

**Seattle Police Department  
Update on Taser Usage  
As of 14 November 2002**

**Summary.** This is an update on the use of tasers in the Department since the First Year Report was issued in May 2002; and since the last update as of mid-July. This update reflects a review of taser use of force reports covering the period through mid-October 2002. There have now been 231 deployments since the taser Program was implemented in December 2000. Based on cumulative data, key findings are, as follows:

- The deployment pattern for the tasers remains virtually the same as in the previous report with West Precinct having the largest number of taser officers, followed by the North, South, and East precincts.
- The largest number of taser deployments continues to occur in the West and South Precincts. In 58% of the incidents, the taser officer was among the first responders (compared with 60% and 55% in the Year I and July update reports respectively). Taser officers were in backup units 37% of the time (36% and 38% previously).
- Tasers were used in the dart projectile mode 55% of the time (compared with 60% and 54% previously); in the stun mode 31% (compared with 27% & 32%); and in both modes 13% (previously 12% & 13%).
- Tasers continue to be used in a wide variety of incidents. The most frequent types of incidents are now drug-related or those involving violent crimes, replacing traffic incidents and mental/suicide calls as the most frequent type of incident. This trend was apparent in the July update report.
- Taser subjects continue to be mostly males (92%, down from 94% previously), 30 years of age or younger (66%). Previously, the proportion of taser subjects 30 years of age or younger was 50% and 53%, so this appears to be an increasing trend.
- The shift in the racial identity of taser subjects noted in the previous update has continued. Now half of taser subjects are African American, followed by Caucasians at 40%. In the Year I report, those numbers were reversed with Caucasians comprising 49% of taser subjects, and African Americans 42%.
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of taser subjects were impaired (climbing from 60% previously), most often by alcohol (36%), followed next by drugs (35% up from 33%), and then mental illness (24% down from 26%).
- Twenty-two percent of taser subjects were armed (25% and 21% previously), usually with knives. 70% of the armed taser subjects were also impaired (up from 62%), usually by mental illness or alcohol.
- Verified taser contact was obtained in 82% of the deployments (compared with 86% and 84% previously). As found earlier, where there was verified contact, the taser delivered a disabling or partially disabling effect 95% of the time.

- Tasers continue to lead to safe resolutions of subject encounters. In 84% of all incidents (previously 85-86%) and 91% of incidents where there was verified contact (previously 92%), the taser was credited with controlling the subject or bringing the situation to a resolution.
- Injuries to subjects and officers remain low in taser deployments. Taser subjects sustained either no injuries, or only dart or stun abrasions, in 62% of the incidents (compared with 68% and 69% previously). Officers sustained no injuries in 85% of the deployments (compared with 82% and 86% previously). In 12% of the incidents, officer injuries occurred before the taser was deployed; and in 3% of the incidents officers were injured after or in the course of the taser deployment. (The comparable numbers previously were 13% and 5%, respectively.) Officers who are injured in taser incidents are most likely to sustain their injuries prior to a taser deployment (77% of injuries are prior to taser use).

Some of the data and a brief discussion of patterns that are emerging in the Department's taser use are presented below. The data provided in the tables are cumulative.

**Taser Incidents by Precinct.** Table A below presents the types of incidents in which tasers were used in each precinct. As reported in the last update, the West Precinct had the most taser deployments as well as the largest number of

**Table A**  
**Types of Taser Incidents by Precinct**  
**N = 231**

Type of Incident	Precincts				Incident Totals
	West	North	South	East	
Auto Theft	1	3	4	1	9
Drug-related	38	5	4	2	49
Fight/disturbance	14	7	7	6	34
Mental/Suicide	9	8	5	6	28
Property Crime	6	5	2	-	13
Traffic-related	5	2	15	5	27
Violent Crime	10	10	15	12	47
Other	3	1	12	8	24
<b>Precinct Totals</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>231</b>

drug-related incidents, themselves the largest category of taser deployments. Drug incidents were 21% of all taser incidents and 44% of the West Precinct deployments (down from 58% in the previous update). South Precinct had the second largest number of taser deployments, with violent crime and traffic-related incidents dominating in that precinct. Fights/disturbances, violent crimes, and mental/suicide calls comprised the largest number of taser incidents in North Precinct, while violent crimes were also dominant in the East Precinct. Among the Precincts, East Precinct showed the largest increase in taser use since the previous update (an increase of 43%), while the other

precincts all recorded taser use increases of around 25%. Violent crimes are the type of incident showing the greatest increase since the last update. Nearly a third (32%) of the new deployments since the last update report in July were in situations involving violent crimes.

**Type of Taser Application.** The precincts differed not only in types of taser incidents, but also in the manner in which the taser was deployed. Table B provides this information, displaying the types of taser applications by precinct.

**Table B**  
**Type of Taser Applications by Precinct**  
**N = 231**

Precinct	Type of Taser Application				Total Deployments
	Darts	Stun	Both	Other	
West	36	29	20	1	<b>86</b>
North	24	14	3	--	<b>41</b>
South	51	8	5	--	<b>64</b>
East	17	20	2	1	<b>28</b>
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>231</b>

As indicated in Table B, tasers were more often used in the dart projectile mode than in the stun or dual modes. However, as noted in the previous update, use of the taser differs somewhat by precinct, with South and North Precincts showing the greater preference for the dart mode, and West Precinct displaying an almost even use in all three modes.

Table C displays the types of taser applications and their effects, in incidents where contact was verified. As can be seen, use of taser in the dart mode has the greatest chance of yielding a disabling effect. In the stun mode, the effects are split nearly evenly, with slightly more partial rather than disabling effects.

**Table C**  
**Types of Taser Applications and Their Effects**  
**N = 189\*\***

Type of Application	Type of Effect			Total Applications
	Disabling	Partial	None	
<b>Darts</b>	64	23	2	<b>89</b>
<b>Stun</b>	30	37	4	<b>71</b>
<b>Both</b>	13	12	4	<b>29</b>
<b>Total effects</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>189</b>

\*\* Includes only those incidents where contact was verified.

**Demographics of Taser Incidents.** Taser incidents also show some patterns when the characteristics of taser subjects are examined. Tables D, E, and F depict, respectively, the race and gender of taser subjects, the age of taser subjects in each type of incident, and the race of subjects by type of incident.

**Table D**  
**Distribution of Taser Subjects by Race and Gender**  
**N = 231**

Racial Group of Taser Subjects	Gender of Taser Subjects		Total Subjects in Racial Group
	Male	Female	
African American	108	7	115
Caucasian	84	9	93
Asian/Pac Islander	11	2	13
Other	10	--	10
<b>Total Subjects in Gender Group</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>231</b>

As noted in the earlier summary, the racial distribution of taser subjects has changed over time. In the Year I report, African Americans comprised 42% of taser subjects, compared with 50% now. Caucasians, which previously made up nearly half of taser subjects, are now 40% of the total. Females as a proportion of total subjects have shown a slight increase from 6% to 8%.

**Table E**  
**Age of Subjects by Type of Taser Incident**  
**N = 231**

Age Categories	Types of Taser Incidents								Age Totals
	Auto theft	Drug related	Fights	Mental/Suicide	Property Crime	Traffic related	Violent Crime	Other	
< 18	3	1	1	2	--	4	1	2	<b>14</b>
18-20	1	4	2	--	1	1	6	5	<b>20</b>
21-25	2	12	7	5	4	3	11	6	<b>50</b>
26-30	1	4	7	5	1	9	13	3	<b>43</b>
31-35	2	9	4	3	3	3	6	3	<b>33</b>
36-40	--	10	4	6	2	5	4	3	<b>34</b>
41-45	--	6	7	2	--	1	3	--	<b>19</b>
46-50	--	1	--	1	2	--	2	--	<b>6</b>
51-55	--	2	--	2	--	1	1	2	<b>8</b>
> 55	--	--	2	2	--	--	--	--	<b>4</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>231</b>

Table E above illustrated the age distribution of subjects across taser incidents. As Table E indicates, fights and disturbances and violent crime incidents are more likely to

involve younger taser subjects. For example, 66% of taser subjects in violent crime incidents were 30 years old or younger; while in fights and disturbances, 55% of the taser subjects were 30 years or younger. Similarly, all of the subjects in auto theft incidents and 71% of those in traffic-related incidents were 35 years of age or less. Mental/suicide calls, on the other hand, ran the full age gamut; and drug-related incidents also showed a wide age range.

**Table F**  
**Type of Taser Incident by Race of Subject**  
**N = 231**

Type of Incident	Racial Group				Incident Totals
	African American	Caucasian	Asian/Pac Islander	Other	
Auto theft	5	4	--	--	9
Drug related	28	13	4	4	49
Fights	15	15	2	2	34
Mental/suicide	6	20	2	--	28
Property crime	6	7	--	--	13
Traffic related	16	8	2	1	27
Violent crime	24	19	2	2	47
Other	15	7	1	1	24
<b>Total for racial group</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>231</b>

Table F displays the race of subjects across taser incidents. As is evident in the table, African Americans and Caucasians, the two largest groups of taser subjects, are reflected about evenly in fights/disturbances, auto thefts, property crimes, and violent crimes. Where there are apparent differences are in drug and traffic incidents, where African Americans predominate; and in mental and suicide calls, where Caucasians are more dominant.

**Taser Subject Impairment and Use of Weapons.** Officers in taser incidents confront a large number of subjects who are both armed and impaired. This information is depicted in Table G below.

As can be seen in Table G, nearly two thirds of taser subjects (64%) were impaired in some way. The most likely impairments were due to alcohol (36% of those impaired) or drugs/chemicals (35%). About a quarter of the subjects (24%) exhibited impairments associated with mental illness. Nearly a quarter of the taser subjects (22%) were armed, most often with knives. Of particular concern, however, is the fact that most of the armed subjects (70%) were also impaired. The combination of an impairment and a weapon was most often seen in incidents involving the mentally ill and those demonstrating alcohol intoxication.

**Table G**  
**Taser Subject Impairment and Use of Weapons**  
**N = 231**

Type of Impairment	Was subject armed?		Total subjects With impairment
	Yes	No	
Alcohol	12	41	53
Drugs/chemicals	4	47	51
Both drugs and alcohol	2	6	8
Mental illness	17	18	35
None mentioned/apparent	15	69	84
<b>Weapon Use Totals</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>231</b>

**Injuries in Taser Incidents.** The reported injury rate in taser incidents remains low. The following tables provide additional information on officer and subject injuries in these incidents. Table H depicts the incidence of officer injuries by the type of taser application used. Officers escaped injury in 85% of taser incidents, a low injury rate in light of the number of impaired subjects they confronted. As can be seen, while overall injuries are relatively infrequent, officers are more likely to sustain injuries in the time before a taser is deployed than at any other time.

**Table H**  
**Timing and Incidence of Officer Injuries by Type of Taser Application**  
**N = 231**

Officer Injury Incidence/Timing	Type of Taser Application				Total Officer Injuries
	Darts	Stun	Both	Other	
<b>No injury</b>	112	60	23	1	<b>196</b>
<b>Before taser use</b>	12	9	5	1	<b>27</b>
<b>After taser use</b>	4	2	--	--	<b>6</b>
<b>During taser use</b>	--	--	2	--	<b>2</b>
<b>Total applications</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>231</b>

Table I below depicts the timing and incidence of officer injuries relative to subject injuries. Like officers, subjects are injured infrequently in taser incidents. Nearly two thirds (65%) of taser subjects either sustained no injuries or injuries that occurred prior to police arrival or were self-inflicted. In another 13% of incidents, the only injury to subjects were dart punctures or stun mode marks. Of the 77 reported subject injuries (other than dart punctures/stun marks), twenty six (34%) occurred prior to police arrival or were self-inflicted, and another twenty seven (35%) were sustained prior to use of the taser. Of the twenty four injuries after taser use, most were the result of falls to the ground upon taser activation.

**Table I**  
**Timing and Incidence of Officer and Suspect Injuries**  
**N = 231**

Suspect injury Incidence/timing	Officer injury incidence/timing				Total Suspect Injuries
	None	Before taser use	After taser use	During taser use	
None	115	8	2	--	125
Darts/stun marks only	25	4	--	--	29
Before taser use	16	11	--	--	27
After taser use	18	2	2	2	24
Before police arrive	9	1	--	--	10
Self-inflicted	13	1	2	--	16
<b>Total officer injuries</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>231</b>

Also apparent in Table I is the extent to which officer injuries mirror those of suspects. Thus officer injuries are relatively rare where subject injuries are prior to police arrival or are self-inflicted, but are somewhat more frequent prior to taser application. These latter injuries may occur even when suspects escape injury, as noted by the shaded cell.

**Taser success.** The final table summarizes the success of the taser in resolving the incidents in which it was deployed. In Table J, verified taser contact is displayed together with the taser's contribution to the resolution of incidents. As can be seen, verified taser contact was obtained in 82% of all incidents. The taser was credited with resolving or contributing to the resolution of 91% of the incidents in which contact was verified and 84% of all incidents. Even where there was no verified contact, the taser was credited with contributing to incident resolution 52% of the time.

**Table J**  
**Taser Resolution by Verified Taser Contact**  
**N = 231**

Verified Taser contact	Taser Credited with Incident Resolution				Total incidents	
	Number "YES"	Percent "YES"	Number "NO"	Percent "NO"	Number of Incidents	% of incidents
<b>YES</b>	172	91%	17	9%	189	82%
<b>NO</b>	22	52%	20	48%	42	18%
<b>Total Resolutions</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>100%</b>