

Written comment re: San Mateo Board of Supervisors Taser Study Session 2/11/19

Police don't need tasers, especially attached to sadistic officers who have no accountability. What they need is to step back and de-escalate whenever possible. It has been established definitively that tasers do not take the place of guns - instead, they are used in place of restraint and reason when officers get frustrated or insulted. It doesn't matter what policies you have in place for use of tasers; they will be used when they should not be, especially on the mentally ill, the homeless and others of the most vulnerable in our society.

Here are a number of examples of deaths and serious injury resulting from taser use. These are only the tip of an iceberg than can easily be expanded into hundreds if not thousands of similar incidents using simple Google search.

Israel Hernandez

Two years ago after a teenage graffiti artist named Israel Hernandez Jr. lost a foot race with Miami Beach police, an officer stunned him with a Taser and then he died of heart failure. The Miami-Dade County medical examiner determined the cause of death was heart failure from the "energy device discharge."

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/crime/article36462477.html>

Lesla Surratt

In August, 2013, a Sherman, Texas police officer told other officers to "Tase the bitch" during a traffic stop, and officers then beat her to death after stopping her for an illegal lane change. Surratt lay on the ground for 20 minutes or more convulsing in seizures before any of defendants called for an EMT. She was in obvious need of medical treatment from the time she was removed from the patrol car. She was allowed by the officers to continue to deteriorate to the point of being brain dead.

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2014/05/28/68235.htm>

Quincy Smith

In December, 2008, Minneapolis police officers said that Quincy Smith continued to resist arrest so they "used a taser on Smith multiple times, punched him in the head, kned him in the rib area, and struck him in the back with the butt of a shotgun," Two officers tased Smith eight times for forty seconds or more.' Quincy Smith died on the way to the hospital.

The medical examiner's report, as quoted in an Appellate Court ruling, says Smith "had a cardio respiratory arrest."

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2014/06/12/68682.htm>

Carlos Ocana

Carlos, a transient whose friends said he had mental health problems, climbed up a billboard atop the roof of a one-story on May 24, 2014. When an LAPD SWAT team was unable to get him to come down, officers shot him with a Taser. He fell to his death.

One man told the LA Times that the police didn't allow Ocana's friends to talk him down from the billboard.

In comments to one of the stories about this tragedy, readers wrote:

"I've seen a homeless man tazed IN THE EYE for lingering too long on one of Orlando's touristy downtown main streets."

"we watched as police officers took a homeless, drunk, handcuffed person to the edge of the curb before tasing him so that he would fall face-first into asphalt."

"I have an artificial heart valve, a pacemaker, and a metal rod fused to my spine. It would be better if they just shot me."

http://laist.com/2014/07/03/homeless_man_falls_to_his_death.php

<http://www.dailykos.com/comments/1311694/53853769#c13>

An unnamed 8 year old girl

Dawn Stenstrom is the mother of an eight year old girl who was tased by Pierre, South Dakota police on October 4th, 2013.

Police warned the 8-year-old they were going to tase her, but "within seconds," an officer fired darts from the electroshock weapon into the chest of the 70-pound girl, "The force of the electricity shot through her body, lifted her, and threw her against a wall. After the officers had stunned her into high voltage submission, they pulled the fish-hook like Taser darts from her chest, gave her emergency medical attention, bandaged the holes left by the razor-sharp hooks, and called the ambulance."

The father of the young girl said

"I don't think 8-year-olds should be Tased anywhere in the world,"

The girl is currently receiving mental and emotional counseling from a child counselor, as a result of the trauma she experienced at the hands of police.

http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/09/us/south-dakota-taser-lawsuit/index.html?hpt=hp_t2

<http://countercurrentnews.com/2014/12/native-american-police-over-reacting/#>

Dante Parker

Dante Parker, 36, was riding a bike in order to improve his health, but because he matched the description of an attempted burglar he wound up being stunned with a Taser gun at least 25 times, placed face-down and denied medical care on August 12th, in Victorville, CA.

The Victorville Daily Press pressman, a father of five, was stunned with a Taser between 25 and 27 times by San Beradino County deputies, "hog tied," then left on the ground face-down, despite having no weapons or tools that could have been used as weapons.

Parker was taken to Victor Valley Global Medical Center, where he was found to be wholly unresponsive and in cardiac arrest. Parker died two days before his 37th birthday.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20150129/dante-parkers-family-files-lawsuit-over-victorville-mans-in-custody-death>

<http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Man-Dies-in-Deputies-Custody-After-Being-Hit-With-Taser-271144901.html>

An Anonymous Man

A South Dakota police officer tasered an unresponsive man who was already handcuffed, an incident that bystanders caught on video in Manderson, on August 14th, 2014.

Commenting on the video, one reporter wrote:

"Officer Sotherland obviously wasn't using the stun gun as a means of defense, as the man is laying helplessly on the ground handcuffed, rather she is using it as a means of sadistic punishment in an attempt to motivate him to get into her police cruiser as she is seemingly too lazy to simply put the suspect into the cruiser herself."

A witness noted: "The kids even said, 'that's the 17th time she tazed him.'" It's so sad they were watching & had to count each time. I saw it too. It was sickening."

<http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2014/08/27/south-dakota-cop-indicted-after-being-caught-on-video-repeatedly-tasering-helpless-man/>

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/08/28/female-tribal-officer-caught-tazing-native-man-17-times-indicted-156636>

Cesar Vazquez

<http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/do-cops-just-tase-people-fun-now>

A lawsuit filed on Monday, August 25th, 2014 over Taser abuse, in San Bernardino County in southeast California, concerned eight deputy sheriffs who routinely tortured prisoners at a jail with Tasers, even sharing videos of the assaults for entertainment.

Cesar Vazquez was given a job within the West Valley Detention Center as a chow server. Soon after starting this job, Vazquez was told by Deputies Sheriff Department Escamilla and Kopasz that these two deputies used a Taser on all chow servers as part of an 'initiation' process.

Escamilla and Kopasz tased Vazquez once a week or more. Another deputy sheriff, Andrew Cruz, tased Plaintiff between 20 and 30 times while housed at the facility, between March and December 2013.

Viola Young

Tallahassee Police said that officers were responding to reports of drug dealing on September 30th, 2014. Viola Young, 62, approached Officer Mahan to ask about one of the men who was being detained. Mahan advises her to stay back, and tries to grab her arm. Video recording shows that after she turns and walks away, the officer pulls out his Taser and fires it into her back. Mrs. Young fell face down onto the pavement. She was then taken into custody on charges of resisting an officer without violence.

<http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2014/10/watch-florida-officer-tasers-62-year-old-black-woman-in-the-back-as-she-walks-away/>

Anonymous Elderly Woman

On November 7th, 2014 in Los Angeles video recorded large numbers of Los Angeles Police surrounding an elderly, probably mentally disturbed, homeless elderly woman, possibly handicapped, possibly holding a stick. She is tazed by one of the officers and falls to the ground.

One witness stated "They just beat up, tasered, an old lady in the street, for no reason. They didn't even have a reason to make contact with her in the first place, let alone tase her." The videographer then said "The police are clearly out of control."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gxtkmEBGP8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHz52CXUqPk&feature=youtu.be%20Back%20to%20top>

Natasha McKenna

Natasha McKenna died after a stun gun was used on her at the Fairfax, Virginia County jail in February, 2015. Within minutes of being shocked by the Taser, McKenna stopped breathing. jail deputies were unable to revive her using CPR.

McKenna, whose deteriorating mental state had caused Fairfax County to seek help for her, tried to fight her way out of cuffs initially and repeatedly screaming, "You promised you wouldn't hurt me!"

Six members of the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team, dressed in white full-body biohazard suits and gas masks, then arrived and placed the wildly struggling 130-pound McKenna into full restraints, their reports state. But when McKenna wouldn't bend her knees so she could be placed into a wheeled restraint chair, a lieutenant delivered four 50,000-volt shocks from the Taser.

Four law enforcement experts interviewed by The Post questioned why a Taser was used on a restrained woman.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/crime/fairfax-jail-inmate-who-died-was-fully-restrained-when-tasered-four-times/2015/04/11/ede0957c-decd-11e4-be40-566e2653afe5_story.html?postshare=871428890221408

Ruther and Lisa Hayes

On June 30th, 2014, Ruther Hayes, a disabled veteran, was severely beaten and tased by Rehoboth Beach, Delaware police officers during the raid as he attempted to give his wife Lisa a sponge bath. Lisa Hayes is a quadriplegic with cerebral palsy who was receiving a sponge bath on the bed when multiple officers forced their way into the couple's bedroom.

When he saw the officers enter the room, Ruther Hayes attempted to cover his naked wife with a sheet. Instead of allowing the man to cover his naked quadriplegic wife, police threw him to the ground, tasered him, and punched him repeatedly. As officers beat the disabled veteran bloody, they screamed at Lisa Hayes to get up, despite having been told by every family member in the home that she was unable to walk.

Mrs. Hayes was forced to listen and watch as they beat and tasered her husband. She was scared that they were going to kill him.

This all occurred after the two men the officers were looking for had been placed in handcuffs and detained.

<http://thefreethoughtproject.com/police-taser-beat-innocent-disabled-vet-terrorize-quadruplegic-wife-fruitless-raid/>