Taser Deployments: 2014 in Review

Purpose:

This document provides a review of the data relating to Taser deployments during 2014 Where relevant a comparative analysis with Taser data for 2013 has been provided.

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Definitions

This document discusses six types of Taser deployments, this includes four types of 'Operational Deployments' and two types of 'Non-Operational Deployments'. Each deployment type is defined here.

Operational

Draw and Cover – The Taser is drawn from the holster so as to cover a subject.

Probes Discharged – The Taser is discharged resulting in the Taser cartridge discharging and firing two probes towards the subject.

Drive Stun – The electrodes of the Taser are applied directly to the subject, with or without the Taser cartridge attached to the device.

Probes Discharged and Drive Stun – This is a combination of the Probes Discharged deployment and the Drive Stun deployment. The Probes Discharged deployment is used first (i.e. the Taser probes are discharged towards the subject), followed soon after by a Drive Stun deployment (i.e. the electrodes of the Taser are applied directly to the subject).

Non-Operational

Hazardous Practice – Any action or inaction by the Taser operator which falls outside the Taser standard operating procedures.

Accidental Discharge – This is a type of Hazardous Practice which generally occurs during a spark test of the Taser, prior to the Officer commencing shift.

Caveat: Data is sourced from the NSWPF Taser IMS database and is correct as of 2 March 2015. Data is compiled by the Taser Project Team. Author: Allan Foster.

Executive Summary

The total number of operational Taser deployments in 2014 amounted to 781, which represents a 9% decrease on the 2013 total of 854 operational deployments. The decline in the number of operational deployments was apparent for each of the four operational deployment types (i.e. Draw and Cover, Probes Discharged, Drive Stun, and Probes Discharged combined with Drive Stun).

The ratio of Draw and Covers to Operational Discharges in 2014 was: 79.5% for Draw & Covers and 20.5% for Operational Discharges. However, looking at the these ratios since the wider implementation of Taser in 2010, the Draw and Cover ratio is 74.5% compared to 25.5% for Operational Discharges. Thus, in 2014, Officers showed a greater propensity to use the Draw and Cover deployment than what has been the general trend for Draw and Cover usage since the implementation of Taser.

Of the six geographic regions, Northern Region and North-West Metropolitan Regions had the highest number of operational deployments in 2014 compared to the other four regions. The ratios for Draw & Cover usage across the six regions ranged from 75% up to 81%. While at the Local Area Command (LAC) level, the highest number of operational deployments occurred at St Marys LAC which had 25 operational deployments. There were four LACs which had operational deployment totals of greater than 20 deployments in 2014.

The greatest percentage of operational Taser deployments occurred in the evening or early hours of the morning. Saturdays and Sundays accounted for the busiest days of operational usage in 2014. The most prominent Associated Factors relating to operational Taser deployments in 2014 continued to be Mental Illness Related, Alcohol Related, and Domestic Violence Related – as was the case in 2013. Similarly, the most prominent locations for operational Taser deployments in 2014 continued to be Residential and Outdoor/Public place – as also occurred in 2013.

In conclusion, and based on the statistical evidence contained in this report, it is evident that since the wider implementation of the Taser weapon in 2010, Operational Deployments could be considered to be trending downwards.

Section 1 – Operational Deployments: Overview

Aggregate Figures for Operational Deployment Types – 2013 and 2014

Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1 display aggregates of the four operational deployment types for 2013 and 2014. Table 1.1 also displays the percentage change in the aggregate of each deployment from 2013 to 2014.

Deployment	Year-2013	Year-2014	Percentage change
			(2013 to 2014)
Draw & Cover	671	620	Decrease of 8%
Probes Discharged	156	145	Decrease of 7%
Probes Discharged with Drive Stun	21	14	Decrease of 33%
Drive Stun	6	2	Decrease of 66%
TOTALS	854	781	Decrease of 9%

[Table 1.1]



[Figure: 1.1]

The operational use of Taser declined from 854 operational deployments in 2013 to 781 operational deployments in 2014. This represents an overall decrease of 9%.

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In line with this decrease in the overall total between 2013 and 2014 there was a similar decrease in the aggregates for each operational deployment type.

The Draw and Cover deployment is the type used most often by Officers. Draw and Covers decreased from 671 in 2013 to 620 in 2014, a decrease of 8%. Similarly, the next most common deployment is the Probes Discharged deployment, this deployment type decreased from 156 in 2013 to 145 in 2014, a decrease of 7%.

The remaining two deployment types (i.e. Probes Discharged combined with a Drive Stun, and the Drive Stun only deployment) are used far less often by Officers. The figures for these two deployment types also declined.

Ratios of Operational Deployment Types – 2013 and 2014

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 and Figures 1.2 and 1.3 display the ratios of each operational deployment type in relation to the annual total of operational deployments. The ratios are expressed as a percentage of the overall annual total operational deployments.

2013 Operational Deployments (with ratios)				
Deployment type	Deployment total	Ratio to overall total		
Draw / Cover	671	78.5%		
Probes Discharged	156	18.25%		
Probes Discharged & Drive Stun	21	2.5%		
Drive Stun	6	0.75%		
TOTAL	854	100%		

[Table 1.2]



[Figure: 1.2]

2014 Operational Deployments (with ratios)				
Deployment type	Deployment total	Ratio to overall total		
Draw / Cover	620	79.5%		
Probes Discharged	145	18.5%		
Probes Discharged & Drive Stun	14	1.75%		
Drive Stun	2	0.25%		
TOTAL	781	100%		

[Table 1.3]



[Figure: 1.3]

The ratios of operational deployments have generally remained consistent when comparing operational Taser usage data from 2013 to that of 2014. The following points are highlighted:

- The rate of Draw and Cover deployments increased slightly as a ratio of all operational deployments accounting for 78.5% in 2013 and 79.5% in 2014;
- The rate of Probes Discharged deployments had a minimal increase as a ratio of all operational deployments accounting for 18.25% in 2013 and 18.5% in 2014;
- The rate of Probes Discharged combined with a Drive Stun/s as a deployment type decreased as a ratio of all operational deployments accounting for 2.5% in 2013 and dropping to 1.75% in 2014;
- The rate of Drive Stuns as a deployment type decreased as a ratio of all operational deployments accounting for 0.75% in 2013 and dropping to 0.25% in 2014.

Ratios of Operational Deployment Types – Since Initial Implementation

The ratios of each operational deployment since the initial implementation of the Taser weapon in 2007 are also provided – see Table 1.4 and Figure 1.4 below. The purpose of providing the ratios dating back to the initial implementation of Taser is to compare 2014 ratios with the overall deployment ratios covering approximately eight years of deployment data.

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Operational Deployments - Since Implementation (with ratios)				
Deployment type	Deployment total	Ratio to overall total		
Draw / Cover	3719	74.75%		
Probes Discharged	975	19.5%		
Probes Discharged & Drive Stun	167	3.5%		
Drive Stun	117	2.25%		
TOTAL	4978	100%		

[Table 1.4]



[Figure: 1.4]

The 2014 ratio for Draw and Cover deployments (79.5%), compared to that of the ratio for Draw and Cover deployments since implementation (74.5%), indicates that Draw and Cover usage for 2014 is superior to the overall trend for Draw and Cover deployments.

Equally, the ratios for operational discharges in 2014 were less for each discharge type (Probes Discharged, Probes Discharge and Drive Stun, and Drive Stun only) when compared to the ratios relating to operational discharges since implementation.

Section 2 – Operational & Non-Operational Deployments:

Regions & Specialist Commands

Regions and Specialist Commands – All Deployment Types – 2013 & 2014

Figure 2.1 displays aggregates of all deployment types (i.e. the four operational deployment types and the two non-operational deployment types) for 2013 and 2014. Note: non-operational deployments account for a relatively low percentage of Taser usage.



[Figure 2.1]

Of the six geographic regions, two regions saw slight increases in their overall deployment aggregates between 2013 and 2014. Those two regions were Northern Region (an increase of 4%) and Southern Region (an increase of 7.5%).

The other four geographic regions saw decreases in their overall deployment aggregates between 2013 and 2014. Those decreases were: Western Region (decrease of 22%), Central Metropolitan (decrease of 16%), South West Metropolitan (decrease of 14%), North West Metropolitan (a decrease of 6%).

The Specialist Commands continued to have relatively low numbers of deployments.

Regions and Specialist Commands – Breakdown of Deployment Types – 2014



Figure 2.2 provides a comparative view of the ratios for each Regions' and Specialist Commands' deployment types for 2014.

[Figure 2.2]

The ratio within each geographic region for the Draw and Cover deployment compared to operational discharges (Probes Discharged, Probes Discharge and Drive Stun, and Drive Stun only) is as follows:

- Northern Region (80% Draw and Cover; 20% operational discharges)
- Southern Region (75% Draw and Cover; 25% operational discharges)
- Western Region (76% Draw and Cover; 24% operational discharges)
- Central Metro (80% Draw and Cover; 20% operational discharges)
- South West Metro (81% Draw and Cover; 19% operational discharges)
- North West Metro (81% Draw and Cover; 19% operational discharges)

LACs: Highest Operational Taser Usage – 2013 and 2014

Table 2.1 provides the names of those Local Area Commands which had aggregate operational Taser usage of more than 15 operational deployments in 2013 and 2014.

	2013				2014		•
LACs: Highe	est Operational	l Taser Usage i	in 2013	LACs: Highe	est Operational	Taser Usage i	in 2014
LAC	Draw & Cover	Discharge	Total	LAC	Draw & Cover	Discharge	Total
Chifley	23	5	28	St Marys	19	6	25
St Marys	25	3	28	Coffs/Clarence	14	10	24
Tweed/Byron	16	8	24	Mt Druitt	20	4	24
Bankstown	13	8	22	Lake Illawarra	19	2	21
Mt Druitt	15	4	19	Blacktown	17	2	19
Richmond LAC	11	7	18	Richmond LAC	17	2	19
Campbelltown	16	1	17	Chifley	13	5	18
Canobolas	12	5	17	Canobolas	13	4	17
Central Hunter	13	4	17	St George	13	4	17
Sutherland	16	1	17	Central Hunter	12	4	16
n/a			n/a	Wagga Wagga	15	1	16

[Table 2.1]

The following points emerge from the data contained in Table 2.1:

- The figure for highest operational Taser usage in a LAC declined between 2013 and 2014 that is, the figure of 28 operational deployments in 2013 (shared by St Marys LAC and Chifley LAC) decrease to a figure of 25 operational deployments in 2014, with that figure being attributed to St Marys LAC.
- The LACs highlighted in red font feature in both lists (i.e. those LACs had totals of more than 15 operational deployments in both 2013 and 2014). Those LACs are: St Marys LAC, Chifley LAC, Mt Druitt LAC, Richmond LAC, Canoblas LAC, Central Hunter.

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Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4 provide a visual of each LACs' Draw & Cover deployments versus their Operational Discharges.

[Figure 2.3]



[Figure 2.4]

In the two groups displayed for 2013 and 2014, the majority of LACs have good ratios of 75% Draw and Covers or greater (i.e. when compared to their respective total operational deployments for the relevant year). The LACs which have not achieved a 75% or better Draw and Cover ratio are:

- In 2014: Coffs/Clarence (58%), Chifley (72%), Wollongong (69%)
- In 2013: Tweed/Byron (67%), Bankstown (62%), Richmond (61%), Canoblas (70%).

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Section 3 – Reasons for Operational Deployments

This section provides information regarding the authorised reasons Officers nominate for the operational use of their Taser weapons. As per the Taser standard operating procedures, an Officer may only deploy the Taser weapon for the following four reasons:

- Protection of human life;
- Protection of themselves or others where violent confrontation or violent resistance is occurring or imminent;
- Protection of an Officer/s in danger of being overpowered or protection of themselves or other persons from the risk of actual bodily harm;
- Protection from animals.

Reasons for Deployment – All Operational Deployments – Aggregates

Figure 3.1 compares the authorised reasons, relating to operational Taser deployments, for 2013 and 2014. Note: A Taser deployment can have more than one authorised reason used to categorise the reason for deployment.



[Figure 3.1]

The reason most often nominated by Officers for their deploying their Tasers in 2013 and 2014 is to protect themselves or others where violent confrontation or violent resistance is occurring or imminent.

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Document has been released by the NSW Police Force Information Access Unit. The second most nominated reason in both 2013 and 2014 was the category relating to the protection of Officers and others against the risk of actual bodily harm, while the third most nominated reason in both 2013 and 2014 was for the protection of human life.

Reasons for Deployment - Draw & Covers vs. Operational Discharges - 2014

Figure 3.2 provides a breakdown for each Reason for Deployment category to compare the number of Draw and Cover deployments versus the number of Operational Discharges within that reason category for the year 2014.



[Figure 3.2]

While the aggregate number of Draw and Covers and the aggregate number of Operational Discharges within each Reason for Deployment category differs, the actual ratios are equal across the three main Reason for Deployment categories. That is, the breakdown is 79% Draw and Covers and 21% Operational Discharges for each of the categories: protection of human life, the avoidance of violent confrontation, and protection against the risk of actual bodily harm.

Section 4 – Characteristics of Operational Deployments

This section provides more detailed information about the context and circumstances surrounding operational deployments which occurred during 2014. A comparative analysis of the data examines the following:

- Comparisons between the time of day in which operational deployments occur;
- Comparisons between the days of the week on which operational deployments occur;
- Comparisons between the locations and premises types where operational deployments occur;
- Comparisons between the associated factors relating to operational deployments.

Time of Day – All Operational Deployments

The time of day in which Tasers were deployed operationally has been broken down into eight distinct 3-hour time blocks. Figure 4.1 displays the aggregate for each of these 3-hour time blocks for the 2014 period.



[Figure: 4.1]

The three busiest time blocks for operational Taser deployments were: the 9:00pm-Midnight period, followed by the 6:00pm-9:00pm period, and the Midnight-3:00am period, respectively. The majority of operational deployments occurred in the nine hour period from 6:00pm to 3:00am, with this period accounting for 55% of operational deployments.

The least busy time blocks for operational Taser deployments were: the 3:00am-6:00am period and the 6:00am-9:00am period, respectively.

Days of the Week – All Operational Deployments

Figure 4.2 displays the seven days of the week and shows the aggregate number of operational Taser deployments for each day over the 2014 period.



[Figure: 4.2]

Saturday and Sunday were the days on which Tasers were most often deployed operationally during 2014, with 20.9% of operational deployments on Saturdays and 18.3% of operational deployments on Sundays. Looking at other days in conjunction with the weekend, over half of operational deployments (54.5%) occurred between the Friday-Sunday period, and over two-thirds (66.9%) took place between the Thursday-Sunday period.

Location / Premises Types – All Operational Deployments

Figure 4.3 compares the locations / premises types, relating to operational Taser deployments, for 2013 and 2014.



[Figure: 4.3]

The primary location / premises type for operational deployments is Residential. In 2013 the Residential category accounted for 62% of operational deployments and in 2014 it accounted for 67% of operational deployments. The next most frequent location / premises type in both 2013 and 2014 is Outdoor/Public Place. All other locations / premises types had relatively low figures compared to the main two categories.

Note: Only those locations and premises types which had operational deployments numbering greater than 10 (in either 2013 or 2014) are displayed in Figure 3.3 – other locations and premises types where operational deployments occurred throughout either 2013 or 2014, but had totals less than 10, were: Recreation, Education, Religious, Utilities, Industrial, and Rural Industry.

Associated Factors – All Operational Deployments – Aggregates

Figure 4.4 compares the associated factors, relating to operational Taser deployments, for 2013 and 2014. Note: A Taser deployment can have more than one associated factor used to categorise the nature of the incident. Only associated factors which totalled 10 or more are included here.



[Figure: 4.4]

As displayed in Figure 4.4, of the six most prominent associated factors relating to operational Taser deployments, the top four associated factors (Mental Illness Related, Alcohol Related, Domestic Violence Related, and Concern for Safety) saw a significant decrease between 2013 and 2014. Drug Related matters remained steady while Personal Violence Related matters saw a small increase.

Associated Factors - Discharge Deployments

(i.e. Probes Discharged, Drive Stuns only, and combined Probes Discharged with Drive Stuns)

Figure 4.5 compares the associated factors relating to those operational Taser Deployments where a Taser was discharged, for 2013 and 2014.



[Figure: 4.5]

While Figure 4.4 indicates that Mental Illness Related is clearly the most numerous associated factor across all operational deployments, Figure 4.5 shows that when a Taser is operationally discharged, Mental Illness Related is only marginally ahead of Alcohol Related as the most numerous associate factor. That is, during 2014, Mental Illness Related matters were a factor in 67 operational Taser discharges compared to Alcohol Related matters which were a factor in 57 operational Taser discharges. A comparison with 2013 data indicates an equivalent scenario occurred, again involving Mental Illness Related and Alcohol Related matters.

Examining associated factors relating to operational Taser discharges also provides an indication as to how often a Taser is discharged in 2014 relevant to each individual associated factor. For the six most prominent associated factors, the frequency of an operational Taser discharge in 2014 is displayed in Table 4.1, see below:

2014: Associated Factors: Frequency of Taser Discharge				
Associated Factor (AF)	All Operational Deployments for this AF	Matters in which a Taser was discharged for this AF		
Mental Illness Related	287	21%		
Alcohol Related	224	25%		
Domestic Violence Related	199	16%		
Concern For Safety	167	23%		
Drug Related	102	25%		
Personal Violence Related	46	11%		

[Table: 4.1]

Associated Factors – All Operational Deployments at Region Level



Figure 4.6 displays the Associated Factors for operational Taser deployments as per each Region.

[Figure: 4.6]

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By grouping the three Metropolitan regions and the three Country regions into two separate groups, the following data indicates which grouping has a greater or lesser proportion of an associated factor category relating to Taser deployments.

2014: Associated Factors - Metropolitan versus Country				
Associated Factor	Metropolitan	Country		
Mental Illness Related	57%	43%		
Alcohol Related	35%	65%		
Domestic Violence Related	43%	57%		
Drug Related	50%	50%		
Concern For Safety	54%	46%		
Personal Violence Related	56%	44%		

[Table 4.2]

As the percentages in Table 4.2 indicate, when considering the associated factors relating to Taser deployments in Metropolitan regions compared to Country regions, the following trends emerge:

- In general terms, Mental Illness Related matters are more prominent in the Metropolitan regions than the Country regions with an overall percentage of 57% in Metropolitan regions compared to 43% in Country regions;
- However, this trend is significantly reversed when considering Alcohol Related matters for these matters, Country regions have an overall percentage of 65% compared to 35% for Metropolitan regions;
- Domestic Violence Related matters are also more prominent in Country regions with an overall percentage of 57% compared to 43% for Metropolitan regions;
- For the remaining three categories, Concern For Safety matters and Personal Violence Related matters tend to have a greater prominence in Metropolitan regions compared to Country regions, while Drug Related matters are fairly evening distributed between Metropolitan and Country regions.

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Section 5 – Annual Trends of Operational Deployments

This section provides a brief overview of the monthly trends in operational deployments assessed over the three years: 2012, 2013, and 2014.



[Figure: 5.1]

The trend lines for monthly operational deployments follow very similar patterns throughout 2012 and 2013 in the way the aggregates increase or decrease each month. The trend line for 2014 mirrors the trend lines for the previous two years to some extent, but then there are also some noticeable differences in how operational deployment monthly totals in 2014 trended away from the previous two years.

All three trend lines (2012, 2013, 2014) follow similar patterns for the months of January to May with higher January and March totals and lower totals in February followed by further dips in April and May. However, the trend line for 2014 behaves differently to the 2012 and 2013 trend lines in the following instances:

- In June the 2014 trend line continues to trend downwards this is different to 2012 and 2013 where the trend lines showed increases in the June totals;
- From July up to November the 2014 trend line generally travels upward with a plateau between October and November this is different to 2012 and 2013 where the trend lines tend to mirror each another by generally showing similar increases and decreases between July and November. This results in the 2014 trend line sitting noticeably higher for November compared to the 2012 and 2013 trend lines;
- The behaviour of the 2014 trend line between November and December is in stark contrast to the 2012 and 2013 trend lines, with the 2014 trend line travelling downwards to a significantly low total for the month of December.

Document Preparation, Authorisation and Approval

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