

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



TASER USE UPDATE

November 2011

- From January 2001 through June 2011, Tasers have been used in 1,752 incidents, averaging 14 incidents per month. During 2011, Taser use averaged 7.5 incidents per month, well below the overall average.



- About 45% of Taser incidents have 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 24% of the situations in which Tasers have been used, followed most closely by violent crimes (18%) drug/alcohol incidents (14%), and mental/suicide calls (11%).
- The Department tracks the mode of Taser use. Tasers have been applied in the probe mode 60% of the time, in the touch mode in 22% of incidents, and in both modes 19% of the time.
- Taser subjects are most often males (93%) and fall across a wide age spectrum, with 62% thirty-five years of age or younger. The largest age group is 21-25 years old and largest racial groups are African American (45%) and Caucasian (41%).
- Three-fourths of Taser subjects (75%) 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, 43% have had knives, 16% have had guns, and 41% have had other weapons, (including scissors, hatchets, broken bottles, shovels, swords, and ice axes.)
- Most of the armed Taser subjects have also been impaired (78%), usually by mental illness (41% of those impaired and armed), alcohol (30%), or drugs (24%). 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 87% 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 36% of Taser incidents. In another 43% of Taser incidents, the only injuries were probe/touch abrasions from the device itself.
- There were no injuries to officers in 84% of the taser incidents (this finding has been stable). Most officer injuries (73%) 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.



City of Seattle

Seattle Police Department

610 Fifth Avenue P.O. Box 34986 Seattle, WA 98124-4986

www.seattle.gov/police

The Seattle Police Department is an accredited law enforcement agency and meets the high standards of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

