



Suicide attempt prompts first Taser gun use

By Evelyn Brown, NI Assoc. News Editor
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UNI officers used a taser gun for the first time Friday in response to a phone call from a man who reported that his brother was attempting suicide.

The taser was used to incapacitate the 25-year-old UNI student, who, according to Dave Zarifis, director of public safety, had stabbed himself with a kitchen knife.

Around midnight, UNI officers arrived at the apartment house on G Street with two Cedar Falls police, but were unable to enter the residence through the front door because it had been locked and a sofa had been placed across it. According to the Waterloo Courier, officers used the back door and found the student, who had stabbed himself once in the neck, holding a knife.

Public Safety Lt. Gary McCormack said in the Courier that, "He wouldn't put the knife down. His brother tried talking to him, and the officers tried to make him put the knife down. He wouldn't, so they used a Taser on him."

UNI officer Andrea Jennings fired the taser and delivered two shocks to the man's chest before he released the knife and went down.

Paramedics then administered care and took the man to Sartori Hospital, where he was later transferred to Covenant Medical Center in Waterloo and later released.

"Given the circumstances in this incident, the taser was very appropriate," Zarifis said. "Without the taser, the only force available was lethal weapons."

Cedar Falls police had been backing up the UNI officers with firearms. McCormack said the taser may have saved the student's life since he was already wounded and bleeding, according to the Courier.

Public safety officers were armed with the tasers last May, after a lengthy campaign, which ended with the Board of Regents' decision in January to allow its three universities' officers to carry the M-26 Tasers.