



Professor Studies TASER Use – Results Shocking

Amy Oshier

Wednesday, December 08, 2004

NBC News 2

LEE COUNTY, FL — The recent death of a Lee County jail inmate brought renewed focus on the use of tasers. A researcher with Florida Gulf Coast University looked at every taser incident in Orange County Sheriff's Office from 2000-2003. The results of his study were shocking.

"There's actually a fairly large toolbox of weapons that officers have the ability to use," said Mesloh.

Police training officer turned college professor Charlie Mesloh did hands on research about the use of tasers in Orange County.

"The taser is the probably what I would consider the flavor of the month," said Mesloh.

Mesloh's study compared tasers with the use of police dogs, batons and chemical agents like pepper spray. The results were surprising. He found that there were fewer injuries related to taser use. Most injuries that did happen, occurred when the suspect hit the ground.

"Within a short period of time what happened was when an officer drew the taser, 90 percent of the time the suspects surrendered at that point," said Mesloh.

As fewer suspects fought, fewer officers got hurt and workers comp claims stemming from arrests dropped by 50 percent. Before long, Orange County's taser became the weapon of choice.

"What we saw were some of their other less lethal weapons like chemical agents were virtually phased out," said Mesloh.

Officers continue to train at gun ranges in the event they have to use deadly force, but it is meant to be a last resort.

Locally deputies are now more likely to reach for their taser as a weapon of choice.

"The real beauty behind the taser is while it's a little bit intrusive, it shoots little prongs into you and it shocks the heck out of you. It doesn't injure you," said Charlotte County Sheriff Bill Cameron.

Mesloh also looked at fatalities that make taser usage controversial. Orange County had three deaths.

"They found that the taser was not directly responsible for these deaths," said Mesloh.

A certain number of people will die in custody regardless of what the restraining method. It usually links to drugs or hidden medical conditions.

During his study, Mesloh found that lives were actually spared. In 18 cases, officers had justifiable opportunities to shoot.

"Without the taser those 18 suspects would have had deadly force used against them," said Mesloh.

Local deputies see the taser as a safest choice for them and their suspects.

"You know, in the old days, when we used to have to wrestle people into the back of the squad car. You know, everybody would end up hurt," said Cameron.

In the case of Byron Black at the Lee County Jail, investigators think black may have had a heart attack after they tried to control him with a taser and pepper spray.

© 2005 by [NBC2 NEWS](#). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.