



Taser use commencement close to arriving at U. Iowa

By Vess Mitev The Daily Iowan
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(U-WIRE) IOWA CITY, Iowa -- University of Iowa Public Safety officers are expected to begin training early this morning in preparation for the April 29 debut of the Taser M26.

The week-long course will include technical skills and tactical training, as well as eight hours of instructional reading and analysis, master instructor and Public Safety Lt. Steve Stange said. The move comes after a two-and-a-half-year campaign by Public Safety officials to arm officers with nonlethal weapons.

The M26 shoots two small darts into a target up to 21 feet away and uses compressed nitrogen to deliver 50,000 volts of electricity, causing immediate loss of neuromuscular control.

"Upon completion, our officers will be extremely educated and confident with the weapon," Stange said.

All 30 officers will be armed, said Duane Papke, assistant director of Public Safety.

"Prior to this, when an officer responded to a situation like a domestic assault or a fight in progress, we had no means to overpower someone with a knife," Papke said. "Now, our officers won't have to have close combat with anyone."

The Tasers resemble and cost roughly the same as a regular-issue handgun. Each officer will be given three one-time cartridges, Stange said.

"This will not be a heavily used piece of equipment," he said. "We will use it only when we have to."

Only officers who wish to become instructors are required to take a blast from the Taser to complete the training, said Chuck Green, UI assistant vice president of Public Safety. Whether officers have been shocked will not affect their credibility in case they have to testify in court, he said.

However, officers are encouraged to take the shock because it is as much a part of the training as reading the instruction manual, Stange said.

"It's important to know how it feels -- so you can know what to do if you have to deploy it," he said.

Public Safety officers will be expected to pass a technical and physical test before they are issued the M26.

University Heights Police Chief Brian Shimon, whose officers have used Tasers for a year, said there have been several instances when a Taser was drawn but never fired.

"It's an extremely effective deterrent," he said. "Suspects see the laser sight, the electric spark dancing and they usually comply."

The UI remains the only school in the Big 10 whose officers don't carry lethal-force weapons. Public Safety officials say the Taser is a step forward but they would still like to see the force armed with handguns some time in the future.



Iowa Campus Safety to Carry TASERS

Tuesday, April 23, 2002
Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) _ Coming soon to public safety officers at the University of Iowa: the Taser M26 stun gun. The campus' 30 officers started training this week with the non-lethal weapon, which can hit targets with 50,000 volts of electricity, causing immediate loss of nerve and muscle control. They'll learn technical skills and complete eight hours of instructional reading before they hit the streets with the gun next week.

The Taser's arrival at the university comes two-and-a-half years after public safety officials requested that officers be armed with non-lethal weapons.

"Prior to this, when an officer responded to a situation like a domestic assault, or a fight in progress, we had no means to overpower someone with a knife," Public Safety Assistant Director Duane Papke said. "Now, our officers won't have to have close combat with anyone."

A version of the stun gun available to the public can be bought without a permit in 43 states, Taser International Inc. officials say.



Stun gun training starts

By Heather Woodward

Iowa City Press-Citizen

Tuesday, April 23, 2002

A weeklong training session for University of Iowa police officers preparing to carry Air Taser brand stun guns began Monday



"They're getting trained in the proper use of the taser," said Capt. Lawrence Langley, an officer with UI's Department of Public Safety.

Training will include instruction on UI's policy regarding the use of force, written testing, question-and-answer sessions, a firing lesson and a final test that officers will have to pass.

"Once they pass the test, all the officers will carry tasers," said Chuck Green, UI's director of public safety.

Green said he hopes all officers will be equipped with tasers by the end of the month, which should happen unless an occurrence on campus takes the officers away from their training.

*Chuck Green, director of the University of Iowa Department of Public Safety, holds an Air Taser brand stun gun. UI police officers are being trained to use the stun guns. **Press-Citizen/Deb Barber***

After the training is complete, the department plans to hold a demonstration of the tasers for the media, allowing the public to get a better idea of how the devices work.

In January, the Iowa state Board of Regents unanimously approved a proposal from UI, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa to arm campus police with the weapons.

At UI, 31 of 46 officers - the regents also approved a change in title from public safety officers to police officers - will carry stun guns.

Both UI Student Government and Staff Council voted overwhelmingly in favor of equipping officers with the stun guns. Meanwhile, the UI Faculty Senate approved the measure in a divided 24-18 vote.

In February, the UI Parents Association allocated \$12,000 for the public safety department to purchase tasers. The total price for each taser, holster and cartridge is about \$520, bringing the total cost for equipping UI's 31 officers to \$16,120.

That cost does not include money for officer training, including one officer's trip to visit the stun gun manufacturer and go through training in Las Vegas.