

24-01 Taser Deployment

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

TRAINING BULLETIN

Field Operations Training Unit



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TASER DEPLOYMENT

Policy Overview and Considerations

In any use-of-force incident, deputies must consider the totality of the circumstances and remember that any force used must be objectively reasonable, proportional, and reasonably appear to be necessary.

The Taser (also referred to as Conducted Electrical Weapon (CEW)) is a less-lethal force option that can be used when a subject poses an immediate threat of harm to any person or when a subject needs to be taken into custody or safely controlled, and the level of resistance presented by the subject is reasonably likely to cause injury to the Department member, subject, or any other person. Unless it compromises Officer Safety or is impractical due to circumstances, a verbal warning shall be issued about the intended use of the Taser.

Merely running away from a pursuing Department member without additional circumstances or factors is insufficient justification for using a CEW to apprehend a subject. Before using a Taser on a fleeing subject, Department members shall consider the severity of the offense, the level of threat posed by the subject, whether the subject can be recaptured later, and the risk of serious bodily injury to the fleeing subject.

Issue #1: "Double Wielding" (Taser in One Hand, Firearm in the Other).

Department policy prohibits personnel from simultaneously holding a Taser in one hand and a firearm in the other. This restriction is crucial in mitigating the risks associated with "slips-and-capture" errors, which are mistakes made when you think you are doing one thing, but you actually are doing another, and the result often is directly the opposite of what you intended. "Slips-and-capture" errors are often caused by urgency, time compression, narrowed focus of attention, and automatic response when responding to a perceived threat. Numerous case studies of real-life incidents have underscored the grave consequences that can arise from inadvertently discharging a firearm when the intention was to deploy a Taser.

There may be situations requiring a deputy to transition to a firearm while simultaneously holding a Taser. A recommendation would be to (1) train re-holstering the Taser while transitioning to a firearm, (2) re-grip the Taser around the frame and lower it to the waistline, keeping the blast doors of the cartridge pointed down to the ground, and (3) designate additional personnel as lethal force back-up.

Issue #2: Deploying a Taser on a Subject Exposed to Water.

During every use-of-force incident, deputies should assess themselves, the person(s) they use force against, and their surroundings/environment.

There is a misconception that using a Taser against a wet subject is prohibited. Examples could include situations where someone who just stepped out of the shower, is exposed to rain, or was otherwise exposed to water. Using a Taser on a subject while wet with water will not increase the electrical charge that a person receives. Additionally, deputies will not feel an electrical charge by physically controlling someone wet and simultaneously being exposed to a Taser charge. Deputies should be aware that wet, slippery surfaces will decrease their ability to control a subject physically during a use-of-force incident and may expose personnel and the subject to increased risk of injury from slippery surfaces.

Department policy states that except in emergent circumstances, the Taser should not be used on a subject who is near a body of water such as a pool, lake, ocean, or any place with an increased risk of drowning because the subject may experience neuromuscular incapacitation because of the Taser. Department members should avoid using the CEW on subjects who are in standing water, mud, or a marsh, where the ability to move is restricted.

Issue #3: Tasing a Subject on a Bicycle.

Department policy states that Department members should avoid using a CEW on subjects who are fleeing or running away unless the subject is an immediate threat to themselves or others. The mere fact that a subject is fleeing does not justify the use of a Taser. You must articulate that the subject is an immediate threat to themselves or others. Personnel must also consider the risk of significant injury to a subject who is riding a bike when considering the use of a Taser, because they may fall off the bike due to neuromuscular incapacitation. Department members should continually assess the situation and consider the most appropriate tactical plan. Depending on the seriousness of the crime, the threat level, and the risk of serious injury, deputies may consider setting up a containment or pursuing (within policy) to make contact rather than use a Taser and instead use control holds to detain.

Conclusion

Every deputy-involved incident poses distinct challenges. Exercising sound judgment and making critical decisions are essential in any situation involving the use of force by deputies. Before resorting to force, when it is feasible and safe to do so, deputies should formulate a tactical plan, seek additional resources if needed, and use de-escalation techniques to mitigate the need for force. It is crucial to adhere to the guiding principle that "just because we CAN, doesn't mean we SHOULD," while exercising discretion and restraint whenever possible.

If you have additional questions or concerns or need guidance, please contact the Field Operations Force Training Unit at (562) 347-4530.
