.

B. Officers should not use a Taser when:

1. The use of the Taser would occur in a flammable or explosive environment (i.e. a meth lab, where gasoline is stored, alcohol based OC spray, etc.)
2. The result from a fall could be dangerous. (Example: the subject could fall from significant heights and receive injury or in water where the subject may not be able to swim or support themselves.)
3. The subject is handcuffed unless the subject continues to pose an immediate threat of harm or injury to the Officer, themselves or the public.
4. The subject refuses to obey commands but is not posing an immediate threat or danger.
5. The Taser will never intentionally be aimed at the eyes, face or groin.
6. The Taser should not normally be used against obviously pregnant females, the elderly or young children.
7. The Taser will not be used if a police K-9 has already been deployed and is engaging the subject.

C. Officers should obtain sufficient back up before deploying the Taser. Since the effects of the Taser are temporary, the additional Officers should use this window of opportunity to properly restrain the subject.

Note: Under exigent circumstances, nothing in this policy prohibits an Officer from deploying the Taser without having the presence of additional Officers. However; the Taser operator should not attempt to utilize the Taser, and affect an arrest at the same time.

D. Cartridges will be replaced before their expiration date. Extra cartridges should not be carried in pockets due to the risk that static electricity could cause an unintentional discharge of the cartridge. Only Department issued or approved cartridges can be carried or deployed.

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E. Officers shall announce "Taser" to other Officers before the Taser is deployed. This will let the Officers involved know that the Taser is being deployed so it is not mistaken by sight or sound as a firearm discharge.

F. If the opportunity presents itself and it is practical, the Taser operator should point the laser sight at the subject and give verbal commands prior to discharging the Taser.

VII. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Officer's Responsibilities

1. Ensure the batteries of the Taser are properly charged. Officers also are need to conduct frequent "spark test" of the Taser to ensure that it is functioning properly. When conducting a "spark test" the cartridges must be removed. Low battery life and/or any problems with the Taser need to be reported to the Taser Coordinator or designee as soon as practical.

2. The Officer shall announce "Taser" to the Officers on the scene prior to discharging the Taser.

3. Officers will report the discharging, including accidental discharges, of the Taser to their supervisor as soon as practical. ***If an accidental discharge occurs while off duty, the Supervisor must to be notified as soon as practical. (Training discharges are excluded).***

4. The discharging Officer will visually inspect the contact site. Probes penetrating the skin can be removed by the discharging Officer unless the probes have impacted the specified areas listed in sub-section (a.) below.

a. Medical personnel will be summoned to remove probes that penetrate the face, neck, breast area of a female, or the groin areas.

b. Officers will inspect probes after removal to ensure the entire probe has been removed. Medical attention shall be provided if a probe is broken.

The discharging Officer has the responsibility to treat or request treatment for any injury caused by the Taser or any secondary injury caused by the use of the Taser.

5. Ensure that photographs are taken of the probe penetration sites, drive stun sites and any secondary injuries caused by falling to the ground, etc. ***Photographs must be taken of the impact sights (probe and/or drive stun) regardless if any signs of injury are visible.***

6. Once the probes have been removed they will be treated as a biohazard and ***should be packaged according to current Taser procedures. The sharp tip of the probes is to be placed (tip down) into the slots on the side of the cartridges. When practical the probes will remain attached to the probe wires and care will be taken to ensure the integrity of the probe wires.***

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7. The discharging Officer will enter all required photographs *into their report. The expended cartridge with probes, a limited number of AFID's (when practical) and a copy of the RPD Use of Force form will be placed into an RPD evidence envelope. The envelope will be marked with an orange biohazard sticker on the front and back. The completed evidence envelope will then be dropped into RPD temporary evidence storage.*

8. The Officer will complete or provide information for the completion of Criminal Investigation Report, Incident Report (if Taser is deployed while assisting an allied agency) charging documents, and an RPD "Use of Force form;" (RPD Form 72).

9. *In the event of an accidental discharge. The Officer will submit a written explanation, in detailed report format, explaining the events which occurred during the accidental discharge. The report should be submitted before the close of the tour of duty during which it occurred, or the first shift upon returning to work if the discharged occurred while off duty. No reports are required for training of the Taser.*

B. Supervisor's Responsibilities

1. *Ensure that all required reports have been completed as required by this General Order. The Supervisor must also make notification to the Taser Coordinator that the Taser has been deployed. This notification can be made through departmental e-mail.*

2. Ensure that only certified Officers carry the department issued Taser.

3. Ensure that medical treatment has been sought if required by policy.

C. Department Coordinator's (or designee) Responsibilities

1. Receive, inspect, and ensure the maintenance and replacement of the Tasers.

2. Maintain records for the Department.

3. Return defective or damaged Tasers and cartridges to the manufacturer.

4. Ensure the batteries of the Taser are properly charged.

5. *Ensure data downloads are completed as soon as practical after each reported use by an Officer.*

6. *Responsible for accessing each weapon's electronic memory database Semi-annually. This will be conducted during the months of January and July of each calendar year.*

7. *Collect required data concerning ECD usage from January 1 through December 31 of each calendar year. That data is to be reported to the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) by March 31 of the following year.*

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D. Chief of Police Responsibilities

1. The Chief of Police will ensure that the Department coordinator performs all of the functions listed above.
2. The Chief of Police (*or Designee*) will review each use of the Taser by Officers to ensure compliance with this policy and General Order 3-13.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

All Taser training will be coordinated with the Department Coordinator and the Chief of Police. All training records will be maintained in accordance with Department standards.

Recertification on the Taser will be conducted annually and at a minimum will consist of the training guidelines provided by Taser.