

# SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



# TASER USE UPDATE

April 2009

- Through December 2008, tasers have been used in 1,488 incidents, averaging 16 incidents per month. In 2008, taser use was down, averaging 12 incidents per month.



Among armed subjects, 43% have had knives, 16% have had guns, and 41% have had other weapons, (including scissors, hatchets, broken bottles, shovels, stakes, and hypodermic needles.)

- About 45% of taser incidents occurred between 4 p.m. and midnight; 34% between midnight and 8 a.m.; and the balance (21%) 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 drug/alcohol incidents (15%), violent crimes (16%) and mental/suicide calls (11%).
- The Department tracks the mode of taser use. Tasers have been applied in the probe mode 58% of the time, in the touch mode in 34% of incidents, and in both modes 18% of the time.
- Taser subjects are most often males (93%) and fall across a wide age spectrum. 63% are thirty five 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 41% Caucasian.
- Nearly three fourths of taser subjects (73%) 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.
- Most of the armed taser subjects have also been impaired (76%), usually by mental illness (42% of those impaired and armed), alcohol (28%), 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 38% of taser incidents. In another 41% of taser incidents, the only injuries were probe/stun 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 (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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