

TASER™ Guidelines

309.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The TASER™ device is intended to control a violent or potentially violent individual while minimizing the risk of serious injury. It is anticipated that the appropriate use of such a device will result in fewer serious injuries to officers and suspects.

309.2 POLICY

Personnel who have completed department approved training may be issued a TASER for use during their current assignment. Personnel leaving a particular assignment may be expected to return their issued device to the department's inventory.

Officers shall only use TASER and cartridges that have been issued by the Department. The device may be carried either as a part of a uniformed officer's equipment in an approved holster, within the thigh pocket of the officer's duty uniform pant leg, or secured in the driver's compartment of the officer's patrol vehicle so that it is readily accessible at all times, or in an approved manner as approved by a supervisor.

- (a) If the TASER is carried as a part of a uniformed officer's equipment, the TASER shall not be carried on the same side as the officer's duty weapon.
- (b) All TASERs shall be clearly and distinctly marked to differentiate them from the duty weapon and any other device.
- (c) Whenever practical, officers should carry a total of two or more TASER cartridges on their person at all times while carrying a TASER.
- (d) Officers shall be responsible for insuring that their issued TASER is properly maintained and in good working order at all times.
- (e) Officers should never hold both a firearm and the TASER at the same time unless lethal force is justified.

309.3 VERBAL AND VISUAL WARNINGS

Unless it would otherwise endanger safety or is impractical due to circumstances, a verbal announcement of the intended use of the TASER shall precede the application of a TASER in order to:

- (a) Provide the individual with a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.
- (b) Provide other officers and individuals with warning that a TASER may be deployed.

If, after a verbal warning, an individual continues to express an unwillingness to voluntarily comply with an officer's lawful orders and it appears both reasonable and practical under the circumstances, the officer may, but is not required to display the electrical arc (provided there is not a cartridge loaded into the TASER) or laser in a further attempt to gain compliance prior to the application of the TASER. The aiming laser should never be intentionally directed into the eyes of another as it may permanently impair their vision.

The fact that a verbal and/or other warning was given or reasons it was not given shall be documented in any related reports.

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309.4 USE OF THE TASER

As with any law enforcement equipment, the TASER has limitations and restrictions requiring consideration before its use. The TASER should only be used when its operator can safely approach the subject within the operational range of the TASER. Although the TASER is generally effective in controlling most individuals, officers should be alert to the potential for failure and be prepared with other options.

309.4.1 FACTORS TO DETERMINE REASONABLENESS OF FORCE

The application of the TASER is likely to cause intense, but momentary, pain. As such, officers should carefully consider and balance the totality of circumstances available prior to using the TASER including, but not limited to, the following factors:

- (a) The conduct of the individual being confronted (as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time).
- (b) Officer/subject factors (i.e., age, size, relative strength, skill level, injury/exhaustion, number of officers vs. subject(s)).
- (c) Influence of drugs/alcohol (mental capacity).
- (d) Proximity of weapons.
- (e) The degree to which the subject has been effectively restrained and his/her ability to resist despite being restrained.
- (f) Time and circumstances permitting, the availability of other options (what resources are reasonably available to the officer under the circumstances).
- (g) Seriousness of the suspected offense or the reason for contact with the individual.
- (h) Training and experience of the officer.
- (i) Potential for injury to citizens, officers and suspects.
- (j) Risk of escape.
- (k) Other exigent circumstances.

309.4.2 APPLICATION OF THE TASER

Authorized personnel may use the TASER when circumstances known to the individual officer at the time indicate that such application of the TASER is reasonable to control a person in any of the following circumstances:

- (a) A violent or physically resisting subject.
- (b) A subject who, by words or action, has demonstrated an intention to be violent or to physically resist and who reasonably appears to present the potential to harm officers, him/herself or others.

When practicable, the officer should give a verbal warning of the intended use of the TASER followed by a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.

The officer must be able to articulate a reasonable belief that other available options appeared ineffective, impractical or would have presented a greater danger to the officer, the subject or others.

309.4.3 TARGETING CONSIDERATIONS

While manufacturers generally recommend that reasonable efforts should be made to target lower center mass and to avoid intentionally targeting the head, neck, chest and groin, it is recognized that the dynamics of each situation and officer safety may not permit the officer

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to limit the application of the TASER darts to a precise target area. As such, officers should take prompt and ongoing care to monitor the condition of the subject if one or more darts strikes the head, neck, chest or groin until he/she is released to the care of paramedics or other medical personnel.

309.4.4 MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS OF THE DEVICE

If the first application of the TASER appears to be ineffective in gaining control of an individual and if circumstances allow, the officer should consider the following before additional applications of the TASER:

- (a) Whether the probes or darts are making proper contact.
- (b) Whether the application of the TASER is interfering with the ability of the individual to comply.
- (c) Whether verbal commands, other options or tactics may be more effective.

This, however, shall not preclude any officer from deploying multiple, reasonable applications of the TASER on an individual.

309.4.5 REPORT OF USE

All TASER discharges shall be documented in the related arrest/crime report and on a department Use of Force Report form and notification made to a supervisor in compliance with Policy § 300.4.1. Accidental discharges of a TASER cartridge will also be documented on an inter-office department memo and forwarded to the on-duty supervisor. Any report documenting the discharge of a TASER cartridge will include the cartridge serial number, the serial number of the TASER used, and an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the discharge.

Officers shall make every attempt to photograph the injuries sustained and document the exact location of the contact(s) prior to the release or transfer of custody.

309.5 MEDICAL TREATMENT

Used TASER darts shall be removed as soon as practical and shall be considered a sharp biohazard, similar to a used hypodermic needle. Universal precautions should be taken accordingly.

All persons who have been struck by TASER darts or who have been subjected to the electric discharge of the device shall be medically assessed prior to booking. Additionally, any such individual who falls under any of the following categories should, as soon as practicable, be examined by paramedics or other qualified medical personnel:

- (a) The person is suspected of being under the influence of controlled substances and/or alcohol.
- (b) The person may be pregnant.
- (c) The person reasonably appears to be in need of medical attention.
- (d) The TASER darts are lodged in a sensitive area (e.g., groin, female breast, near the eyes).
- (e) The person requests medical treatment.

Persons who exhibit extreme agitation, violent irrational behavior accompanied by profuse sweating, extraordinary strength beyond physical characteristics, imperviousness to pain, or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple officers to bring under control,

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may be at an increased risk of sudden death and should be examined by qualified medical personnel as soon as practicable. Any individual exhibiting signs of distress after such an encounter shall be medically cleared prior to booking.

If any individual refuses medical attention, such a refusal should be witnessed by another officer and/or medical personnel and shall be fully documented in related reports. If an audio recording is made of the contact or an interview with the individual, any refusal should be included if possible.

The transporting officer shall inform any person receiving custody or any person placed in a position of providing care that the individual has been subjected to the application of the TASER.

309.6 TRAINING

In addition to the initial department approved training required to carry and use a TASER, any personnel who have not carried a TASER as a part of their assignment for a period of one year or more shall be recertified by a department approved TASER instructor prior to again carrying or using the device. A reassessment of an officer's knowledge and/or practical skill may be required at any time if deemed appropriate by the Training Coordinator. Refresher training with the TASER should occur every two years at a minimum.

The Training Coordinator should ensure that all training includes the following:

- (a) A review of this policy.
- (b) A review of the Use of Force Policy 300.
- (c) Target area considerations, to include techniques or options to reduce the intentional application of probes near the head, neck, chest, and groin.
- (d) De-escalation techniques.