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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE

This Procedure links into the Policy for Firearms

PD 418 – PROCEDURE ON TASER

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(PD 418 V1.0 Taser Procedure)
Dated : 30th March 2006



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SECTION 1 TITLE

PROCEDURE ON TASER

SECTION 2 VERSION CONTROL

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1.0	13/03/2006	Insp Walton	Inspector Force Support	New Procedure

SECTION 3 PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

1.1 Managing conflict and responding to violence are core police functions. Police response is underpinned by Human Rights and in particular the obligation under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to uphold the right to life.

1.2 This guidance is intended to inform the operational use of the [REDACTED] (hereafter referred as the Taser), electrical incapacitation device. The use will be limited to authorised police firearms officers and will be subject to continued monitoring and regular review.

1.3 The use of the Taser will be informed by reference to the Conflict Resolution Model, and is intended to provide firearms officers with an additional means of dealing with threats of serious violence. The availability or deployment of the Taser should not be considered as a replacement for conventional firearms.

1.4 The operational use of Taser is intended to provide firearms officers with a differentiated use of force and firearms. The Taser will only be deployed alongside conventional firearms and other less lethal technologies already on issue to firearms officers.

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- 1.5 An authorisation to deploy firearms will include the full range of conventional firearms and less lethal weapons available to those officers.

2 Description of Equipment

- 2.1 The Taser is a single shot weapon designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through the use of an electrical current, which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system. The electrical output of the device is around 26 watts. The weapon is shaped like, and shares the handling characteristics of, a modern self-loading pistol.
- 2.2 The Taser is laser-sighted and uses cartridges attached to the end of the 'barrel'. The cartridges project a pair of probes or darts attached to insulated copper wires. The absolute maximum range of the device is currently 21 feet (6.4 metres); this being the length of the wires that carry the current and attach the barbs to the weapon. It may also be used in a direct contact stun mode.
- 2.3 The device delivers a sequence of very high voltage pulses of very short duration through the copper wires.
- 2.4 The normal reaction of a person exposed to the discharge of the is the loss of some voluntary muscle control resulting in the subject falling to the ground or 'freezing' on the spot. The device relies on physiological effects other than pain alone to achieve its objective.
- 2.5 When the Taser is fired a number of small discs are discharged from the cartridge. These discs have the number of the cartridge recorded upon them. These discs are called Afid Tags and are a serialized tracking system for use of the cartridge.

3 Modes of Operation

- 3.1 The may be operated with or without the cartridge designed to fire the wires and contact barbs. The electrical flow can therefore be delivered to a subject either by:
- means of two probes, attached to the weapon by fine insulated wires, fired into the subject or their clothing, or
 - direct contact with the device in 'touch stun' mode. This method of delivery can only be achieved when either no cartridge or a discharged cartridge is fitted.

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3.2 To be effective, the Taser must be sufficiently charged, the wires connecting the barbs must remain intact, both probes (or in 'touch stun mode' both electrodes) must make contact with the subjects body or clothing.

4 Effects of the Taser

4.1 In either mode the Taser delivers its electrical charge in a five-second cycle (which can be broken or repeated), but once the cycle ends or is broken, the direct incapacitation effect ceases.

4.2 In most cases this application will be sufficient to render a subject incapable of continuing an attack and is likely to result in the subject collapsing to the ground. The effect is not intended, nor is it likely to, render the subject unconscious.

4.3 The effects are likely to be instantaneous. It should, however, be remembered that no incapacitating device, including conventional firearms, is universally effective and there may be individuals on whom the Taser may not be effective at all or only partially so.

4.4 The direct incapacitating effect is only likely to last for as long as the electrical charge is being activated. The subject may recover immediately afterwards and could continue with their previous behaviour. It is therefore important that an incapacitated subject is controlled and restrained quickly and effectively.

4.5 Whilst the 5 second cycle electrical charge can be repeated if the incapacitation effect does not appear to take effect, there may be technical or physiological reasons why the device is not working as expected on a particular individual, officers should therefore immediately consider other options.

5 Procedures For Issue and possession

5.1 Electrical Incapacitant Devices, including Taser, are classified as 'prohibited weapons' by virtue of Sec. 5 Firearms Act 1968.

5.2 Taser will only be issued alongside conventional firearms to authorised firearms officers who have a current Firearms Authority to use the weapon.

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5.3 In circumstances where authorised firearms officers have been deployed to a situation, any authority to arm will include the authority to use any other less lethal option or technology with which they have been issued including, where appropriate, the Taser .

5.4 The limited range and single shot capability of the Taser are constraining factors. **For this reason Taser will only be deployed alongside conventional firearms.**

5.5 Tasers are not to be taken into any Custody Suite areas.

5.6 **Armed Response Vehicles.**

Each ARV has [REDACTED] tasers that are stored within the [REDACTED] becoming part of the normal weaponry inventory for that vehicle and included in the Standing Authority. Each will have 4 cartridges with the serial numbers recorded on the ARV inventory. The cartridges will be stored in the Taser holster. One cartridge will be loaded to the front of the Taser . On commencement of each tour of duty by the ARV crews they are to carry out the following procedure:

At the designated downloading bay they are to remove the loaded cartridge and spark test the weapon.

The digital power magazines strength of the Taser is to be checked. The minimum power magazines strength for an operational Taser is 20 percent.

All equipment needs to be checked for serviceability and damage.

The weapon can then have the cartridge replaced for operational use.

5.7 **Force Support**

Force Support tasers are stored in the [REDACTED] They are issued in the same manner as conventional weapons in Book 97 with an additional note made of the serial numbers of each cartridge supplied. Force Support will carry out the spark test procedure before any operational deployment and weekly during the weapons inventory check.

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5.8 Unloading drills are not used when either storing the weapon in the gun box or handing it back in the [REDACTED] they are stored with a cartridge loaded secured in a holster.

6 Use

6.1 Use of the Taser is one of a number of tactical options available to an officer who is faced with violence or the threat of violence. Its purpose is to temporarily incapacitate an individual in order to control and neutralise the threat that they pose.

6.2 Where the criteria for arming has already been met and an authority to arm has been granted, it may under certain circumstances be appropriate for officers to use Taser in order to protect themselves or another person from a dangerous animal, such as a loose guard dog.

6.3 The duration of the initial discharge and any subsequent discharge must be proportionate, lawful, appropriate, necessary and non-discriminate, in all the circumstances. The decision to use the Taser is an individual one for which the officer will be accountable. The Conflict Resolution Model should assist officers in making such judgements.

7 Oral and Visual warnings

7.1 Where circumstances permit, officers should give a clear warning of their intent to use the Taser, giving sufficient time for the warnings to be observed, unless to do so would unduly place any person at risk, or would be clearly inappropriate or pointless in the circumstances of the incident.

7.2 It may, in certain circumstances, be appropriate to provide a visual display of the sparking effect of the unloaded in order to induce compliance, thus avoiding the need to actually discharge the Taser at the subject.

7.3 The visual effect of the laser sight being directed at an individual may also have a deterrent effect. Officers should be aware that the pointing of a Taser at an individual represents a use of force and may in certain circumstances constitute an assault.

7.4 Police officers shall give the clear verbal warning "Taser, Taser, Taser" indicating to all persons in the vicinity that the Taser is being discharged.

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8 Aftercare

- 8.1 Recovery from the direct effects of the Taser should be almost instantaneous, once the current has been turned off. After application of the Taser and once the subject has been properly restrained it is important that the officer provides verbal reassurance as to the temporary effects of the Taser and instructs the subject to breathe normally. This will aid recovery and mitigate against hyperventilation.
- 8.2 No attempt should be made to remove the probes which have penetrated the skin. This should be done by a medical professional either at the scene, at a hospital or in the custody suite. However, officers also have a duty of care in relation to the well-being of individuals under their control. Where it is evident that the probes are attached to clothing (with no penetration of the skin) they may be removed by gently pulling on the probes. Care should be taken not to unnecessarily further damage the clothing.
- 8.3 Where officers are informed or come to believe that a person to whom the Taser had been applied has a cardiac pacemaker or other implanted device in place, immediate referral should be made to a hospital. Similarly, if the subject is found to have any other pre-existing medical condition that might lead to increased medical risk immediate referral to a hospital should be considered.
- 8.4 All arrested persons who have been subjected to the discharge of a Taser, must be examined by a Forensic Medical Examiner as soon as practicable. A notice for General Practitioners is available on Intranet>Organisation> Taser. If they are unaware of its effects.
- 8.5 At the earliest opportunity following arrival at the custody suite, any person who has been subjected to a discharge should be given an information leaflet describing the Taser its mode of operation and effects. This should be recorded on the custody record. These notices are subject information and are found on Intranet>Organisation>Taser.
- 8.6 Close monitoring of a subject throughout the period following application of the Taser is of utmost importance. If the person is detained in a cell they should be subject to the same cell supervision provided for persons who have consumed alcohol or drugs. An information leaflet for Custody Staff who are responsible for persons upon whom the Taser has been used is available on the Intranet>organisation>Taser. If there are any signs of adverse or unusual reactions then

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medical attention should be provided immediately and if necessary this must be given precedence over conveying the subject to the police station.

- 8.7 Experience from the use of tasers in other countries, which is supported by medical assessment in the UK, has shown that the persons most likely to be at the greatest risk from any harmful effects of the device are those suffering from the effects of drugs or who have been struggling violently. There are cases where such persons exposed to the effects of the Taser have died some time after being exposed although the cause is unlikely to have been the Taser itself. For this reason, such persons should be very closely monitored following exposure to the effects of Taser. In addition, and as highlighted in other guidance, if there is any suspicion at all that the violent behaviour of any subject is being caused by excited delirium, that should be treated as a medical emergency and conveyed directly to hospital.

9 Exhibiting of probes

- 9.1 Once the probes are removed, they must be secured as evidence and any injury or damage noted. Probes removed from the body should be considered as biohazards. Once removed the barbs must be examined to ensure that they are complete.
- 9.2 Officers are responsible for the integrity and safety of the fired cartridge when fired in circumstances that do not initiate full Post Incident Procedures. Each probe is individually placed in a specimen jar tube. The top probe is to be identified and marked accordingly on the jar. Both jars are then placed within a self seal bag with Biohazard markings together with the wires and, if possible, Afid Tags. For further guidance officers should refer to the document CSI Unit Recovery of Discharged Weaponry. This document is held on Intranet>Organisation>Taser. All these items together can be referred to as one exhibit. They are to be kept for the statutory amount of time pending any civil litigation which is six years.
- 9.3 More serious injuries could occur if the probes were to strike a sensitive area such as the face, eyes, neck or genital areas. In the event of a person being struck in these areas only suitably qualified medical personnel should remove the probes. In most cases such a resource is only likely to be available at a hospital. Officers will obtain a statement from the person removing the probes referring to them as the officers own exhibit. In such circumstances where the subject has been taken to a different location for probe removal, officers may not be able to recover all items as one exhibit, this is not an issue

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and each item could be referred to individually if necessary.

10 Post Discharge Procedures

10.1 When a Taser is discharged, mandatory referral to the IPCC is only required if the discharge:

- Resulted in death or serious injury
- Caused danger to the public
- revealed failings in command

10.2 This does not preclude the force referring discharges in other circumstances if they think it appropriate. This might include for example, where tasers has been used outside current policy guidelines. In these cases referral to the IPCC will be a matter for the Divisional Commander HQ(OS) in consultation with HQ Professional Standards .

10.3 Following any operational discharge, officers must submit a Taser use of force form in addition to the standard use of force form. These forms have been distributed in hard copy for submission to the identified Divisional officer 

10.4 In the event of an unintentional discharge, where there is no mandatory referral, this will be subject of an internal investigation conducted by a Silver Commander.

10.5 It is the responsibility of the duty Bronze Commander to collate all relevant information regarding the circumstances of the discharge on behalf of the investigating Silver Commander.

10.6 Following an operational discharge the Taser electronic audit data should be downloaded as soon as possible. This procedure will be undertaken by Firearms Training.

11 Dataport Auditing

11.1 Taser electronic audit data will be routinely downloaded on a monthly basis by HQ(Firearms Training). This information will be retained to provide an audit trail of the activation of each Taser.


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12 Storage and Administration

- 12.1  holds sufficient stocks of Digital Power Magazines for operational replacement . On replacement the officer will notify the responsible armoury officer so they can arrange replenishment from Firearms Training.
- 12.2 Used or damaged cartridges that are not exhibits are to be bagged and endorsed by the reporting officer. They are to be placed in the box within the armoury and replacement obtained from the store. All relevant inventories will need updating immediately. These will be exchanged at Firearms Training by arrangement (Procedure attached Appendix A).
- 12.3 Exhibited used cartridges will be stored in the appropriate Divisional OTFP property store. OTFP numbers will be recorded in Armoury records for audit purposes and so that a replacement cartridges can be obtained.
- 12.4 If a Taser is defective Firearms Training will be notified by the reporting officer immediately so replacement or repair can be arranged.
- 12.5 Tasers are not to be stored with electronically initiated pyrotechnics or flammable substances. The ARV s tasers will be stored in their operational holsters within the vehicle gun boxes when not in use. Force Support tasers are stored in holsters within the armoury. Spare cartridges are kept in allocated draws independent of other ammunition. Any movement of weapons or cartridges are to be recorded in line with any conventional weaponry

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SECTION 4 LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This document has been drafted to comply with the general and specific duties in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Data Protection, Freedom of Information Act, European Convention of Human Rights and other legislation relevant to the area of policing such as, Employment Act 2002, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Employment Relations Act 1999.

This document has been registered as an official Force document.

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In addition to the normal booking out procedure, if you need to replace a cartridge which been discharged or is faulty, then:

- **PLACE CARTRIDGE IN EVIDENCE BAG AND SEAL.**
- **COLLECT REPLACEMENT CARTRIDGE FROM GREEN TRAY IN AMMUNITION CABINET.**
- **WRITE DOWN ON EVIDENCE BAG THE SERIAL NO OF THE DEFECTIVE/DISCHARGED CARTRIDGE AND ALSO THE SERIAL NO OF THE NEW CARTRIDGE ISSUED IN REPLACEMENT.**
- **PUT NAME, TIME AND DATE ON BAG.**
- **CROSS OUT THE CARTRIDGE SERIAL NO WHICH YOU HAVE USED AS A REPLACEMENT ON THE WHITE LABEL ATTACHED TO THE FRONT OF EACH GREEN TRAY.**
- **PUT EVIDENCE BAG IN MARKED BLUE “” BOX([REDACTED])**
- **ENTER THE REPLACEMENT IN THE BOOK 99(REMOVAL OF OPERATIONAL WEAPONS) FROM [REDACTED] AND INCLUDE BOTH THE SERIAL NO OF THE DAMAGED CARTRIDGE AND ITS REPLACEMENT.**
- **INFORM THE ARMOURY OFFICER BY EMAIL TO CONFIRM THAT THIS HAS BEEN DONE.**

