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## San Diego State U. police to utilize new shocking devices

*Taser gun will allow officers to subdue dangerous suspects in less-harmful manner*

By Leslie Hackett *The Daily Aztec*

(U-WIRE) SAN DIEGO -- It's a new weapon that's sure to stun you -- literally.

Starting next week, **San Diego State University Police officers will carry ADVANCED TASER guns when on duty.**



Powerful new taser guns resemble firearms but are less lethal. Officers begin carrying the guns Friday. Jason Williams / Daily Aztec

Resembling a handgun, the taser gun sends out 26 watts of electricity through two small probes that can be shot at a suspect from up to 21 feet away.

When executed properly, the taser conveys powerful electrical shocks that are sent through wires to the body of the target. The probes successfully can penetrate up to two inches of clothing.

The new technology uses Electro-Muscular Disruption, which causes uncontrollable muscle contractions, physically weakening a target regardless of his or her strength and tolerance of pain. Eventually, shocks should allow officers to subdue a potentially dangerous suspect.

"It literally shuts the circuits down between the brain and the muscle," University Police Crime Prevention Specialist Marc Fox

said.

The taser gun will not be a replacement for other weapons usually carried by officers in the field.

"It provides another option for our officers," University Police Capt. Steve Williams said. "We felt that it was necessary to provide our folks with the same level of less-than-lethal types of implements as other agencies."

In a test of 400 volunteers, the taser gun showed a 99.55 percent incapacitation rate -- all without injury.

"Obviously, it's not a replacement for the firearm because it is not 100 percent effective," Fox said. "An officer that is faced with a spontaneous, life-threatening assault has to respond with the appropriate level of force."

The taser gun is equipped with various special features, one of which is a laser sight. This characteristic adds to the accuracy of the weapon and is, according to Fox, a deterrent.

Fox said often when a suspect sees a laser being pointed at him or her, he or she is not sure what to think. For all they know, it could be a laser from a lethal weapon.

According to Taser International, the company that manufactures the weapon, the taser is easier to use than firearms or pepper spray, which require an officer to hit a specific area, because it affects the central nervous system, and a hit anywhere on the body is effective.

University Police officers will participate in a three-hour training session Thursday to learn how to properly handle the less-lethal weapon.

Officers not only have to go through classroom training but also will be exposed to real-life scenarios.

Upon completion of training, guns will be issued to each patrol car. Watch commanders will decide when officers working events, such as concerts, parties and sporting events, will carry the guns.

"Officers are still equipped with pepper spray and batons," Fox said. "What we've effectively done is given them more tools."