

# Taser use by police in Hamilton down 31%

**BY PAUL MORSE**

Taser use by Hamilton police has been steadily decreasing since the electrical discharge weapon was first deployed in 2005, a new report says.

Last night, Hamilton Police Services Board heard that officers used Tasers 87 times in 2005 and 60 times last year.

“We’ve seen a 31 per cent decrease from 2005 to 2006, and we’re on track for another decrease in 2007,” Deputy Chief Ken Leendertse told the board.

Between January and July this year, Hamilton police used a Taser 32 times.

The force has 37 Tasers, spread out among all patrol sergeants, vice and drugs, crime managers and emergency response units. Since 2005 police have received one public complaint.

The report comes in the wake of public outcry over the death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski, who was Tasered by RCMP at Vancouver airport in October. Last week, an RCMP watchdog recommended the Mounties tighten rules for Taser use to combative individuals who are at risk of injuring or killing themselves or a police officer.

Taser use in Hamilton is authorized when people become actively resistant, don’t listen to commands, throw things and are combative, Leendertse said.

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# Police board backs Taser use

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“If that person is just standing there and is just not being compliant, that would not authorize an officer to use it.”

Hamilton police classify its Tasers as an intermediate weapon, which is considered a less-than-lethal weapon. A telescoping metal baton known as an Asp and pepper spray are also classified as impact intermediate weapons.

Hamilton police respond to 86,000 calls for service a year and use force, including Tasers, 308 times a year, Leendertse said.

Along with the province’s use of force report that must be made each time a Taser is used, Leendertse said Hamilton police also requires its own special report.

“Once filled out, there are seven levels of review, right up to the deputy chief of police.”

Board members, including Mayor Fred Eisenberger and Councillor Terry Whitehead, endorsed the continued use of Tasers in Hamilton.

“To my understanding, their use is very limited, in certain circumstances, with supervision, so I am comfortable with the information I’m hearing,” the mayor said.

Whitehead said he believes police need Tasers, “but I’m concerned about them being abused.”

Whitehead also questioned police about a defence lawyer’s allegations his 16-year-old client was Tasered twice in October without provocation.

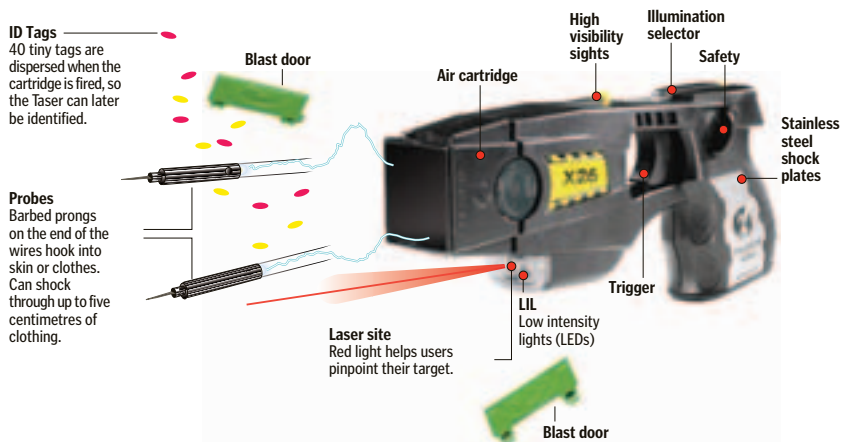
According to police, the teenage boy was a suspect in two knife-point robberies.

Chief Brian Mullan told the board

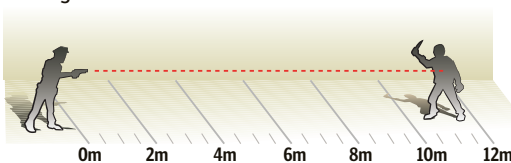
## Taser guns

The Taser immobilizes the subject with a series of high-voltage bursts that override the central nervous system and cause uncontrollable muscle contractions.

### The X26: How it works



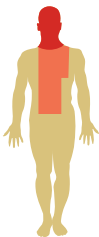
### Range



### Effectiveness

Police often aim at the chest, but a hit anywhere on the body can be effective.

- Sprays
- Guns
- Tasers



Source: Taser International

TAMMY HOY / THE CANADIAN PRESS

that police have not managed to reach the lawyer to confirm details. Police have not launched an internal investigation because the youth has not filed a personal complaint.

Last night, defence lawyer Michael Puskas told The Spectator he has been too busy to return police calls. He said he intends to bring a Charter of Rights application to have the charges stayed

on the basis that it was cruel and unusual punishment.

“I am going to allege that police have no coherent internal policy for the use of Tasers, no review policy and basically allow what the United Nations categorizes as torture.”

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