



## Seattle Office of Police Accountability

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May 29, 2025

Chief Shon F. Barnes  
Seattle Police Department  
PO Box 34986  
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Barnes:

Please see the below Management Action Recommendation.

### Case Number

- 2024OPA-0403 / 2025COMP-0009

### Topic

Use of Taser on Fleeing Subjects

### Summary

- It was alleged that the named employee violated policy by deploying their taser at a fleeing subject absent “other factors.”

### Analysis

- At the time of the allegation SPD Interim Policy 8.300<sup>1</sup> prohibited officers from deploying a taser on a fleeing subject absent “other factors.”
- The current SPD Policy 8.300 similarly states “tasers should not be used on a person who is fleeing the scene, absent other factors.”<sup>2</sup>
- SPD training provides examples of “other factors” to consider whether to tase a fleeing subject in their Taser 10 new user course,<sup>3</sup> but these examples are not articulated in SPD’s current taser policy nor does the policy provide any guidance as to what factors should be considered.
- In another OPA investigation,<sup>4</sup> OPA identified a lack of clarity in policy as to when a subject is “fleeing the scene.”
- Axon produces a policy playbook for departments. The playbook outlines circumstances in which officers might avoid using the tool and recommends offering “specific guidance” on topics such as “fleeing subjects.”<sup>5</sup>
- A joint DOJ and PERF report stated “Fleeing should not be the sole justification for using an ECW [electronic control weapon] against a subject. Personnel should consider the severity of the offense,

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<sup>1</sup> Seattle Police Department. Policy Manual. 8.300 Interim Policy Use of Force Tools. POL 3B (6). Revised 12/01/2023.

<sup>2</sup> Seattle Police Department. Policy Manual. [8.300 Use of Force Tools](#). POL 3 (6). Revised 09/01/2024.

<sup>3</sup> SPD Training. Taser 10 New User Course. 4/10/2024.

<sup>4</sup> 2024OPA-0164. OPA also observed related questions in 2025OPA-0086/2025FIT-0002 and the factual scenario in 2025OPA-0092.

<sup>5</sup> Axon. Taser Energy Weapon Policy Playbook. Retrieved 04/07/2025.



the subject's threat level to others, and the risk of severe injury to the subject before deciding to use an ECW on a fleeing subject."<sup>6</sup>

- RCW 10.120.020 permits the use of force to “prevent a person from fleeing” provided they are given notice they are not free to leave. This statute also encourages the use of less lethal alternatives before using deadly force.<sup>7</sup>
- OPA reviewed policies from comparable cities.
  - Portland policy states that “a person’s mere flight from an officer is not a sufficient reason for the use of a less lethal weapon” but does not specify conditions that would call for a subject to be tased when fleeing.<sup>8</sup>
  - Chicago’s policy advises officers that “fleeing alone is not a sufficient cause to tase” and to avoid the use of tasers on subjects who “could fall,” “are running, or are otherwise in motion.” It does not prohibit officers from using taser on subjects who are fleeing but also does not articulate criterion to evaluate the propriety of tasing a fleeing subject.<sup>9</sup>

**Recommendations**

- SPD should revise SPD Policy 8.300-POL-3(6) to provide guidance regarding: (1) when a subject is “fleeing the scene,” and (2) what “other factors” should be considered to evaluate whether a taser may be deployed at a fleeing subject.

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie Glenn".

Bonnie Glenn  
Interim Director, Office of Police Accountability

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<sup>6</sup> Police Executive Research Forum and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. “[Electronic Control Weapon Guidelines](#).” Washington D.C. March 20, 2011. (Guideline 26)

<sup>7</sup> Washington Legislature. [RCW 10.120.020. “Permissible uses of force.”](#)

<sup>8</sup> City of Portland. Policy Manual. [1010.00 Use of Force](#). Effective 09/11/2024.

<sup>9</sup> City of Chicago. Policy Manual. [General Order 03-02-04. Taser Use Incidents](#). Effective 02/29/2020.