

Conducted Energy Weapons

There have been recent incidents highlighted that have brought the use of Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW's) by the Police under review. The Camrose Police Service has been deploying CEW's since 2003 and currently uses the Taser International brand X26 CEW. All members of the Police Service are trained and authorized to use this tool in the completion of their duties. Each officer has completed a training course and has passed a practical and written examination. They further receive annual refresher training and instruction specific to CEW's.

The Camrose Police Service has detailed policy surrounding the training, deployment, and monitoring of the CEW's. Each use is reported and documented to the user's supervisor and every actual deployment is thoroughly reviewed by a board and the Use of Force instructors. The reviews constantly ensure that the CEW's are being utilized properly, where justified, and only when necessary.

The following frequently asked questions are being provided for further information concerning CEW's.

Conducted Energy Device – Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Taser™/Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW)?

Conducted Energy Weapons (CEWs) are tools developed to provide law enforcement, corrections and military personnel with an alternative method of control. More commonly known by the brand name Taser™, CEWs are designed to temporarily incapacitate, confuse, delay or restrain a suspect within a range of seven metres in a variety of situations.

How does the CEW work?

CEWs use electricity to induce involuntary muscle contractions that may cause temporary incapacitation. Shaped like a gun but battery operated, CEWs discharge two probes. The probes, when activated by an officer, deliver an electrical charge, which may immediately incapacitate the individual. As soon as the electrical charge is complete the person is able to walk, talk and function normally.

Why does law enforcement use the CEW?

The CEW is a control option to aid officers in dealing with violent, assaultive or actively resisting subjects. CEWs may reduce potential injury to the individual, bystanders or officers. The goal when using a CEW is to subdue the suspect long enough to safely take the person into custody.

How often are CEWs used?

CEWs have been used to successfully resolve situations in which deadly force may have otherwise been authorized. In many cases the mere display of the device is sufficient to overcome an individual's willingness to fight or resist. The CEW is an important tool for de-escalating a dangerous situation; it is used judiciously and with great regard for the safety of all involved. Less than 2% of all contact between police and suspects result in police using force.

How many ways can a CEW be used?

There are three ways for a CEW to be used:

1. An officer can display the CEW to a subject to gain compliance;
2. An officer can deploy the CEW, with probes that attach to a subject, conducting energy into the subject's body causing temporary large muscle contraction; and
3. An officer can use the CEW in stun mode (does not cause large muscle contraction). The officer is looking to gain compliance through pain rather than muscle contraction. (Similar to OC spray).

Under which circumstances is the CEW used?

CEWs are useful tools in specific instances for de-escalating dangerous situations and reducing injuries to citizens and officers. Law enforcement agencies have taken great care to ensure the proper and appropriate use of CEWs through ongoing review of policies and procedures, supervision, training and management oversight.

What is the use-of-force model?

The AACP has a use-of-force model to assist police officers in understanding the options that are reasonable and lawfully authorized pursuant to the Criminal Code of Canada, in a variety of different circumstances.

What is Excited Delirium?

Excited Delirium is an acute medical condition that may be caused by drug overdose or a mental disorder. A subject suffering from Excited Delirium is often found engaging in dangerous and unpredictable behaviour, placing themselves and others at risk. Excited Delirium is a medical emergency that can progress rapidly to death, and these situations demand immediate police and medical intervention. Prolonged struggles to physically control individuals suffering from Excited Delirium significantly increase the medical risk to the subject. In order to reduce the chance of a prolonged struggle, the best course of action may be to use a CEW, followed by proper restraint techniques that do not compromise breathing and a speedy medical response.

How safe are CEWs?

CEWs are generally very safe to use. They are highly effective in helping officers achieve control over violent and resistive subjects while posing a very low risk of injury to the individual arrested. Further, they may reduce the number of injuries and deaths to both officers and subjects.

What does it feel like when someone is on the receiving end of a CEW deployment?

CEW causes fast muscle contraction in the subject's body. The feeling is similar to a static shock you could receive from a doorknob but on a much larger scale. To understand what the CEW feels like, many officers have personally been exposed to the effects of a CEW deployment.

Can a CEW deployment cause heart attacks?

There have been extensive tests done on CEW devices. These tests have shown the CEW is not powerful enough to affect a subject's heart.

Are there any side effects or long term damages after a CEW deployment?

The most common side effect is consistent with what occurs after any extreme physical exertion: subjects may feel dazed for several seconds/minutes and may have a temporary tingling sensation. The only known long-term risk from a CEW deployment is the possibility of having small burn marks left on the skin. This is very dependent on skin tone and type and length of CEW exposure.

What happens if you are on drugs and/or prescribed medications when you are subjected to a CEW deployment?

Drugs and/or alcohol, mental illness or extreme emotion do not change how the CEW affects the body. However, there are types of drugs and/or mental illness that can contribute to a subject being in poor physical health. How well a subject's body handles physical stress can be dependent upon the health of that person. Poor health can cause medical issues when the body is placed under any type of stress.

Can you lose consciousness once you have been exposed to a CEW deployment?

If both of the CEW probes contact the subject's head or if the subject falls and hits his/her head, unconsciousness could result. Officers are trained to be aware of these situations and will seek medical assistance as soon as possible if there is any possibility this may have occurred.

What if you have metal in your body?

Metal in your body will not affect the CEW, how it works, or its effects on the subject.

How many police agencies in Canada use CEWs?

73 law enforcement agencies.

Can the general public purchase a CEW? Carry CEW?

CEWs are prohibited weapons under the Criminal Code of Canada and as such are not available to the general public.

Has the CEW helped save lives?

We believe CEWs has saved the lives of both officers and citizens in Alberta.