



# GEORGETOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY MANUAL 304 TASER

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## **304.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This policy provides guidelines for the issuance and use of the TASER® device.

## **304.2 POLICY**

The TASER device is intended to control a violent or potentially violent individual, while minimizing the risk of serious injury. The appropriate use of such a device should result in fewer serious injuries to officers and suspects.

## **304.3 ISSUANCE AND CARRYING TASER DEVICES**

Only members who have successfully completed department-approved training may be issued and carry the TASER device.

Officers shall only use the TASER device and cartridges that have been issued by the Department. Uniformed officers who have been issued the TASER device shall wear the device in an approved holster on their person. Non-uniformed officers may secure the TASER device in the driver's compartment of their vehicle.

Members carrying the TASER device should perform a spark test on the unit prior to every shift.

When carried while in uniform, officers shall carry the TASER device in a weak-side holster on the side opposite the duty weapon.

- 1) All TASER devices shall be clearly and distinctly marked to differentiate them from the duty weapon and any other device.
- 2) Whenever practicable, officers should carry two or more cartridges on their person when carrying the TASER device.
- 3) Officers shall be responsible for ensuring that their issued TASER device is properly maintained and in good working order.
- 4) Officers should not hold both a firearm and the TASER device at the same time.

## **304.4 VERBAL AND VISUAL WARNINGS**

A verbal warning of the intended use of the TASER device should precede its application, unless it would otherwise endanger the safety of officers or when it is not practicable due to the circumstances. The purpose of the warning is to:

- 1) Provide the individual with a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.
- 2) Provide other officers and individuals with a warning that the TASER device may be deployed.

If, after a verbal warning, an individual is unwilling to voluntarily comply with an officer's lawful orders and it appears both reasonable and feasible under the circumstances, the officer may, but is not required to, display the electrical arc (provided that a cartridge has not been loaded into the device), or the laser in a further attempt to gain compliance prior to the application of the TASER device. The aiming laser should never be intentionally directed into the eyes of another as it may permanently impair his/her vision.

The fact that a verbal or other warning was given or the reasons it was not given shall be documented by the officer deploying the TASER device in the related report.

## **304.5 USE OF THE TASER DEVICE**

The TASER device has limitations and restrictions requiring consideration before its use. The TASER device should only be used when its operator can safely approach the subject within the operational range of the device. Although the TASER device is generally effective in controlling most individuals, officers should be aware that the device may not achieve the intended results and be prepared with other options.

### **304.5.1 APPLICATION OF THE TASER DEVICE**

The TASER device may be used in any of the following circumstances, when the circumstances perceived by the officer at the time indicate that such application is reasonably necessary to control a person:

- 1) a subject who demonstrates resistance levels of active aggression or deadly force assault,

- 2) a subject who by words or action has demonstrated an intention to be actively aggressive or who reasonably appears to present the potential to launch a deadly force assault against officers, him/herself, or others.

The officer must be able to articulate a reasonable belief that other available options reasonably appeared ineffective, impractical or would have presented a greater danger to the officer, the subject or others. For use of force purposes, the TASER is considered a high level of force option. Mere flight from a pursuing officer, without other known circumstances or factors, is not justification for the use of the TASER device to apprehend an individual.

### **304.5.2 SPECIAL DEPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

The use of the TASER device on certain individuals should generally be avoided unless the totality of the circumstances indicates that other available options reasonably appear ineffective or would present a greater danger to the officer, the subject or others, and the officer reasonably believes that the need to control the individual outweighs the risk of using the device. This includes:

- 1) Individuals who are known to be pregnant.
- 2) Elderly individuals, or obvious juveniles.
- 3) Individuals with obviously low body mass.
- 4) Individuals who are handcuffed or otherwise restrained.
- 5) Individuals who have been recently sprayed with a flammable chemical agent or who are otherwise in close proximity to any known combustible vapor or flammable material, including alcohol-based oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray.
- 6) Individuals whose position or activity may result in collateral injury (e.g., falls from height, operating vehicles).
- 7) Individuals confined to a wheelchair.
- 8) Individuals with known neuromuscular disorders such as muscular sclerosis, muscular dystrophy or epilepsy; or persons known to be wearing pacemakers or other biomedical devices sensitive to electrical current, or known to have heart conditions.

Because the application of the TASER device in the drive-stun mode (i.e., direct contact without probes) relies primarily on pain compliance, the use of the drive-stun mode generally should be limited to supplementing the probe-mode to complete the circuit, or as a distraction technique to gain separation between officers and the subject, thereby giving officers time and distance to consider other force options or actions.

The TASER device shall not be used to psychologically torment, elicit statements or to punish any individual. The TASER Device shall not be used on subjects who are demonstrating passive or defensive resistance.

### **304.5.3 TARGETING CONSIDERATIONS**

Reasonable efforts should be made to target lower center mass and avoid the head, neck, chest and groin. If the dynamics of a situation or officer safety do not permit the officer to limit the application of the TASER device probes to a precise target area, officers should monitor the condition of the subject if one or more probes strikes the head, neck, chest or groin until the subject is examined by paramedics or other medical personnel.

### **304.5.4 MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS OF THE TASER DEVICE**

Officers should apply the TASER device for only one standard cycle and then evaluate the situation before applying any subsequent cycles. Multiple applications of the TASER device against a single individual are generally not recommended and should be avoided unless the officer reasonably believes that the need to control the individual outweighs the potentially increased risk posed by multiple applications.

If the first application of the TASER device appears to be ineffective in gaining control of an individual, the officer should consider certain factors before additional applications of the TASER device, including:

- 1) Whether the probes are making proper contact.
- 2) Whether the individual has the ability and has been given a reasonable opportunity to comply.
- 3) Whether verbal commands, other options or tactics may be more effective.

Officers should generally not intentionally apply more than one TASER device at a time against a single subject.

### **304.5.5 ACTIONS FOLLOWING DEPLOYMENTS**

Officers shall notify a supervisor of all TASER device discharges. The expended cartridge should be collected, along with both probes and wire, and should be submitted into evidence. The

cartridge serial number should be noted and documented on the evidence paperwork. The evidence packaging should be marked "Biohazard" if the probes penetrated the subject's skin.

The onboard TASER Device memory will be downloaded through the data port and saved, and a data sheet shall be printed by a supervisor or TASER instructor, and submitted with the Use of Force Report.

### **304.5.6 DANGEROUS ANIMALS**

The TASER device may be deployed against an animal as part of a plan to deal with a potentially dangerous animal, such as a dog, if the animal reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to human safety and alternative methods are not reasonably available or would likely be ineffective.

### **304.5.7 OFF-DUTY CONSIDERATIONS**

Officers shall ensure that TASER devices are secured while in their homes, vehicles or any other area under their control, in a manner that will keep the device inaccessible to others.

### **304.6 DOCUMENTATION**

Officers shall document all TASER device discharges in the related arrest/crime report and in the Blue Team software. Accidental discharges of a TASER Device cartridge will also be documented in the Blue Team software. Any report documenting the discharge of a TASER Device cartridge will include the cartridge serial number and an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the discharge, to include:

- 1) Identification of all personnel firing TASER devices
- 2) Identification of all witnesses
- 3) Medical care provided to any persons receiving the application of TASER Devices
- 4) Observations of any suspect's physical and physiological actions
- 5) Any known or suspected drug use, intoxication or other medical problems

Notification shall also be made to a supervisor in compliance with the Use of Force policy.

### **304.7 MEDICAL TREATMENT**

After achieving safe control of the suspect, an officer should remove any imbedded probes not lodged in soft tissue such as the neck, face, eyes and groin. The officer should wear latex gloves for probe removal and the puncture site should be treated with antibiotic cream and adhesive bandages. Used TASER Device darts shall be considered a sharp biohazard, similar to a used hypodermic needle, and handled appropriately. Universal precautions should be taken accordingly. Only emergency room staff may remove probes that imbed in soft tissue areas such as the neck, face, eyes, or groin.

All persons who have been struck by TASER device probes or who have been subjected to the electric discharge of the device shall be medically assessed as soon as practicable by emergency medical services personnel summoned to the scene.

Persons who exhibit extreme agitation, violent irrational behavior accompanied by profuse sweating, extraordinary strength beyond their physical characteristics, imperviousness to pain (sometimes called "excited delirium") or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple officers to be brought under control, may be at an increased risk of sudden death and should be examined by qualified medical personnel as soon as practicable. Any individual exhibiting signs of distress after such an encounter shall be medically cleared prior to booking.

If any individual refuses medical attention, such a refusal should be witnessed by another officer and/or medical personnel and shall be fully documented in related reports. If an audio recording is made of the contact or interview with the individual, any refusal should be included, if possible.

The transporting officer shall inform any person providing medical care or receiving custody that the individual has been subjected to the application of the TASER device.

### **304.8 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

When possible, supervisors should respond to calls when they reasonably believe there is a likelihood the TASER device may be used. A supervisor should respond to all incidents where the TASER device was activated.

A supervisor should review each incident where a person has been exposed to an activation of the TASER device. The device's onboard memory should be downloaded through the data port

by a supervisor or a Department approved TASER Device instructor and saved with the related arrest/crime report.

Supervisors should ensure persons subjected to the electric discharge of the device were medically assessed as specified in the medical section and that photographs of probe sites were taken.

### **304.9 TRAINING**

Personnel who are authorized to carry the TASER device shall be permitted to do so only after successfully completing the initial department-approved training. Any personnel who have not carried the TASER device as a part of their assignment for a period of six months or more shall be recertified by a department-approved TASER device instructor prior to again carrying or using the device.

Proficiency training for personnel who have been issued TASER devices should occur every year. A reassessment of an officer's knowledge and/or practical skill may be required at any time if deemed appropriate by the Training Lieutenant. All training and proficiency for TASER devices will be documented in the officer's training file.

The Training Lieutenant is responsible for ensuring that all members who carry TASER devices have received initial and annual proficiency training. Periodic audits should be used for verification.

Application of TASER devices during training could result in injury to personnel and should not be mandatory for certification.

The Training Lieutenant should ensure that all training includes:

- 1) A review of this policy.
- 2) A review of the [Use of Force Policy](#).
- 3) Performing weak-hand draws or cross-draws to reduce the possibility of unintentionally drawing and firing a firearm.
- 4) Target area considerations, to include techniques or options to reduce the unintentional application of probes near the head, neck, chest and groin.
- 5) Handcuffing a subject during the application of the TASER device and transitioning to other force options.

- 6) De-escalation techniques.
- 7) Restraint techniques that do not impair respiration following the application of the TASER device.