

# Specially Trained Officers

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

This SOP provides clear direction and procedural instruction to provide a consistency of response in accordance with force policy. It is recognised that policing is a dynamic profession and the standard response may not be appropriate in every circumstance. In every situation, your decisions and actions should be supported by the National Decision Model and based on the values and ethics of Police Scotland. You may be expected to provide a clear and reasonable rationale for any decision or action which you take.

## Notice:

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## Purpose/Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) supports the following Police Service of Scotland, hereafter referred to as Police Scotland, Policies:

* Armed Policing Policy
* Major Incidents and Emergencies Policy
* Specialist Operations Policy
* Training, Leadership and Development Policy
* Death or Serious Injury Following Police Contact Policy

The purpose of this document is to provide structured instruction on the:

* assessment and selection of Specially Trained Officers (STO); and
* operational deployment of Taser.

This document applies toindividuals who are issued with Taser as well as those officers and police staff that are involved in arranging and providing a response to incidents (for example control room staff, local policing officers and supervisors).

The term “individual”will be used to refer to police officers, special constables and authority / police staff from this point forward (provisions for any particular group will be clearly identified).

## Definitions

AConducted Energy Device (CED)/Taser isclassified as a ‘prohibited weapon’ by virtue of Section 5 Firearms Act 1968.

Tasers are classified by the National Less Lethal Weapons Working Group as ‘work related equipment’ (in the same way as firearms) and not as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Police officers whilst acting in their capacity as such, are exempt from the requirements of the legislation and do not need any additional legal authority to possess a CED.

Police Scotland has authorised the use of CED for Specially Trained Officers (STOs) and will deploy in accordance with national policy agreed by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) and College of Policing (COP) Authorised Professional Practice.

Police Scotland will deploy STOs equipped with the Taser X2 dual optically-sighted device that discharges a single cartridge with the ability to quickly re-engage with a second cartridge. This device may also be used in the “direct-contact mode” if justification exists.

Taser may be deployed and used as one of a number of operational safety tactical options only after application of the National Decision Model (NDM).

Taser use can be defined as any;

* draw
* aim
* red-dot
* arc display
* discharge (probe mode and/or contact mode)

## Roles and Responsibilities

The following outlines the processes and responsibilities when dispatching STOs:

### Area Control Room (ACR) Staff

* Alert ACR supervisor of any incident that may necessitate the deployment of STOs.
* ACR controllers/supervisors must ensure that the correct closure codes are applied to the incident. These codes are:
* PS27 – NDM, STO not tasked (not deployed as STO but had occasion to use Taser at the incident)
* PS28 – NDM, STO tasked (deployed as a STO)
* PS29 – NDM, STO not available
* Closure codes must be added as soon as an ACR supervisor updates that STO attendance is deemed suitable. If a PS27 or PS28 closure code is applied then one of the below qualifiers must be selected:
* Taser not used
* Taser Drawn
* Taser Discharged

### ACR Supervisors

* Assess all incidents brought to their attention using the National Decision Model.
* Consider whether the deployment of Specially Trained Officers should be considered as an option if available and then endorse the Command and Control Log to that effect.
* Make contact with Overview and tag the incident to Overview by applying the Overview tag.
* When/if deploying STOs, provide all details as per the incident log to the attending officers.
* Ensure the local supervisor is informed of the deployment so that local command protocols are established.
* Ensure a divisional unit is dispatched to the incident as support if appropriate and available.
* Endorse the Command and Control Log with strategy and rationale applied. This must include an assessment of the level of risk and a NDM based rationale for deployment including the appropriate working strategy.
* Maintain an overview of the incident and escalate/deescalate where appropriate.
* In the event of a Taser discharge by a STO, inform Duty Officer Area Overview of the discharge.
* ACR controllers/supervisors must ensure that the correct closure codes are applied to the incident. These codes are:
* PS27 – NDM, STO not tasked (not deployed as STO but had occasion to use Taser at the incident)
* PS28 – NDM, STO tasked (deployed as a STO)
* PS29 – NDM, STO not available
* Closure codes must be added as soon as an ACR Supervisor updates that STO attendance is deemed suitable. If a PS27 or PS28 closure code is applied then one of the below qualifiers must be selected.
* Taser Drawn
* Taser not used
* Taser Discharged

### Overview Duty Officer

* Consider the necessity or otherwise of specialist resources, in particular firearms resources.
* Assume command should firearms resources be required under an initial firearms authority.
* Maintain overview of the incident until the threat of escalation is no longer viable.
* Professional Standards Department (PSD) on call should be notified as soon as reasonably possible of any incident involving a Taser, which results in serious injury to the subject, police officers or any other person as a direct or indirect result of the actions or inaction of Police Scotland officers.

### Local Supervisor

* Assume command of the incident following notification by ACR supervisor.
* Through application of the NDM, ensure that the force is providing a proportionate level of response.
* Ensure that any wider aspects of the incident such as cordons and road closures are managed effectively.
* Ensure that the appropriate level of post incident procedures (PIP), if implemented, are applied as per the Death and Serious Injury following Police Contact Policy and Post Incident Procedures National Guidance.
* Ensure that wellbeing of staff is considered at all times
* Ensure that relevant paperwork is submitted to the OSD Taser Policy and Compliance Unit. The STO section below details the paperwork to be submitted if Taser is used and if Taser is discharged
* Ensure the officers wellbeing after Taser discharge / use is considered if appropriate in relation to TriM / Occupational Health / Employee Assistance Programme.

### STO

* On commencement of duty, STO is required to inform ACR that they are deploying with Taser.
* On arrival at the incident carry out a NDM based assessment as per their training ensuring that they consider all tactical options open to them to resolve the incident and that the level of response is measured and proportionate through the application of the NDM.
* As per training, take into account of any potential subject vulnerability and additional risk factors such as age, disability and location.
* If Taser is used, ensure local supervisor and ACR are immediately notified and ensure relevant incident codes are applied.
* If Taser is used, submit Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) and SCoPE Use of Force form.
* If Taser is discharged, submit Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035), National Standard Statement Form (Form 045-001 (B)) and Use of Force form
* Inform Divisional SPOC regarding discharge to facilitate Taser download.

### Local Inspectors

* Ensure that local supervision undertake proactive management of the incident.
* Ensure that an Incident of Note is submitted if applicable.

## Assessment and Selection Process

Officers who have completed two years’ service and have successfully completed their probationary period, may be eligible to be trained and deployed as a STO.

Recruitment information, including the STO Role Profile, Application Form and Guidance are published on the OSD STO intranet page.

The key requirements of Local Policing Divisions in the selection process of Divisional STOs is contained within the Selection Process steps:

### Selection Process

1. Intranet advert and banner with link to application form, role requirements and guidance documents for divisions.
2. Applicant to complete application and send to first line manager.
3. First Line Manager – Make comment on the suitability of the applicant.
4. Area Commander – Comments on suitability of the applicant.
5. Endorsed application sent by Local Area Commander to Divisional Single Point of Contact (SPOC)
6. Divisional application sift
   * If not selected then process ends.
   * If selected proceed to step 7
7. Electronic spreadsheet to OSD STO Compliance
8. Division arrange PSD Gateway checks and pass back to Divisional SPOC for suitability.
   * If applicant not suitable. Notification sent to applicant and Line Manager from SPOC. Process ends.
   * Suitable applicants sent back by Divisional SPOC on spreadsheet to OSD to arrange eye checks. Proceed to Process Step 9.
9. Eye checks completed, forms passed back to Divisional SPOC for suitability.
   * If applicant not suitable, notification to applicant and line manager from SPOC. Process ends.
   * If applicant suitable. Proceed to step 10.
10. Selected applicants (hard copy) to OSD STO Compliance.
11. Selected applicants passed to training delivery to update Scope training record (Priority 1). Process ends.

## Authorisation of Specially Trained Officers

Officers who successfully complete training and are qualified to carry Taser, will be authorised for a period of twelve months minus one day from the date the authority was granted. If an officer’s Taser authority expires, they cannot be deployed operationally as a STO until Taser re-qualification has been undertaken.

If an officer’s Operational Safety Training (OST)/Scottish Police Emergency Life Support (SPELS) expires, they are not authorised to carry Taser, attend a Taser training course or deploy operationally until a re-qualification has been undertaken.

A STO must not draw or deploy with a Taser unless they have completed all required initial, or recertification training and are in license with all mandatory training (Acute Behavioural Disturbance training, Operational Safety Training and First Aid).

## Retention of Authority

Supervisors must always be aware of the physical and mental well-being of the officers under their command. Where supervisors consider that the officer’s physical fitness or state of mind is such that to have them issued with Taser would be inappropriate then the officer must not be deployed with the weapon and their authority must be withdrawn and the National Taser Unit informed by email to OSD Taser Policy and Compliance.

The authority must only be re-issued when the Chief Taser Instructor in collaboration with Divisional management are satisfied that the officer is fit to resume duties as a STO. To establish this position a referral to Occupational Health may be required.

Officers must demonstrate a willingness and ability to use and deploy Taser in a responsible manner. Where officers fail to meet the high standards expected or where an officer’s authority to carry Taser is brought into question then the occurrence must be reported by a supervisory officer to Divisional Management and the Chief Taser Instructor. A reviewing panel consisting of the Area Commander/Divisional Representative and the Chief Taser Instructor may convene. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

* investigation of a use of force complaint;
* STO becoming unfit to deploy Taser due to welfare or other issues;
* unintentional, accidental, negligent discharge;
* any other information which may bring into question the STOs ability to use and deploy Taser in a responsible manner.

The circumstances of the incident will be reviewed and the Reviewing Panel will make one or more of the following decisions:

* no further action;
* further training and reassessment;
* temporary suspension of authority to carry Taser;
* permanent withdrawal of authority to carry Taser;
* refer the incident to PSD to consider disciplinary procedures.

All decisions to withdraw or reissue an officer with a Taser authority must be recorded in writing on a Withdrawal / Re-Authorisation of Authority – Specially Trained Officer Form (Form 064-030) and submitted to the OSD Taser Policy and Compliance Unit for recording on the officers’ training record. A report outlining the full circumstances must also be retained on the officer’s personal file for future reference. The first line manager pending the officer resuming Taser duties will also retain the Withdrawal / Re-Authorisation of Authority – Specially Trained Officer Form (Form 064-030). When fully completed the form should be sent to OST Taser Policy and Compliance for storage in the officer’s training record.

If an officer who is subject to the removal of their authority wishes to challenge the decision they must do so in writing to the relevant Divisional Superintendent who will review the decision and provide a reply in writing as soon as practicable and in any case within ten working days.

STOs can declare they are unfit to carry and must do so if there are any significant issues affecting them including life stresses. This may relate to illness, injury, and personal issues.

In this case the officer’s supervisor will complete and adhere to the Withdrawal / Re-Authorisation of Authority – Specially Trained Officer Form (Form 064-030). It is a matter for the Chief Taser Instructor, following discussion with the area commander, to determine, once an authority has been withdrawn, how long that withdrawal will be for (either permanent or temporary).

The return of an authority may necessitate the officer receiving support from Occupational Health and/or some other form of intervention that helps confirm they are suitable to carry the device.

On commencement of duty, a STO is accepting that they are fit to carry Taser and that there are no physical or mental factors that will prevent them carrying out their duties with the device. A STO must declare that they are fit to carry Taser by updating the Chronicle Asset Management System/paper record prior to issuing a Taser.

## Deployment of Specially Trained Officers

STOs are operational officers accessible 24 hours a day through Area Control Rooms if required.

STOs must have in their possession all of their authorised PPE when carrying Taser to enable them to choose the appropriate tactical option for dealing with any situation encountered.

If a controller deems an incident may require a STO to be dispatched they must alert the ACR supervisor to assess the incident.

Following assessment of an incident, and where it is deemed appropriate to deploy an officer in their capacity as a STO, a rationale for dispatch must be added to the incident by an ACR supervisor.

STOs may be dispatched as one of a number of tactical options only after application of the NDM. A STO may also need to resort to another option if the device does not have the intended effect. The National Decision model should be utilised at all times. In addition the primary tactic of removing the public or victim from the threat to mitigate any risk remains extant.

The availability or deployment of STOsshould not be considered a replacement for conventional firearms if the relevant criteria for the deployment of armed officers are met.

The decision to dispatch a STO to an incident may be based on a number of factors including:

* resource proximity to call;
* call type and priority;
* speed of response required;
* skill and experience of officers;
* resource status and availability.

### Role of STO Taser SPOC

The Taser SPOC has overall responsibility for the following,

* Ensure post deployment or use procedures are in place.
* Ensure Taser incidents are reviewed to establish that policy and training were followed.
* Identify and communicate any training or operational learning that has occurred.
* Ensure any National LLW circulars, practice advice or training updates are disseminated to all relevant people.
* Ensure safe systems of work exist for the storage, maintenance, routine inspection and data-port download of Taser.
* Ensure downloaded data is reviewed for correct function checking, fault analysis and timely indications of improper or unaccounted use.
* Ensure systems of audit and accounting exist for the data-port download, movement, issue or use of Tasers and cartridges.
* Ensure any faults or failures of Taser, Taser cartridges or any associated equipment are reported to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and National LLW in the prescribed manner.
* Ensure advice and guidance is available to medical professionals within their area of responsibility.

### Intentional Taser Discharge

The process steps below show the process to be followed if Taser is intentionally discharged:

1. STO discharges Taser.
2. Subject to be properly restrained. STO to provide verbal reassurance.
3. Consider first aid, secondary injuries and medical assistance.
4. Inform local supervisor. Local supervisor to decide if incident meets criteria for post incident procedure (Post Incident Procedures National Guidance), informing Area Overview.
   * Local supervisor to ensure correct disposal code has been added to STORM incident PS27 or PS28.
5. STO to recover evidence using Post Discharge Packs. Items to be recovered include barbs, 2 or 3 Anti Felon Identity Disc AFIDs (each cartridge) and cartridge (not spooled). Consideration should be given to photographing the items prior to recovery.
6. STO to inform ACR of the discharge, ACR will notify Service Overview. If any incident involving Taser results in serious injury to the subject, police officers or any other person as a direct or indirect result of the actions or inaction of Police Scotland officers, on call PSD should be notified as soon as reasonably possible. Definition of serious injury can be found in The Death or Serious Injury in Police Custody National Guidance.
   * ACR will ensure correct result code is recorded on incident, PS27/PS28.
7. Lodge Post Discharge Pack as a production in line with local procedure.
8. Secure Taser back in cabinet with maintenance tag attached – clearly marked ‘Do Not Use’.
   * STO will fully complete Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) and National Standard Statement (Form 045-001 (B)) which must be forwarded to OSD Taser Policy and Compliance prior to going off duty. The Taser use will thereafter be fully reviewed by Taser policy and compliance unit to ensure adherence to training and policy. This process will be overseen by the STO Taser Single Point of Contact (SPOC). This will then be forwarded to PSD and referred to Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC).
9. STO will ensure correct result code of PS27 or PS28 was entered onto STORM incident.

### Accidental/Unintentional Taser Discharge

The Unintentional Discharge process steps below outline the process to be followed if Taser is unintentionally discharged:

1. Accidental/Unintentional Taser Discharge (this should be treated as per any other ‘use’). Do not move anything, make the weapon safe and leave in situ. Do not leave weapon unattended.
2. Consider First Aid (if applicable).
3. Inform ACR of the discharge.
4. Inform local supervisor of the discharge (another supervisor will be appointed if directly involved).
5. Supervisor on scene to ensure evidence recovery. Items to be recovered include: Barbs; 2 or 3 Anti Felon Identity Disc AFIDs (each cartridge); Cartridge (not spooled).
   * Consideration should be given to photographing the items prior to recovery.
   * Thereafter lodge in Post Deployment Pack as evidence.
6. Reporting to PSD/PIRC:

* Level 1:
  + Discharge in safe load/unload board, or in training or police environment,
  + No injury to any person,
  + No damage caused or risk identified.
  + STO to inform Duty Inspector and OSD Taser Policy and Compliance who will thereafter inform the STO Taser SPOC. STO to complete Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) to be sent to OSD Taser Policy and Compliance for onward transmission to PSD for consideration of whether a PIRC referral is required.
* Level 2:
  + Discharge in other circumstances,
  + No injury or damage caused.
  + STO to inform Duty Inspector and OSD Taser Policy and Compliance and complete Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) to be sent to OSD Taser Policy and Compliance for onward transmission to PSD for consideration of whether a PIRC referral is required.
* Level 3:
* Injury to any person; or
* Serious failings by STO.
* May result in a full PIP being implemented.
* Consult on call Senior Executive at PSD.
* Supervisor to ensure Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) is completed for onward transmission to PSD and PIRC.

If Taser is unintentionally discharged the Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) must be completed.

In relation to unintentional discharge and possible outcomes, please see Section 6 ‘Retention of authority’.

### Carriage of Taser

STOs may retain possession of Taser when conducting interviews at a police station, but only if there are no approved storage cabinets at the station where the interview is to be conducted.

STOs who are engaged on prisoner escort to any prison establishment must not be in possession of Taser. Taser must be secured safely within the storage cabinet prior to prisoner escort and thereafter retrieved on completion of the escort.

STOs should not be used in operations or incidents that require the use of Police Support Units (PSUs) deploying in level one dress unless as an operational necessity.

STOs will not be in possession of Taser when engaged in football or other event duties, unless specifically outlined in the relevant Operational Order and approved by the Event Policing Lead.

### Medical Assessment

All persons subjected to Taser discharge who have been arrested mustultimately be examined and assessed by a registered medical practitioner – a doctor (for example a Forensic Physician (FP) or Emergency Department doctor) who is familiar with the nature of Taser-associated risks and complications. If the doctor is unfamiliar with these unique risks and complications, they must be provided with a copy of Medical Management of People Subjected to Discharge from Conducted Energy Devices (‘TASERs’) Form (Form 064-012A) to inform them. If the arrested person is not showing any adverse effects, they must be taken to a custody facility in the first instance to be assessed by a health care professional who will advise the FP who will then attend and examine the subject. If there is any doubt about the subject’s condition they must be taken straight to hospital.

In the absence of any arrest/criminality, police officers do not have any power to remove a person from their home to receive medical treatment after being subjected to a Taser discharge. If the person will not voluntarily attend hospital, officers should request the attendance of emergency medical personnel and stay with the individual until they can be assessed. There may be an exception to the foregoing in that if the individual is so adversely affected that there is a risk to life, there may be a justification to remove the person to hospital in terms of Section 20 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

As a minimum, following Taser discharge, officers should request the assistance of emergency medical personnel where the subject refuses to voluntarily attend hospital. Following this assessment, and if the subject still refuses to attend hospital voluntarily, then the subject should be monitored until the STO is satisfied that there is no immediate risk to the subjects health and safety and thereafter must be provided with a Taser information leaflet. The officers must record this information and their rationale on their mobile devices and/or notebooks.

In terms of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, where a person suffering from mental disorder is in public and is in need of immediate care or treatment, police officers can take them to a place of safety. This does not apply when the person is in a private premises. Therefore if concerns are still present around the mental health of the subject, then existing procedures to deal with persons suffering from a mental disorder within private premises under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 should be followed. Further guidance is contained within Mental Health and Place of Safety SOP.

Officers must also be cognisant of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence) and Article 5 (right to liberty and security) of the European Convention on Human Rights. In terms of Article 8, a person has the right to refuse medical treatment and any interference with this right must be necessary, proportionate and be conducted in accordance with the law (for example, in accordance with the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003; or in terms of Section 20 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 where officers may have a lawful basis to intervene where there is an immediate risk to life). Article 5 provides that no one shall be deprived of their liberty, save in a number of prescribed circumstances and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law. The forceable removal of a person from their home for the purpose of medical treatment is likely to constitute an unlawful deprivation of liberty, in contravention of Article 5.

## Recording and Reporting

A Specially Trained Officer X2 Taser Deployment Form (Form 064-035) must be completed on every occasion where a Taser is usedand emailed to theSpecially Trained Officer Compliance Teamat OSD Taser Policy and Compliance.

The form must be completed prior to the end of each tour of duty, but in any case within 24 hours of the use.

Under no circumstances will a STO submit a Taser deployment Form directly to the PIRC.

If Taser has been fired/used in Direct Contact Mode or if Taser is used within the Custody Suite environment in any capacity the Taser deployment form will be forwarded to PSD to review, in line with NPCC recommendations. This must be forwarded by the Chief Taser Instructor, once the form standard has been reviewed.

## Routine Downloads

Each Taser device must be downloaded every 8 weeks and the data stored centrally. This information will be retained to provide an audit trail of the activation of each Taser and to identify any faults. This function will be carried out by the appropriately nominated Taser downloader at each response Hub.

The Taser download process also includes the inspection of cartridges and cartridge expiration date. Do not use an expired cartridge.

All faults or download issues must be brought to the attention of the Taser Hub SPOC or theSpecially Trained Officer Compliance Team (OSD Taser Policy and Compliance).

## Additional Information

The OST Guidance on Conducted Energy Devices (Taser) document provides non-STOs information on Police Scotland’s approach to the training and deployment of STOs and the knowledge and skills required to safely manage incidents involving use of CED and to provide an awareness of how CEDs work and where the device may be deployed. This document is also designed to assist line managers, ACR and custody staff in developing a better understanding of CEDs, how they will be deployed, how officers are selected and trained and the responsibilities of supporting departments.

## Key Contacts

For additional information please e-mail.

Information has been removed due to its content being exempt in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 Section 30 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs.

Additional guidance and information can also be found on the National Taser Unit Intranet Pages.

## Compliance record

EqHIRA completion/review date: 09/10/2024

Information Management Compliant: Yes

Health and Safety Compliant: Yes

## Version Control Table

| **Version** | **History of amendments** | **Approval date** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1.00 | Initial Approved Version | 31/05/2018 |
| 2.00 | Paragraph 13.18.4 and 13.18.5 amended to reflect changes to ACR and Duty Officer responsibilities. Paragraph 14.7 included to provide direction to STOs when conducting prisoner escorts to Prison establishments. Amendment to Paragraph 19 to include direction that persons subject to Taser discharge must be examined by a qualified medical professional. | 16/01/2019 |
| 3.00 | Content fully revised, rationalised and reformatted in line with the SOP Review Guiding Principles. | 03/12/2020 |
| 4.00 | Document reformatted to meet accessibility standards with process steps replacing previous flowcharts. Contact details and hyperlinks updated. SOP updated regarding change in PSD reporting, removal of STO Authorisation Card, direction on carrying TASER at events, change in terminology from drive stun to direct contact mode and changes made in relation to C3 terminology – reference to Taser Tag removed, paragraph updated to include requirement for STO to inform ACR when deploying with Taser at commencement of duty and update on closure codes. Text added to Intentional and Unintentional Processes to include forwarding of discharge form to PSD and PIRC. Changes made to unintentional discharge procedure. Inclusion of PS29 closure code. Taser use definition added in Section 2. Paragraph added in relation to seeking medical attention following Taser discharge in a private dwelling where no criminality has been identified. Role of Taser SPOC added. | 08/10/2024 |

## Feedback

All Police Scotland service delivery Policies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and National Guidance are subject to regular reviews. It is important that user feedback is taken into account when documents are reviewed.

If any officer / staff member wishes to provide comment, or make suggestions for improvements to this or any associated document, Force Form 066-014 should be used.