

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



TASER USE UPDATE

March 2010

- Through December 2009, Tasers have been used in 1,619 incidents, averaging 15 incidents per month. In 2009, Taser use was down, averaging 11 incidents per month.



- About 45% of Taser incidents occurred between 4 p.m. and midnight; 33% between midnight and 8 a.m.; and the balance (22%) between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- In 63% of Taser incidents, the Taser officer was among the first responding officers to the scene; in a backup unit in 33% of the incidents and specifically called to the scene in 4%.
- Tasers have been used in a wide variety of incidents. Fights and disturbances comprise 23% of the situations in which Tasers have been used, followed most closely by violent crimes (17%) drug/alcohol incidents (15%), and mental/suicide calls (11%).
- The Department tracks the mode of Taser use. Tasers have been applied in the probe mode 59% of the time, in the touch mode in 23% of incidents, and in both modes 18% of the time.
- Taser subjects are most often males (92%) and fall across a wide age spectrum, with 63% thirty-five years of age or younger. The largest age group is 21-25 years old and largest racial groups are African American (46%) and Caucasian (41%).
- Nearly three fourths of Taser subjects (74%) confronting officers have been impaired, often severely, by alcohol, drugs, or a mental illness or delusion. (This has climbed from 60% in 2001.)
- One-fifth of Taser subjects have been armed. Among armed subjects, 44% have had knives, 16%

have had guns, and 40% have had other weapons, (including scissors, hatchets, broken bottles, shovels, stakes, and hypodermic needles.)

- Most of the armed Taser subjects have also been impaired (77%), usually by mental illness (41% of those impaired and armed), alcohol (29%), or drugs (25%). The proportion of armed and impaired subjects has grown steadily since 2001 when 62% of Taser subjects were armed and impaired.
- Verified Taser contact was obtained in 77% of the incidents. Where there was verified contact, the Taser delivered a disabling or partially disabling effect 95% of the time. This has remained stable over time.
- In 79% of all incidents and in 89% of the incidents where contact was verified, the Taser was credited with controlling the subject or bringing the situation to a resolution.
- Subject injuries are relatively low in Taser deployments when compared with other use of force situations. Subjects sustained no injuries, injuries prior to police arrival, or only self-inflicted injuries in 38% of Taser incidents. In another 42% of Taser incidents, the only injuries were probe/touch abrasions from the device itself.
- There were no injuries to officers in 83% of the taser incidents (this finding has been stable). Most officer injuries (74%) occur before the Taser is deployed. In police encounters with violent and mentally ill subjects (often subjects in Taser incidents), as many as 40% of the officers and the subjects may sustain injuries, according to national studies.



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