

NEWS RELEASE

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SERIOUS INJURIES FROM TASER ARE EXTREMELY RARE

Washington, DC— A three-year review of all Taser uses against criminal suspects at six law enforcement agencies found only three significant injuries out of 1,201 criminal suspects subdued by conducted electrical weapons (CEW), or Tasers, and reports that 99.75% of criminal suspects shocked by a Taser received no injuries or mild injuries only, such as scrapes and bruises. The study is published online today in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* (“Safety and Injury Profile of Conducted Electrical Weapons Used By Law Enforcement Officers Against Criminal Suspects”).

“These weapons appear to be very safe, especially when compared to other options police have for subduing violent or combative suspects,” said study author William P. Bozeman, MD, of Wake Forest University in Winston Salem, North Carolina. “That is not to say that injuries and deaths are impossible. Police and medical personnel need to be aware of the potential for serious injury and look for evidence that a person subdued by a Taser has been hurt.”

The findings represent the first large, independent and multi-center study of CEW injuries. Of the 1,201 criminal suspects, 492 suffered mild injuries, mostly superficial puncture wounds (83 percent). Of the three subjects who sustained significant injuries, two suffered from head injuries related to falls; the third suffered rhabdomyolysis, or a rapid breakdown of muscle tissue. Ninety-four percent of the suspects were male, and alcohol or intoxication was documented in almost half of the cases (49.5 percent).

More than two-thirds of United States law enforcement agencies currently use CEWs.

“While injuries from Taser are uncommon, they are not unheard of,” said Dr. Bozeman. “Subjects exposed to a CEW discharge should be assessed for injuries, and appropriate medical evaluation should be provided when non-trivial injuries are apparent or suspected. Existing medical and/or psychiatric conditions in the suspect may cause or contribute to the behavior that leads police to use Taser to subdue suspects. These underlying conditions may require medical assessment and treatment, independent of Taser exposure.”

Annals of Emergency Medicine is the peer-reviewed scientific journal for the American College of Emergency Physicians, a national medical society with more than 27,000 members. ACEP is committed to advancing emergency care through continuing education, research, and public education. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, ACEP has 53 chapters representing each state, as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. A Government Services Chapter represents emergency physicians employed by military branches and other government agencies. For more information visit www.acep.org.

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