

	The University of North Carolina Greensboro Police Department	
	General Order 2-2.3	Electronic Control Weapon (Taser)

Purpose and Scope

This policy provides guidelines for the issuance and use of the Electronic Control Weapon (ECW).

Policy

The ECW is used to control a violent or potentially violent individual. The appropriate use of such a device should result in fewer serious injuries to officers and suspects.

In order to control individuals who are violent or who demonstrate the intent to be violent, the UNCG Police Department authorizes officers to use control devices in accordance with the guidelines in this policy and the Use of Force Policy. The Chief of Police may also authorize other positions or individual department members to use specific control devices.

A. Issuance and Carrying of ECWs

Only officers who have successfully completed department approved training may be issued and carry an ECW. All personnel who are issued an ECW will carry it when on duty and in the patrol uniform, unless required to secure the ECW while in certain locations (e.g. a detention facility or court house).

Officers shall only use the ECW and cartridges that have been issued by the department. Uniformed officers who have been issued the ECW shall wear the device in an approved holster on their person. Officers not assigned to patrol may secure the ECW in the driver's compartment of their vehicle when on duty. The ECW will be secured in an approved locked container within the vehicle or removed from the vehicle when the officer is not on duty.

Officers carrying the ECW should perform a full five second spark test on the unit prior to every shift.

When carried, the ECW will be worn on the officer's non-dominant side away from the service firearm to ensure that the drawing and firing of the ECW is done with the officer's non-dominant hand.

- Officers will carry one cartridge on their person and any other cartridges in an approved carrying method.
- Officers shall be responsible for ensuring that their issued ECW is properly maintained and in good working order.
- Officers shall not hold both a firearm and the ECW at the same time except briefly during a weapons transition, or the escalation or de-escalation of force.

B. Verbal and Visual Warnings

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

- Provide the individual with a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.
- Provide other officers and individuals with a warning that the ECW may be deployed.

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 ECW in the related report.

C. Use of the ECW

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

D. Application of the ECW

The ECW may be used in any of the following circumstances, when the officer at the time indicates that such application is reasonably necessary to control a person:

- The subject is violent or is actively/physically resisting.
- The subject has demonstrated by words or action, the intent to use active/physical resistance against the officer or others, and reasonably appears to present the potential to harm the officer or others.
- The subject is about to commit suicide or inflict serious bodily injury upon themselves and other efforts to de-escalate have not been effective.

Mere flight from a pursuing officer, without other known circumstances or factors, is not sufficient cause for the use of the ECW to apprehend an individual.

E. Special Deployment Considerations

The use of the ECW 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:

- Individuals who are known to be pregnant.
- Individuals with increased physical injury potential due to age (elderly or very young) or physical condition (frail, underweight, medical or psychological issues).
- Individuals who are handcuffed or otherwise restrained.
- Individuals who have been recently sprayed with a flammable chemical agent or who are otherwise in close proximity to any combustible vapor or flammable material known to the officer.
- Individuals whose position or activity may result in increased injury (e.g. falls from height, operating vehicles, or near a body of water).

Because the application of the ECW 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 transition to other use of force options.

The ECW shall not be used for psychological intimidation, to elicit statements or to punish any individual.

F. Targeting Considerations

Reasonable efforts should be made to target the front lower center mass or back 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 ECW probes to a precise target area, officers shall 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.

G. Multiple Applications of the ECW

Officers should apply the ECW for only one standard cycle and then evaluate the situation before applying any subsequent cycles and anticipate transitioning to other use of force options. Multiple applications of the ECW against a single individual 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 ECW appears to be ineffective in gaining control of

an individual, the officer should consider certain factors before additional applications of the ECW, including:

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

H. Actions Following Deployments

Persons who have been subjected to the ECW probes will be treated as follows.

- A. Once the subject is in custody, the arresting officer will request EMS to be dispatched to assist in the probe removal. If the probes penetrate the skin, the puncture sites will be brought to the attention of the supervisor, who will photograph the area. It is highly recommended that EMT's remove ECW probes that are embedded in the soft tissue areas such as the neck, face, groin, and female breasts for sensitivity-issues. Removal from other areas will be at the discretion of the on-scene supervisor.
- B. After examining the affected person, the EMT will make the determination if the person should or should not be transported to the hospital. Transportation to a medical facility will be by police transport unless an ambulance is needed.
- C. If an EMT is not available and the only medical conditions are the probes, it is safe to remove them on scene. The ECW trained officer will be responsible for the removal of the probes using the techniques taught. EMS should still be dispatched as soon as possible to evaluate for other possible medical conditions. There may be some redness from the application of the ECW. They can only penetrate to a maximum of ¼ inch. The attending EMT will be asked to treat the wound as they determine, and bandage it on scene.

Photographs of probe sites should be taken (unless in a sensitive area such as breasts or genitalia), Anti-Felon Identification (AFID) tags can be collected, and the expended cartridge along with both probes shall be submitted into evidence for future reference. The cartridge serial number should be noted and documented on the evidence paperwork, as well as notated in the case and use of force report.

The removed probes must be treated as a bio-hazard if they have penetrated skin and safely inserted back into the expended cartridge, points first, then secured into the cartridge using tape and/or a disposable latex glove. The responsible officer will place the cartridge into evidence as a blood-contaminated item, following procedures outlined in the Exposure Control for Bloodborne Pathogens located in the squad room. Officers must be aware that one easily overlooked aspect of injury in the deployment of an ECW is that of falling from a standing position. If any injury is suspected, a thorough physical examination with particular emphasis on injuries secondary to the fall

should be requested from the on-scene EMS.

I. Prohibited Uses

The following are prohibited uses of the Taser Device:

- The Taser Device shall not be used to torture, psychologically torment, elicit statements or to punish any individual,
- Horseplay or practical jokes,
- Demonstrations, without the permission of a supervisor or specialized training officer,
- Against passively resisting subjects, and/or
- Individuals who are known to be covered in any combustible material.

J. Off-Duty Considerations

Officers are not authorized to carry department ECWs while off-duty. Officers shall ensure that ECWs are secured while off-duty, in a manner that will keep the device inaccessible to others.

K. Documentation to be added to the Use of Force Report

Officers shall document all ECW discharges in the related use of force report and as required by policy. Notification shall also be made to a supervisor and an investigation conducted. Unintentional discharges will also be documented by the supervisor in an email to the Professional Standards Commander.

Additional items that shall be included in the ECW use of force report are:

- Cartridge type and cartridge serial number
- Date, time, and location of the incident
- Whether any display of laser deterred a subject and gained compliance
- Any verbal warnings given by the officer
- Observations of the subject's physical and physiological actions
- Any known or suspected drug use, intoxication, or other medical or psychological problems
- Identification of all personnel firing ECWs
- The number of ECW activations and the duration of the cycle(s)
- The range at which the ECW was used
- The type of mode used (probe or drive-stun)
- Location of any probe impact
- Location of contact in drive-stun mode
- Description of where missed probes went
- Whether medical care was provided to the subject

- Whether the subject sustained any injuries
- Whether any officers sustained any injuries
- Identification of witnesses

The Professional Standards Commander will conduct a review of all ECW deployments and periodically analyze the report forms to identify trends, including deterrence and effectiveness. The Professional Standards Commander will also conduct audits of data downloads and reconcile ECW report forms with recorded activations. ECW information and statistics, with identifying information removed, shall periodically be made available to the public.

L. Medical Treatment

Consistent with local medical personnel protocols and absent extenuating circumstances, only trained officers shall remove the probes from a suspect. If the probes have embedded in a sensitive area (head, groin, face, neck, or breast area on a female) then removal shall be done by medical professionals. Used ECW probes shall be treated as a biohazard sharp, similar to a used hypodermic needle, and handled appropriately. Universal precautions shall be taken.

All persons who have been struck by ECW probes or who have been subjected to the electric discharge of the device shall be medically cleared by EMS prior to booking. If any individual refuses medical attention, such refusal should be witnessed by another officer and/or medical personnel and shall be documented in related reports. If an audio recording is made of the contact or an 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 ECW and any other circumstances known to the officer that may impact treatment.

M. Supervisor Responsibilities

A supervisor should respond to all incidents where the ECW is likely to be used or has been deployed.

A supervisor should review each incident where a person has been exposed to an activation of the ECW. The device's on-board memory will be downloaded through the data port by a certified Taser Instructor and saved with the related use of force report. Photographs of probe sites should be taken and witnesses interviewed along with a summary of any medical treatment or medical care required.

N. Training

Personnel who are authorized to carry the ECW shall be permitted to do so only after successfully completing the initial department-approved training.

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

Command staff, supervisors, and investigators should receive additional ECW training as needed to conduct use of force investigations and review ECW deployments.

Officers who do not carry ECWs shall receive training that is sufficient to familiarize them with the device and its appropriate application.

The Professional Standards Unit is responsible for ensuring that all officers who carry ECWs have received initial and annual proficiency training.

Application of an ECW on officers during training could result in injury to personnel and are not required for certification. Annual ECW training shall include:

- A review of this policy.
- A review of the Use of Force Policy.
- Performing reaction hand draws to reduce the possibility of accidentally drawing and firing a firearm.
- Target area considerations, to include techniques or options to reduce the accidental application of probes near the head, neck, chest, and groin.
- Multi-officer tactics and handcuffing a subject during the application of the ECW.
- Escalation and de-escalation techniques.
- Psychological or mental health issues that may be affected by the use of the ECW.