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 are authorized to carry the TASER for use during their tour of duty. Prior to going off duty, personnel are expected to return the TASER to the department's inventory.

Officers shall only use the TASERs and cartridges that have been issued by the Department. If available, the device shall be carried as a part of a uniformed officer's equipment in a department approved holster so that it is readily accessible at all times. Officers assigned to the Special Operations Division may carry a TASER, but it is not a requirement.

(a) When the TASER is carried as a part of a uniformed officer’s equipment, the TASER shall be carried on the side opposite from 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 when carrying a TASER.

(d) Officers shall be responsible for ensuring 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.

(f) The TASER shall not be used to torture, psychologically torment, elicit statements or to punish any individual.

309.3 VERBAL AND VISUAL WARNINGS
A verbal warning of the intended use of the TASER should precede its application, unless it would otherwise endanger the safety of officers or when it is not practicable due to the circumstances. The purpose of the warning is for the following:

(a) Provide the individual with a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.

(b) Provide other officers and individuals with a warning that a TASER may be deployed.

The aiming laser should never be intentionally directed into the eyes of another as it may permanently impair his/her vision.

The fact that a verbal and/or other warning was given or reasons it was not given shall be documented by the officer deploying the TASER.

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
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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) The subject is violent or physically resisting.
(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.
(c) Absent meeting the conditions set forth in (a) or (b) above, or a reasonable belief that
an individual has committed or threatened to commit a serious offense, mere flight
from pursuing officers shall not serve as good cause for the use of the TASER to
apprehend an individual.

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 SPECIAL DEPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS
The use of the TASER should generally be avoided in the following situations unless
the totality of the circumstances indicate that other available options reasonably appear
ineffective, impractical, or would present a greater danger to the officer, the subject or
others, and the officer reasonably believes that the need to control the individual outweighs
the risk of using the TASER:

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(a) Pregnant females.
(b) Elderly individuals or obvious juveniles.
(c) Individuals who are handcuffed or otherwise restrained.
(d) Individuals who have been recently sprayed with a flammable chemical agent or who are otherwise in close proximity to any flammable material.
(e) Individuals whose position or activity may result in collateral injury (e.g. falls from height, operating vehicles).

Because the application of the TASER in the drive-stun mode (i.e. direct contact without probes) relies primarily on pain compliance and requires close proximity to the subject, additional caution should be exercised. The application in drive-stun mode should be limited to brief applications in which pain compliance would reasonably appear necessary to achieve control.

309.4.4 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 to limit the application of the TASER probes 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.

309.4.5 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 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.

309.4.6 REPORT OF USE
All TASER discharges shall be documented in the related arrest/crime report and a Use of Force report generated as per Policy § 300.4. Additionally, a supervisor shall be notified in compliance with Policy § 300.4.1. Any report documenting the discharge of a TASER cartridge will include the cartridge serial number and an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the discharge.

The on-board TASER memory will be downloaded through the data port by a supervisor or TASER instructor and saved with the related Use of Force report. Photographs of probe sites should be taken and the expended cartridge along with both probes and wire should be submitted by the officer collecting the cartridge into evidence for future reference. The cartridge serial number should be noted and documented on the evidence paperwork. The evidence packaging should be marked "Bio-hazard" if the probes penetrated the subject's skin.

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309.5 MEDICAL TREATMENT

Absent extenuating circumstances or unavailability, only qualified personnel, including certified paramedics, should carefully remove TASER probes from a person's body. Used TASER probes 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 probes 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 probes are lodged in a sensitive area (e.g., groin, female breast, near the eyes).
(e) The person requests medical treatment.

A "drive-stun" application does not require a medical assessment unless the officer notes secondary injuries, symptoms of excited delirium, or other factors warranting a medical assessment.

Persons who exhibit extreme agitation, violent irrational behavior accompanied by profuse sweating, extraordinary strength beyond their physical characteristics, imperviousness to pain (sometimes called "excited delirium"), or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple officers to be brought under control, 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, all personnel authorized and trained to carry a TASER shall be annually recertified by a department approved TASER instructor. A reassessment of an officer's knowledge and/or practical skill may be required at any time if deemed appropriate by their supervisor or division commander.

The taser instructors should ensure that annual training includes the following:

(a) A review of this policy.
(b) A review of the Use of Force Policy § 300.
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(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.

(e) Any taser bulletins issued since the last training session that the taser instructor or department administration feel are appropriate and valuable for our training goals.