


Government is considering use of Taser in wider range of incidents, according to chief officers

 Police minister Hazel Blears is considering extending the use of Taser to non-firearms situations, according to the ACPO lead on conflict management.

Currently, Taser is deployed to specially trained firearms officers in situations where the use of firearms has been authorised.

But Mike Tonge, ACPO lead on conflict management and chief constable of Gwent Police, revealed that in a recent meeting with Ms Blears she indicated she would be more interested in considering deploying Taser to more situations than extending its use beyond firearms officers.

Derek Talbot, ACPO media spokesman on Taser and assistant chief constable of Northamptonshire, also told a Capita conference on officer safety that he had asked the Home Office for Taser to be used in a wider range of situations.

'We have requested the use of Taser in more incidents. The minister will get back to us. We have made our case and we await the reply with interest.'

The Federation has called for Taser to be used in a wider range of situations and by frontline officers increasingly facing violence on the streets.

A survey at the Federation's annual conference last year found that around three-quarters of those questioned wanted to be armed with the stun device.

Research carried out by Price-waterhouseCooper showed little public support for rolling out Taser to all officers. More than 90 per cent of the public surveyed wanted to confine the use of Taser to specially trained officers.

Taser has been used in 212 cases since April 2003. In 80 incidents the stun gun was fired but in

115 cases it was just aimed or the red dot used.

Chief officers at the conference warned that a national roll-out could damage public relations and lead to misuse. They rejected the idea of equipping all officers with the less-lethal weapon.

Mr Talbot agreed that the use of Taser 'had a direct bearing' on officer safety and gave them greater protection, but he added: 'People confuse the sort of officers who should have Taser with the sort of incidents they should be deployed in.'

'Rolling it out to all officers increases the risks of misuse and could lead to a loss of public support.'


'It could lead to situations where questions will rightly be asked about whether or not it was used appropriately. Currently it is totally controlled.'



Mike Tonge: Taser could be used in more situations

Sgt Simon Williams, also from Northamptonshire Police, said a widespread deployment of Taser could resort to it being used inappropriately.

'There are some situations where Taser cannot be used. Even firearms officers misuse it on occasions.'

● See Taser feature on  pages 14 and 15.

Majority of officers killed on duty are in vehicle accidents

Most police officers are killed in vehicle-related incidents, according to UKCOPS, the charity that supports survivors of fallen officers.

Sixty three officers have been killed as the result of road accidents between 2000 and 2005, leaving 87 children without a parent.

UKCOPS (UK Care of Police Survivors) said it hoped to carry out further research into the high numbers of officer deaths that happen on the roads.

Dick Coleman, chairman of UKCOPS, raised concerns that changes in shift patterns may play a role in the deaths of officers who had finished duty and were returning home.


Margaret Stafford, whose son Cambridgeshire officer PC Andreas Newbery was killed in 2003, gave a moving presentation on the importance of the work of UKCOPS.

PC Stafford, who was her only child, died on the hard shoulder of the A1 motorway near Alconbury in Cambridgeshire. He was preparing to protect the scene of a vehicle collision, when a passing car spun out of control in the icy road conditions and struck the officer, causing multiple injuries. He died at the scene.

● For more information on UKCOPS, log on to www.ukcops.org



Health and safety can only improve if people stop 'pointing the finger'

 The service must move away from 'blame' culture if health and safety for officers and staff is to improve.

Fred Callum, chairman of the Association of Police Health and Safety Advisors, told a Capita conference that health and safety is an 'attitude and a frame of mind to be accepted.'

'The culture in the service has always been a pointing of the finger. Because of that, people are not opening up. We do not get to the root cause. How are we going to change things for the future?'

'We need to provide better training that looks at the root causes and doesn't apportion blame. It needs to be the golden thread that runs through what we do.'

Mr Callum said occupational health departments still carry a stigma, but had a vital role to play in proactively working to improve health and safety.

'Occupational health is relatively young. The perception is that it undertakes medicals, fitness tests and vaccinations. The work of picking up the pieces after something has gone wrong.'

'It is seen as a weakness which has a stigma attached to it. This is a barrier that we need to break down.'

Mr Callum said a model used in firearms situations could be used to help reduce the number of assaults on officers and staff.

'Assaults on the police officers and staff are rising, despite 81 per cent of staff in the police receiving training in violence and threatening behaviour.'

'The conflict management model is used for firearms. Can it not be brought into officer safety training in terms of threat assessment? Can it not be a standard model applied throughout the service? It could be built into the briefing aspect. It is something worth considering.'