



SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

TASER USE UPDATE

August 2005

- From January 2001 through June 2005, tasers were used in 702 incidents, averaging 13 incidents per month overall and 14 incidents a month since we have been at the 220 taser deployment level.
- West Precinct, with the largest number of taser officers, has also had the most taser deployments (38% of the Department total).
- In 56% of taser incidents, the taser officer was among the first responding officers to the scene, in a backup unit in 38% of the incidents and specifically called to the scene in 5%.
- Tasers have been used in a wide variety of incidents. Fights and disturbances and drug/alcohol incidents together comprise 36% of the situations in which tasers have been used, followed most closely by violent crimes (17%) and mental/suicide calls (14%).
- The Department tracks the mode of taser use. Tasers are being applied in the dart projectile mode 53% of the time, in the stun mode in 34% of incidents, and in both modes 13% of the time.
- Taser subjects are most often males (93%) and fall across a wide age spectrum. Just over half (52%) are thirty years of age or younger. The largest age group is 21-25 years old. The racial breakdown of taser subjects is 46% African American and 42% Caucasian.
- Over two-thirds of taser subjects (71%) confronting officers have been impaired, often severely, by alcohol, drugs, or a mental illness or delusion. (This has climbed from 60% in 2001.)
- Nearly a quarter of taser subjects (22%) have been armed. Among armed subjects, 43% have had knives, 17% have had guns, and 40% have had other weapons, (including scissors, hatchets, broken bottles, shovels, stakes, and hypodermic needles.)
- Of great concern is the fact that most of the armed subjects (75%) were also impaired, usually by mental illness (41% of those impaired and armed), alcohol (25%), or drugs (25%). The proportion of armed and impaired subjects has been growing steadily, with 62% armed and impaired in 2001, 70% in 2002, and 74% by the end of 2003.
- Verified taser contact was obtained in 80% of the incidents. Where there was verified contact, the taser delivered a disabling or partially disabling effect 93% of the time. This has remained stable over time.
- In 80% of all incidents and in 86% of the incidents where contact was verified, the taser was credited with controlling the subject or bringing the situation to a resolution.
- Injuries to subjects are 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 45% of taser incidents. In another 32% of taser incidents, the only injuries were dart/stun abrasions from the device itself.
- There were no injuries to officers in 82% of the taser incidents (this finding has been stable). Eighty percent of officer injuries in taser incidents occurred before the taser was deployed. National studies have indicated that 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.



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