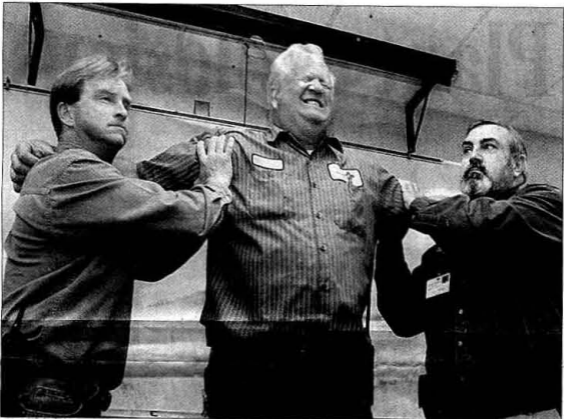


# Immobilized



Record photos/WOODY FENDER

Above, Wesley Ward, left, and James Pearson, right, hold Doug Johnson as he receives a half-second hit from a Taser. Below, Johnson stands ready to shoot a Taser during training Tuesday at Caldwell Memorial Hospital.



## Hospital's security personnel using 'Advanced Taser' on violent visitors

By VICKI GREENE  
Record Staff Writer

**LENOIR** — A new weapon used by security staff at Caldwell Memorial Hospital controls combative and violent behavior in visitors with stunning effects.

The security department at Caldwell Memorial uses what it calls "the most powerful handheld weapon on the planet," an Advanced Taser, that employs electro-muscular disruption technology. Advanced Tasers affect the central nervous system by imitating electrical impulses used to communicate within the human body.

Hospital officials say this technology is better than bullets, sprays or stun devices. Randy Martin, head of security with

Advanced Taser training class for employees Tuesday, demonstrating the effects of the Taser on some of the participants. Hospital employees who will use the Advanced Taser must be certified, must shoot the weapon and feel its effects themselves.

Caldwell Memorial employee Doug Johnson was held up by co-workers during his half-second shock. Afterward, he said he had been pepper sprayed and tased, and he would prefer to be tased.

"Yeah, you will hit the floor," Johnson said. "There is no pain. I'm just numb. I only could have hit the floor. You don't know what it feels like until you experience it. It would put the biggest man on the floor."

There is a need for new technology in

## Hospital head of security says weapon cannot kill

*Martin: 'There is no medical implication other than the possibility of a small seizure'*

### • TASER, from 1A

security, Johnson added.

"I have been working here in security since 1994, and things have gotten progressively worse," said Johnson.

The Advanced Tasers used by law enforcement staff have 26 watts of electricity and are effective up to 21 feet. Tuesday's trainees felt the effect for half a second, although the actual length of one stun is five seconds.

The effect can also touch the weapon to the violent individual for additional immobilization.

"The only time we would use this is on a violent person trying to injure patients, staff or visitors," said Martin. "We do not use it if a person is damaging property. The same crimes as are happening on the street are happening here. Sometimes the law enforcement is busy and can't get here right away. We are trying to make Caldwell Memorial Hospital a safe place."

The Advanced Taser is said to immobilize people 100 percent of the time. Although the weapon, which resembles a gun, can appear scary, no bodily damage is done to the person being tased.

staff members at Caldwell Memorial Hospital who will be certified to use the Advanced Taser. The hospital currently has two Advanced Tasers and is planning two more.

Security officers, especially those in an environment like a hospital, face special challenges in controlling violent and combative individuals, according to Tiffany Cooper with the hospital.

"We think it is important news that benefits the public and may serve as a deterrent to potentially violent persons," Cooper said.

The Advanced Taser has a laser sight, and one of the weapon's two probes follows that line. The second probe hits about eight degrees away, opening up the possibility of more than one person being tased with one shot.

Martin said from a distance of 21 feet, the spread of the probes can be 36 inches. He also advised staff not to touch a person between the two probes, or they would also get a shock.

Otherwise, a person can touch someone being tased and not be tased themselves.

If a person has both probes on them,

"It cannot kill you," Martin said. "It won't hurt you if you have a pacemaker or an illness. I have shot over 1,000 people with them (Tasers). There is no medical implication other than the possibility of a small seizure."

The Taser shock causes the body to go into the fetal position.

Caldwell Memorial Hospital employee Charles Hooper, who works in environmental services, volunteered to have the Advanced Taser demonstrated on him. His reaction to the exposure was real, as he had not been participating in the training session and had not seen other trainees being tased.

Martin gave Hooper a rubber knife as a prop and asked him to pretend he had a hospital employee at knife point. As soon as Martin pulled the trigger for one-half of a second, Hooper's arm tossed the knife and trainees caught him before he hit the ground.

"I couldn't have hurt anyone," Hooper said, laughing. "That's a Taser?"

Hooper said he was conscious during the experience, and because he wasn't sure how his body would react to being tased, had purposely begun to pull the

rubber knife prop away from the trainee's neck right before the shock, just in case.

There was little need for this precaution, as Hooper curled up and his legs gave way beneath him. He said after the shock was over, he felt a little weak.

"When they tried it on me, I thought I could still get to them but I was mistaken. This is the best tool to control a violent person that I've ever seen," said Martin.

Since January, Caldwell Memorial Hospital staff has successfully used the Taser on two individuals at the hospital. Martin said in both cases the individuals were incapacitated. One had assaulted a police officer and the other had attacked and bitten a hospital officer.

"We chose (the Advanced Taser) because spraying pepper spray contaminates the area and may affect patients and staff," said Martin. "It takes about one hour to treat a person who has been sprayed with pepper spray, but using the Taser means the person can be put in the patrol car as soon as he has been controlled."

Martin said there will be about 15

they will receive the full force of the shock. If one probe goes on a person and the second goes on another, they would get a partial shock, unless they were touching. Then they would both be fully shocked.

Martin said the probes, No. 7 eagle claw fish hooks, can go through light weight shirts, but not break the skin. The probes leave a small red mark for a few days. He said it is policy for hospital staff to look at individuals whose skin has been touched by the probes before releasing them to the authorities.

In one instance, a probe lodged into the zipper of a person's jacket and the current went up and down the zipper, still immobilizing the individual, Martin said.

Martin, who also has his own business of self defense and security, will be training Basic Law Enforcement Training classes in April at Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute in Hudson. He said these students will also learn about the Advanced Taser and will find out what the weapons feel like.

• Reach Vicki Greene at 322-4510, Ext. 249 or vgreene@piedmontpublishing.com.