



COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operational Guidelines

Taser X-26© Electronic Control Device					
Unit Operations		Chapter Use of Force		Guideline Number	
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I. Policy

The Columbia Police Department authorizes the use of only that level of force that is reasonably necessary and, in furtherance of that policy, utilizes the Taser X26 conducted energy weapon to safely and effectively subdue violent or potentially violent individuals and thereby minimize the likelihood of injury to officers and suspects.

II. Definitions

Drive Stun - a use of the Taser wherein direct contact of the Taser, with the cartridge removed, is made with the skin of a person. A drive stun is effective as a pain compliance technique only.

Electronic Control Device - a device that uses electricity to temporarily override the command and control systems of the body and thereby impair muscular control. The device transmits electricity either through a drive stun or probe deployment. The Department authorizes only the Taser X-26 Electronic Control Device.

Excited Delirium - a state of extreme mental and physiological excitement, characterized by extreme agitation, hyperthermia, euphoria, hostility, exceptional strength, and endurance without fatigue.

Laser Light Activation - a use of the Taser wherein the device is aimed at a person and the safety is disengaged, causing the laser light aiming device to illuminate on the person. This use may be effective to gain voluntary compliance without actually using force.

Probe Deployment - a deployment of the Taser wherein the two probes from the cartridge are discharged at a person, whether or not one or both of the probes actually contact the person. A successful probe deployment temporarily incapacitates the person.

Spark Demonstration - a demonstration of the Taser's capability to conduct electricity that is conducted with the cartridge removed, to attempt to obtain voluntary compliance.

Spark Test - an approximate one-second test of the Taser's ability to conduct electricity that is conducted with the cartridge removed, to verify that the Taser is functioning properly.

III. Procedure

A. Training

1. Officers shall complete at least eight hours of instruction prior to being issued, carrying, or using a Taser. Such instruction may include an optional Taser exposure and shall include instruction on:
 - a) Appropriate carry, use, and deployment of the Taser;
 - b) This Standard Operational Guideline;
 - c) Techniques for retention of the Taser; and
 - d) Excited delirium.
2. Officers shall also complete at least eight hours of annual instruction in order to maintain Taser certification.
3. It is the responsibility of the officer to ensure that necessary training has been completed. If an officer's Taser certification lapses, the officer shall return the Taser to an authorized instructor.

B. Equipment Care and Handling

1. Officers certified and authorized to carry and use the Taser shall be issued the following equipment:
 - a) Taser X-26;
 - b) 2 cartridges;
 - c) Holster; and
 - d) Bandages and iodine or alcohol wipes.
2. Replacement cartridges shall be issued by authorized Taser instructors, supervisors or command-level officers. An inventory of available and issued cartridges will be maintained by cartridge serial number. Those issuing cartridges shall ensure that officers are issued no more than two cartridges at any given time.

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3. Officers shall not modify or tamper with the Taser and shall use only Taser brand cartridges and power supplies supplied by the Department.
4. Officers assigned a Taser shall carry the Taser at all times while in uniform and assigned to enforcement activities, except during periods of heavy precipitation. Uniformed officers must also carry a baton and pepper spray (see SOG 3.02).
5. Officers shall carry the Taser:
 - a) With the safety engaged;
 - b) With a cartridge installed on the front of the Taser; and
 - c) In a holster authorized or provided by the Department.
6. Officers shall position the Taser holster:
 - a) On the side of the body opposite the firearm; and
 - b) So that the Taser cannot be easily drawn by the hand used to draw the firearm.
7. Uniformed officers carrying a Taser shall carry a total of 2 cartridges, one installed on the front of the Taser, and one either in a carrying pouch or installed on the handle of the Taser.
8. Officers shall not carry the Taser while off duty and out of uniform.
9. Officers shall handle, store, secure, and protect the Taser as if it were a loaded firearm. Officers shall point the Taser in a safe direction, with the safety engaged, during loading, unloading or when handling other than during operational deployment.
10. At the beginning of every duty shift, officers shall inspect their assigned Tasers to ensure proper functioning. The daily inspection shall include:
 - a) A spark test;
 - b) A visual inspection of the Taser cartridges; and
 - c) A visual inspection of the battery capacity reading.
11. Tasers that fail the spark test or that have 20% or less remaining battery capacity, and cartridges with any visible damage (including missing cartridge "blast" doors) shall be removed from service and returned to an authorized instructor.

C. Justification for Taser Use

1. Use of the Taser, as with all uses of force, must be objectively reasonable and necessary when considering the totality of the circumstances.
2. Verbal commands, pepper spray, and empty hand control techniques that do not involve strikes are considered lesser force options than the Taser.
3. Officers may use the Taser to subdue a person whom the officer is otherwise justified in using force against when:
 - a) The person is harming or attempting to harm his or herself or others;
 - b) The person is threatening his or herself or others with bodily harm and appears reasonably able to carry out the threats;
 - c) Attempts to subdue the person using lesser force options have been ineffective;
 - d) The officer believes, based on specific and articulable facts, that attempts to subdue the person using lesser force options are likely to be ineffective; or
 - e) The officer believes, based on specific and articulable facts, that it would be extremely dangerous for officers to come within close proximity of the person.

D. Restrictions on Taser Use

1. Officers shall weigh the nature and seriousness of the offense against the likelihood of injury from an ensuing fall before deploying a Taser against a person who is running. Officers shall not use the Taser to subdue a person who is fleeing a misdemeanor offense unless the person has shown a propensity for violence or is an immediate threat to the officer or a citizen.
2. Unless there are compelling reasons that can be clearly articulated, officers shall not use the Taser:

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- a) Where lethal force is clearly justified, unless another officer is present and able to immediately use lethal force should the Taser be ineffective;
 - b) Against a person who is operating a running motor vehicle, unless the officer is certain that the vehicle is immobile;
 - c) To disperse a crowd or individual, as a control tool by either, presenting the device, laser light activation or spark test demonstration.
 - d) Deployed indiscriminately into any group of people.
 - e) Deployed on a person that does not present a clearly identified preferred target area such as when more than one person(s) are in close proximity and/or moving; and/or the person(s) actions creates a disproportionate risk of potential injury if used (i.e. two people rolling on the ground fighting).
 - f) Against a person who the officer believes:
 - (1) Is holding a firearm;
 - (2) Has come into contact with flammable liquids;
 - (3) Is in a position where a fall would likely cause serious injury or death;
 - (4) Is pregnant;
 - (5) Is at the extremes of age; or
 - (6) Is physically frail.
 - g) Against an animal.
3. Officers shall not use a Taser:
- a) In a combustible or flammable environment such as a clandestine laboratory;
 - b) To punish;
 - c) To escort a person; or
 - d) To awaken an unconscious person.
4. Officers shall not use a Taser on any person who is handcuffed behind the back unless:

- a) The person is harming or attempting to harm his or herself or others; or
- b) Attempts to subdue the person using lesser force options have been ineffective.

E. Deployment of the Taser

1. Prior to deploying a Taser, the deploying officer shall visually and physically confirm that the weapon selected is in fact a Taser and not a firearm.
2. Prior to deploying the Taser, the deploying officer shall yell, if feasible, "Taser, Taser, Taser."
3. The Taser can be used in four modes:
 - a) Laser sight activation;
 - b) Spark demonstration;
 - c) Drive stun; and
 - d) Probe deployment.
4. **Laser Sight Activation**
Officers may attempt to gain voluntary compliance through the use of the Taser laser sight activation accompanied by a verbal warning or command.
5. **Spark Demonstration**
Officers may attempt to gain voluntary compliance through the use of the Taser spark demonstration accompanied by a verbal warning or command.
6. **Drive Stun**
 - a) Officers should use the probe deployment instead of the drive stun unless use of the probe deployment it is not practical or possible.

- b) Officers may use the drive stun only where the application is likely to bring a person under immediate control. If a drive stun is ineffective, officers are encouraged to consider alternative tactics and force options. More than two drive stuns are discouraged and shall not be employed unless other force options, including the probe deployment, are impractical.
- c) Unless deadly force is justified, officers shall not target the head, face, throat or groin.

7. Probe Deployment

- a) The probe deployment is the preferred mode of Taser deployment.
- b) Officers may employ a drive stun after a partial or close range probe deployment.
- c) The center mass of the back is the preferred target area and the center mass of the chest or legs are examples of alternate target areas.
- d) Officers should deploy the Taser for the standard five-second cycle, and shall not purposely deploy the Taser for more than five seconds per cycle. After initial deployment, officers shall reassess the situation and deploy the Taser for additional cycles as necessary. Officers should consider other force options should the Taser be ineffective.
- e) The Taser is target-specific and, as such, shall not be deployed indiscriminately into any group of people.
- f) Other officers present and available during a successful Taser probe deployment shall attempt to handcuff the person against whom the Taser is being deployed during the Taser deployment cycle.
- g) Unless deadly force is justified, officers shall not target the head, face, throat or groin.

F. Probe Removal and Recovery

- 1. Officers shall remove Taser probes from people consistent with their training. If possible, the probes shall be removed before the person is transported from the scene. However, probes embedded in the face, neck, groin, or female breast shall be removed by qualified medical personnel.
- 2. After removing the probes, officers shall wipe the probe contact sites with an iodine or alcohol wipe and cover the site with a bandage.

3. After removal, officers shall inspect the probes to ensure that the entire probe has been removed.
4. Recovered probes shall be treated as biohazard sharps. The probes shall be placed, point down, into the expended cartridge bay, packaged in a cardboard box, and entered into evidence (see section H, below).

G. Medical Treatment

1. Officers shall ask any person against whom the Taser is used whether the person has ingested any controlled substances in the past 72 hours. Officers shall document any response in the appropriate report.
2. Officers shall summon medical personnel either to the scene of the deployment or to the Department when:
 - a) More than three cycles of the Taser were effectively deployed against the person;
 - b) The Taser probes are embedded in the person's face, neck, groin, or breast;
 - c) The Taser probes appear broken and may possibly remain embedded in the person.
 - d) It appears reasonably necessary;
 - e) The person loses consciousness;
 - f) The person requests medical attention; or
 - g) The officer believes that the person may be suffering from excited delirium, as suggested by one or more of the following behaviors:
 - (1) Bizarre or violent behavior;
 - (2) Signs of overheating/ profuse sweating;
 - (3) Disrobing;
 - (4) Violence toward/attacking glass;
 - (5) Superhuman strength and endurance;
 - (6) Imperviousness to pain;
 - (7) Self-mutilation; or
 - (8) Disturbances in breathing patterns.

3. Officers shall provide the person against whom a Taser is deployed with a “Taser Aftercare Form” (Attachment A).

H. Evidence Collection

1. Officers shall ensure that the person against whom a Taser has been deployed is photographed, or document reasons why the person was not photographed. Officers shall photograph the probe contact points and signature marks. Officers should also photograph the head, face, and body of the person to document other incidental injuries or the lack thereof.
2. The expended cartridge, the recovered probes, and the photographs shall be entered into evidence.

I. Data Collection

1. Officers shall download the Taser deployment data memory at least every 30 days and shall save the download to the hard drive of a designated computer.
2. Officers shall download the Taser deployment data memory and print a report before the end of any duty shift during which the Taser is deployed, either using the drive stun or probe deployment.
3. Documentation of the Taser incident must be done. A computerized version of the “Taser Use Report Form” will be completed by an officer within the Police Information and Investigation System, Mandatory Review. If the computer version is not operational then an officer shall document the incident on “Taser Use Report Form” (Attachment B):
 - a) Laser sight activation;
 - b) Spark demonstration;
 - c) Drive Stun; and
 - d) Probe deployment.
4. Officers shall compile an offense or incident report to fully document all incidents involving:
 - a) Drive stuns
 - b) Probe deployments.
5. Officers will prepare appropriate documentation as needed. Officers shall reference the “Taser Report Guideline Form” to assist in documentation.

J. Investigations

1. Mandatory reviews will be conducted on incidents where the Taser is used to attempt to or to control a person. The four operating modes; laser sight activations, spark demonstration, drive stun(s) and probe deployment will be reviewed.
2. Officers shall notify a supervisor of a Taser deployment before the end of any duty shift during which the Taser is deployed.
3. At least every 90, days an officer designated by the Chief of Police shall conduct download audits of a random 20 percent of Taser operators to ensure compliance with I-1, above. The selected officers' downloads will be printed by an instructor and released to the designated auditor.
4. At least every 6 months, Taser Instructors will audit the cartridge supply to ensure that all cartridges are accounted for and that no officer has been issued more than two cartridges at a time.
5. All Taser drive stuns and probe deployments will be investigated in accordance with SOG 4.03 – Mandatory Reviews or SOG 4.04 – Internal Investigations.

IV. Attachments

- A. Taser Aftercare Form**
- B. Taser Use Report Form**
- C. Taser Report Guideline Form**