

# Taser: Studies show that inappropriate use of Tasers can cause both injuries and deaths

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The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) sets standards, which may or may not be adopted for use by individual police departments. Those standards forbid the use of Tasers on a handcuffed or secured prisoner, unless there is "overtly assaultive behavior that cannot be dealt with in any other less intrusive fashion". The policy also advises that officers shall deploy the device "the least number of times" needed and be aware that someone already tased "may not be able to respond to commands during or immediately after exposure".

But, people have died after being hit with a Taser. A study done by University of California

San Francisco found that the number of in-custody deaths went up six-fold in the first year a department started using Tasers. They believe that was due to officers aiming too close to the heart. The Oakland, California, police department hasn't had any fatalities linked to Taser use, but they call for an ambulance every time they Tase a suspect "just to be safe."

Amnesty International, www.amnestyusa.org, reports the number of people who died after being struck by Tasers in the United States was 334 between 2001 and August 2008. They reviewed information from 98 autopsies and found that 90 percent of those who died after being struck by a Taser were unarmed and many did not ap-

pear to present a serious threat. In 37 of the cases, medical examiners listed the use of a Taser as a cause or contributory factor in the deaths. Many received repeated or prolonged shocks. Tasers are set to a five-second cycle that can be overridden by the police officer holding down the trigger. Tasers can fire up to ten five-second cycles. A Canadian study, reported on in the April 2009 Calgary Herald, found that about one in ten Tasers delivered more than the 50,000 volts they were designed to fire.

A number of police officers have reported injuries when they themselves were Tased, usually during training. The injuries ranged from broken bones, to a broken vertebrae,

to a bent screw in a state trooper's leg. The pain from a Taser is said to be "excruciating."

Amnesty International is asking law enforcement agencies to suspend the use of Tasers until more studies are done, or to use them only where officers would otherwise be justified in using firearms where no lesser alternatives are available. In other words, they are suggesting that Taser use be moved up the Use of Force Continuum to just below deadly force. They also recommend avoidance of prolonged (beyond the five-second cycle)

or repeated use.

Are Tasers safe? The answer is that the jury is still out on Tasers. When used correctly, meaning one discharge in the back or a large muscle like the thigh – not close to the heart – and on a large, healthy adult (rather than a young or small person, a pregnant female or someone suspected of being under the influence of certain drugs), a Taser will cause pain but should do no more than subdue the person so they pose no risk to others, including police officers.

## Knife sharpening fund raiser was a great winner

by Murray Carter

On May 1 and 2, Murray Carter of Carter Cutlery (www.cartercutlery.com) hosted a two day, half-price knife sharpening fund raiser for the Vernonia Head Start program. The response was far better than expected and local residents brought blades of every shape and size for professional sharpening. Murray reported that he even sharpened a couple of swords for \$5 each, compared to the regular fee, which is several times more than that. The people who brought knives were extremely pleased with their newly honed edges; in many cases they were far sharper than when the blades were purchased new. Here's what one customer said:

"I was concerned at first about having someone mess with my personal knives; I was worried that I might get them back in worse shape than when I took them in. As soon as I ar-

rived at the Carter Cutlery shop, Mr. Carter greeted me and examined my knives. He was able to immediately identify the brand and style of my cutlery and assess what needed to be done to them to improve them and make them sharper. He carefully explained how he would accomplish a complete refurbish of the blades and then wasted no time in undertaking the task. In about ten minutes, he had finished working on the three knives I had brought. They were then carefully wiped and wrapped in Japanese newspaper and handed back to me before I even thought to ask some questions about his operation. It is a joy to watch Mr. Carter at work; there is a fluidity and economy of motion that only comes with years of careful experience. When I asked him if he has sharpened many knives, he casually answered "more than 40,000 knives!"

They looked great, but how would they cut? I found out soon enough when I got back to my restaurant. I grabbed some ripe tomatoes from the fridge and was amazed at how they sliced extra thin slices effortlessly. There wasn't even a drop of tomato juice on the cutting board after cutting several slices. To say that I am pleased with Mr. Carter's services is an understatement and I will definitely have him sharpen my knives again when they get dull. I'll even be happy to pay his regular fees. It is really worth it!"

*Bill Long, Owner of Café 47*

Murray Carter has offered to do another Head Start Knife Sharpening fundraiser for next year. In the meantime, you can get your blades expertly sharpened and repaired at regular prices, which start at \$10 per knife. Contact Carter at 503-429-0447 or email him at [murray@cartercutlery.com](mailto:murray@cartercutlery.com).

## BLOG: Important to use all available communications tools

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The agency is also using Twitter, a free service that allows individuals and agencies to provide updates online that can be monitored by others from their computers or cell phones.

Vicki Harguth, Director of Columbia County Emergency Management, said that it is important to use all available tools to reach people. "Our goal is to make sure people and businesses are as prepared as they

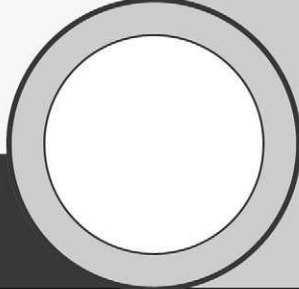
can be for disasters. These websites allow us to get important information out so folks will be ready to help themselves, their neighbors, family and friends when major emergencies arise," said Harguth.

Columbia County is vulnerable to various types of hazards, from severe winter storms to earthquakes.

"Citizens need to know not only what we are doing to prepare for emergencies, but also

what they can do to protect themselves. Government is affected by disasters, as well, and it is important that folks have plans and kits in place to take care of themselves in the first hours to days of a disaster," added Emergency Management Coordinator Derek White.

The blog can be found at <http://columbiacountyem.blog.spot.com/>. The Twitter page is at <http://twitter.com/columbiacoeem>.




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**Have a Safe Memorial Day**  
**Don't Drink & Drive**