

December 27, 2007

## Cops use Taser in toy store

**'Taser saved a lot of grief,' cop says after chase through crowded store**

By GLENN KAUTH - Sun Media

A city cop is crediting the controversial Taser for avoiding tragedy after a knife-wielding fugitive ran into a crowded toy store yesterday.

"This is one (incident) where I truly feel the Taser saved a lot of grief," said Staff Sgt. Denis Jubinville, adding cops may have had to shoot the man with a handgun had they not had the Taser.

Police tracked the wanted man at 10:30 a.m. to the Trailway Motor Inn at Calgary Trail and Whitemud Drive. When confronted by cops, the man bolted across the road and into the Toys "R" Us.

"He ran in full traffic across Calgary Trail," said Jubinville.

As shoppers were evacuated, the man in his 40s ran to the back of the store and threatened a bystander with a knife, said Jubinville.

The incident ended when a cop stunned the man with a Taser. No one, including the fugitive, was injured, Jubinville said, adding the end result is proof of the usefulness of the stun gun.

"Had we not had it, it could have led into a standoff," Jubinville noted.

Charges against the man are pending. A tip led cops to track him down at the motel. He was wanted on a deportation warrant, Jubinville said.

Toys "R" Us staff wouldn't comment yesterday.

The most recent use of the Taser comes as controversy continues to surround the stun guns. In Ottawa, police are defending the use of a Taser last week to subdue a teenager who was acting strangely in traffic.

In that incident, police were called last Thursday after a 17-year-old boy was found "acting in a strange manner" on a busy street near his high school, said Staff Sgt. Peter Couillard.

Police shot the teen with a stun gun and took him into custody where he received "the attention that he required" before being released, Couillard said.

"It's a very zero incident to us," he said. "From the police standpoint, it's just an average everyday call."

Locally, there have been several incidents involving Tasers, including a death on Christmas Eve 2005.

Alessandro Fiacco, 33, was zapped after cops were called as he wandered into traffic near 113 Street and 76 Avenue. He died in an ambulance several minutes later.

Although the province's assistant chief medical examiner later determined Fiacco died of a cocaine overdose, relatives complained police should have done more to help him as he stammered in a drug-induced state, rather than zapping him.

In 2002, Randy Fryingpan, then 16, was zapped with a Taser six times by Edmonton police. A judge

later stayed a minor charge against him and accused police of cruel and unusual treatment.

The use of stun guns has been under scrutiny since the case of Robert Dziekanski, the Polish immigrant who died shortly after being shocked with a Taser at Vancouver international airport.

The company that manufactures Tasers stresses the devices have never been directly blamed for a death.

- With files from The Canadian Press