

Donald J. Lee, Jr.
Chief of Police



Key West **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

TO: Chief Lee
FROM: Sergeant Tripp
DATE: 6/19/14
RE: TASER use related injury report

Over the last week, I researched all of the Response to Resistance Incident reports that we currently maintain (6/2010-6/2014) with the goal of determining the number and severity of injuries related to the use of TASER. In turn, I was able to quantify the number of injuries related to hands-on force. Additionally, I tried to see if we could determine a relationship between hands-on force and officer injuries (because in gaining compliance using the TASER only, injury to the officer would be very unusual).

This task was especially difficult and the final results include some inference, error and assumption for several reasons. In the span of time, there were at least eight different supervisors, with different styles, making the reports, including those whose style of writing changed over time. Some minor perceptions and definitions of force and injury were observed. There was a phase in which the Monroe County Detention Center refused to take any TASERED subject, subjects with minor injuries, or severely intoxicated subjects without hospital clearance. And finally, the report form was not formatted to answer the specific questions in my research. Therefore, I did my best by reading the narratives, and, when not clear, pulling the reports and/or looking at photos. Still, keep in mind that there is a small amount of estimation and supposition.

There were 254 reports used for this study. It was our policy to document accidental discharges on these forms; accidental discharges were not used for this report. TASERS were used, alone or in combination with other force options 135 times and there were 24 injuries (note: The TASER itself did not cause any injury. Injuries in this category were sustained during a fall from TASER use.). There were three serious injuries from the use of the TASER: a broken jaw (subject was already under arrest for domestic battery and was escaping), a broken finger (subject was already arrested for a warrant and was escaping), and a "brain bleed" (large arrestee punched a small victim in front of officer). There was one subject who lost a tooth (subject was fleeing from a warrant arrest). Another subject hit his head on the ground when he fell and went briefly unconscious, but was uninjured (subject was fleeing from charges). The remainder of injuries from TASER falls (19) were scrapes and cuts. Thirteen of



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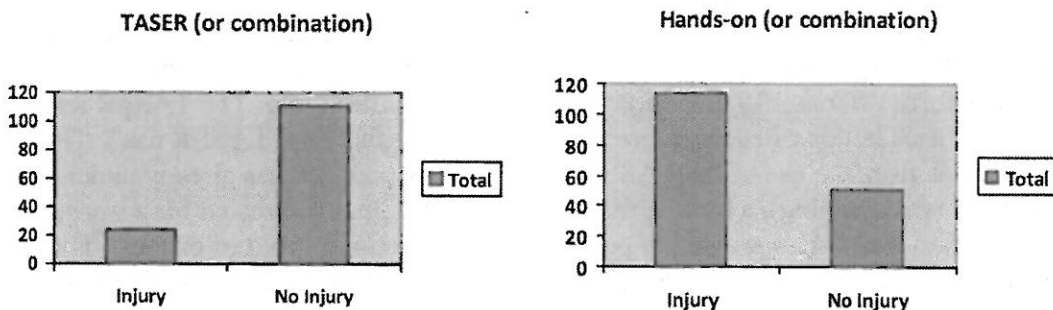
those were on fleeing subjects. The TASER was used by itself (effectively) 39 of 67 times without any injury at all. There were a significant number of reports that referred to signature marks and probe marks as injury. When I was fairly certain that this was the case, I did not count those marks as injury.

Injuries to subjects during the 164 times officers struggled with subjects with their hands (with or without TASER) were significantly more numerous (114) and included officer injuries (35). Though the only serious injury (1) was a torn urethra, there were 2 times in which the subject's head struck concrete and another where the subject and officers nearly went through a glass window. There were several instances of subjects grabbing the officers' weapons during a struggle. There were only 56 of the 164 times that the officer had to struggle with the subject without any injury.

Of note, there were a couple of incidents where it was documented that the display of the TASER stopped resistance. From July 2012 to May 2014, the TASER was displayed about 215 times and used about 56 times, an apparent testament to the deterrent effect of displaying the TASER. Based on my experience, subject statements and information provided by other officers, displaying the TASER often immediately stops resistance.

The data indicates that the serious injuries from TASER use on subjects were very limited and occurred under circumstances with charges from which escape or physical contact might not be a good option. The likelihood of injury to subjects and officers greatly increases once a hands-on struggle occurs. The subject's reluctance (initial and continued) to follow lawful orders dictates the possibility and severity of injury. The quicker compliance reduces the possibility of injury to both officers and subjects.

Please contact me if you have any questions.



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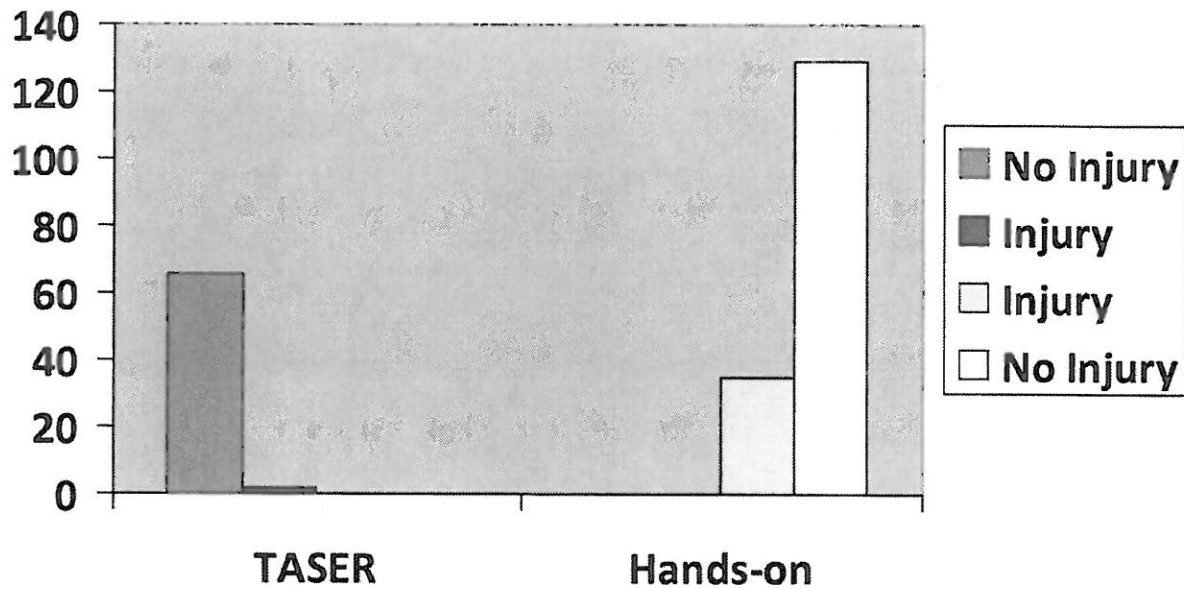


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Officer Injury- Hands-on



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