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# Shock Treatment: Why Are Officers Being Tased?

## Some Say Training Practice Should Be Stopped

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**DENVER** -- They're designed to subdue suspects, so why are police using Tasers to shock their own officers? The Investigators exposes a potentially dangerous practice within many Colorado law enforcement agencies.

It's a practice that is designed to build confidence in Taser use and to enhance the officer's credibility in the courtroom. But at what cost? Our investigation found cases in Colorado and across the country where officers claim severe injuries after being jolted with 50,000 volts from a Taser.

Doug Perry took a Taser hit during training at Aurora Community College's Police Academy.

"I didn't want to be there but it's part of the class," he said. "As soon as I got up, I knew I was hurt."

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Perry said the five second Taser jolt sent him to the hospital where doctors treated him for a variety of injuries, including a broken back. Perry said he was told that a Taser could not injure him.

"It's kind of like the old boys network. You're not really one of the boys unless you can stand up and take a Taser hit and you can stand up and high five and it's almost like a machismo kind of thing," Perry said.

So why are law enforcement agencies allowing recruits and officers to voluntarily take a Taser hit in training?

The logic is that taking a Taser hit will improve an officers confidence in the weapon, create a better understanding of its power and make the officer more credible in the courtroom during a trial.

In a training video the Taser company clearly emphasizes the weapons' safety.

"(It will be) transmitting patented shaped pulse energy into the central nervous system of the target, safely causing immediate incompasitation ... safely, effectively and without injury," the video says.

"There's no value added. There's absolutely zero value added in subjecting a police officer to that type of risk. It's not done with conventional weapons," said forensic engineer James Ruggieri.

Ruggieri has studied the impact and safety of Tasers. In one report he specifically states, "Officer Tasing as a means of training for authorization to use the Taser should cease immediately."

"One doesn't ask a police officer to take a 9-mm hit into his bulletproof vest. So why are looking at requiring officers to subject themselves to risky ... a risky event such as exemplar Taser training?" Ruggieri said.

7NEWS has learned that Perry's Taser experience was not unique.

One Utah sheriff's deputy blames a Taser hit during training for a neck injury that has kept him out of uniform and

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out of work.

In a public filing, Taser International Inc. acknowledges seven lawsuits resulting from "training injuries."

The growing concern has led some agencies to pull the plug on Taser hits during training. That list includes the Denver Police Department, the Phoenix Police Department and Arizona's Maricopa County Sheriff.

7NEWS' investigation also found several metro area law enforcement agencies that do Tase officers during training including Lakewood, Aurora, Jefferson County and Douglas County.

"It's a voluntary option if the officers want to be Tased," said Douglas County Sheriff's Department Lt. Alan Stanton. "We've had no injuries resulting from training from Tasing. When we see officers being injured, by all means, that's something we'd want to look at. "

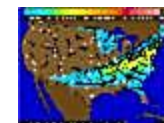
Perry is hoping that the other law enforcement agencies recognize the risks and remove the 50,000 volt jolt from all officer training.

"All these police departments that are hooking people up and Tasing them ... it needs to stop immediately," Perry said. "There is no reason in the world why a police officer needs to know what the Taser feels like."

Aurora Community College is currently reconsidering its use of the Taser at its police academy. Douglas County has never had a deputy injured during training but said it will study this latest information. Taser International declined 7NEWS' request for an interview on this issue.

**Have a question or comment on this story? [E-Mail The Investigators](#). If you have a news tip or other story suggestion, e-mail us at [Newstips@TheDenverChannel.com](mailto:Newstips@TheDenverChannel.com).**

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