

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

INSIDE IOWA STATE
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INSIDE Iowa State

Taser implementation to take months

by Anne Krapfl

During its Jan. 16 meeting in Iowa City, the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, approved Taser weapons for use by campus officers at the three regents universities. The regents also approved several name changes: the department's public safety officers are now police officers and the law enforcement division is the police division. *Inside* asked Jerry Stewart, director of ISU's department of public safety, and Gene Deisinger, manager of the department's special operations unit, what happens next.

What is the timeline for equipping ISU officers with the Taser weapon?

A: We don't have a timeline yet for when officers will start carrying the Tasers, but we know what has to happen first. We'll need to write department policy about when and how to use them, confirm funding and purchase the weapons, and train all officers who will carry them. All of this will take several months.

Who will carry the Tasers?

A: Only the 32 certified police officers in our police division. Student employees won't use them; employees outside our police division won't use them.

Why weren't pepper spray and expandable batons (DPS officers' weapons) enough?

A: We don't see a lot of violent crime on campus, but we are seeing an increase in reported incidents involving hostile or threatening behavior. We want to take a proactive role in those cases to minimize injury or threats to anyone. You also have to remember that ISU is not a closed community. Not all the people our officers encounter are Iowa State students or necessarily concerned about a safe campus community.

Why Taser weapons?

A: We looked into other weapons, for example, a beanbag gun or rifle, a gun that fires rubber pellets, but this (Taser) is the weapon that met or surpassed the criteria we set for ourselves. Those criteria were: instant "stopping power" of most subjects; by design, shouldn't cause serious or permanent injury; provides optimal distance between an officer and a dangerous person (thus maximizing officer's safety); can be carried on an officer's belt.

What are some of these safeguards?

A:

- For one, a safety mechanism must be turned off before an officer fires the weapon.
- Once the Taser is activated, a laser beam indicates the point of impact of the weapon's projectiles. A laser dot projected onto a suspect sometimes is enough to compel cooperation with an officer.
- Once an officer deploys the Taser's electrodes, the weapon's electrical charge automatically will turn off in 5 seconds, if the officer hasn't already manually stopped it. The electrodes themselves do not have to come in contact with skin; the electrical charge is effective through up to 2 inches of clothing.
- A computer chip in each Taser records its uses. That information can be downloaded but not edited, providing for tracking and accountability of the weapon.

- Each time the weapon is fired, several dozen "microdots" also are ejected and fall to the ground. These microdots contain a serial number that is traceable to a specific weapon and officer.

Are Taser weapons a stepping stone to ISU officers carrying guns?

A: Firearms are a separate issue. This proposal was about looking for a less-lethal option for stopping people. Within our options, we view this as an improvement in our efforts to enhance campus safety. Even if our officers carried firearms, I think we'd want to look into other, less-lethal options, including the Taser weapon.

What's the significance of the name changes?

A: The new name better reflects our training and our responsibilities. Some people still perceive us as security personnel or think only of our parking division. The police division is a professional, nationally accredited police agency. Our officers receive the same training and certification as officers at police units throughout the state. We hope it will help the community understand better what we do and can help with.

<http://www.iastate.edu/Inside/2002/0201/tasers.shtml>



Parents Association helps buy UI tasers

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By **Heather Woodward**

Iowa City Press-Citizen

The University of Iowa Parents Association is picking up roughly half of the nearly \$24,000 bill to equip the school's police officers with Air Taser-brand stun guns.

In February, the association voted to allocate a total of \$54,327 to fund seven campus projects, including \$12,000 for the school's Public Safety Department to purchase tasers.

The Iowa state Board of Regents unanimously approved in January a proposal from UI, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa to arm campus police with the weapons, which shoot electrical probes up to 21 feet and temporarily disable the person.

Of UI's 46 officers, 31 will carry tasers. Each taser will cost between \$400 and \$500. That brings the total price tag for buying the tasers to \$15,500.

However, it will cost at least \$24,000 to equip officers with tasers, UI officials said.

"That's including equipment," said Duane Papke, associate director of UI Public Safety. "When you start adding in leather for new holsters and things like that, then that ups the amount.

"We are very pleased and happy with this dollar amount the Parents Association gave to our department. It's going a long way to help us out in the purchase of tasers."

Jim Waterbury, a member of the UI Parents Association board of directors, said the decision to help UI buy tasers is consistent with the group's emphasis on campus safety.

"We really looked at it as Air Tasers can help prevent serious trouble," said Waterbury, who lives in Waterloo. "We debated whether to fund all or part of the program, and the figure we came up with was half."

Waterbury said the other areas that recently received money from the UI Parents Association also promote safety.

Parents Association

- **All parents** of University of Iowa undergraduates are members of the school's Parents Association. The Parents Association board currently is made up of 29 parents, who travel to Iowa City at their own expense three times a year to advise and support the goals of UI, as well as volunteer their time and expertise to assist other UI parents with questions and concerns.
- **The UI Parents** Association is funded entirely by donations.