

Wayne P.D. Invests In Tasers To Protect Lives

By Henry M. Holden

Tasers are the most commonly used force option, employed by 96-percent of law enforcement agencies nationwide," said Detective Captain Lawrence Martin. "The primary purpose for employing the Taser is to protect human lives and prevent injury to officers and citizens."

Taser is a brand-name of a conductive energy device (CED) generically known as stun guns.

A change in state law last year changed the circumstances for stun gun use.

"The state attorney general rewrote the use of force guidelines for it," said Lt. Robert Franco. "After several rewrites, we arrived at the current policy. Chief Clark asked us to look into it. Both Lt. Andrew Verdon and I determined that it was in our best interest to move forward with this."

"There are several limitations on

when we can deploy a Taser," he said. "Tasers are not designed to kill but to immobilize an individual. Under the new specifications from the Attorney General, stun guns may be used if a person is actively resisting an officer, such as refusing to surrender a deadly weapon, or if officers anticipate bodily harm. We can't deploy a Taser on a juvenile, a pregnant woman, someone standing near water, or on a cliff.

"The devices cannot be used against a person who is passively resisting an officer using a "pain-compliance" hold, such as a wristlock," he continued.

The device can deliver 50,000 volts of electricity; however, the current is very low.

"When we deploy a Taser we use the terms passive and aggressive resistance, so this would be for a criminal who is committing a crime and is displaying aggressive resistance to

us, or is committing an offense against another individual. We can also use it for potential suicidal victims."

Taser weapons have the capability to fire electrodes with hooks designed to grip onto fabric and deliver an electric shock from 15-feet away.

"The Taser is an intervention," said Martin. "The use of force is a last-ditch effort. We always try to use constructive force which is just talking to the individual. Our officers are very good at that, and they receive a lot of training. However, it doesn't always work, and we try to deploy the least amount of force necessary to carry out the arrest, or to save the individual's life.

Forty officers include all patrol supervisors attended a two-day training session on how to properly use this "smart weapon."

It's called a smart weapon because it senses the voltage. The Taser can measure and

adjust the charge delivered to ensure it uses the least amount of energy needed to incapacitate someone.

"What you want to do is interrupt this person's actions for five seconds which is the time the Taser is firing its electric charge. It interrupts their skeletal muscles, so we can bring them under control. The Taser doesn't interfere with heart muscles or smooth muscles.

"Wayne police officers do not use body cameras, yet so the current version of these Tasers



have cameras," said Verdon. "Everything is recorded. It's the most accountable tool that officers can have, as well as being able to disprove false claims and ensuring proper use of the Tasers."

The Tasers cost

about \$3,000 each, and come with batteries, software upgrades and a five-year warranty.

When deployed, Tasers on average reduce officer injuries by 70 percent, and there is a 40 percent reduction in suspect injuries.

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