Simply Stunning! A Proposed Solution for Regulating the Use of Tasers by Law Enforcement in the Seventh Circuit

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholar.valpo.edu/vulr/vol49/iss3/13
SIMPLY STUNNING! A PROPOSED SOLUTION FOR REGULATING THE USE OF TASERS BY LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT

I. INTRODUCTION

During a routine early morning call in Spaulding, Illinois, animal control was sent to a house to secure an unchained dog.\(^1\) Upon arrival, the dog’s twenty-year-old owner, Travis, resisted animal control’s attempt to capture the loose dog.\(^2\) Travis also threatened the animal control officers, saying he would “knock them out,” and “kick [their] ass.”\(^3\) In response, police officers were dispatched to the location.\(^4\)

Despite police presence, the scene continued to escalate with the arrival of Travis’s mother, Cindy.\(^5\) Travis eventually exited the house and was placed under arrest.\(^6\) Following the arrest, police were transporting Travis, who continued to be uncooperative and caused the transporting officer to back his vehicle into Cindy’s vehicle.\(^7\) Travis pleaded for Cindy “to get him out.”\(^8\) Cindy approached, prompting the officer to exit his

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\(^2\) Abbott, 705 F.3d at 709. Animal control spent over an hour attempting to secure the dog, but their efforts were hindered because Travis was inside the house moving to different locations and calling out windows for the dog to come to that location. \(id.\)

\(^3\) \(id.\) Later, during Travis’s arrest, he “yelled to the animal control officers, ‘Thanks a lot assholes!’” \(id.\) at 710.

\(^4\) \(id.\) at 709.

\(^5\) \(id.\) at 710.

\(^6\) Abbott, 705 F.3d at 710.

\(^7\) \(id.\)

\(^8\) \(id.\) While in the backseat of the police vehicle, Travis was able to wiggle his hands free from behind his back. \(id.\) After his hands were free, Travis unhooked his seatbelt. \(id.\) These actions posed a threat to the officer because he was unprotected by a “prisoner-transport shield” between the front and back seats. \(id.\) at 710. The officer therefore placed his foot on
vehicle. The officer gave Cindy both visual and verbal instructions to stop approaching the car; however, she ignored the warnings and proceeded to move toward the officer and Travis, who remained in the backseat. As a result of her noncompliance, the officer discharged his taser, hitting Cindy in the stomach, causing her to fall to the ground on her back. Even after being tased and instructed to lay face down, Cindy continued to refuse to honor the officer’s instructions. The officer then had two options for securing Cindy after the initial tasing, either: (1) confront her with hand-to-hand tactics and, while doing so, place himself and other officers in danger; or (2) deploy his taser again, allowing Cindy to comply with his instructions, while removing himself and others from a potentially dangerous encounter.

Officers are forced to make decisions like the one above on a daily basis. Unfortunately, they do not have the benefit of clear and consistent rules, guidelines, or statutes governing the use of tasers. The Supreme
2015] Simply Stunning! 909

Court’s refusal to rule on the issue, combined with a circuit split, creates uncertainty as to when an officer can lawfully deploy a taser. Had Illinois adopted a statute governing the appropriate use of tasers, the officer in Abbott v. Sangamon County, Illinois would have been able to make an informed decision as to whether he could have used a taser to gain control over Cindy, during her ongoing disobedience.

Given the current ambiguity, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin should adopt a model statute that resolves the lawful use of tasers by law enforcement. Part II of this Note demonstrates why law enforcement officers need guidance when dealing with tasers in the field and provides an overview of taser regulation at the state level. Next, Part III demonstrates why the legislature needs to rework the current system of taser regulation. Part IV offers a model statute that the states in the Seventh Circuit should adopt to clarify when law enforcement may lawfully utilize tasers. Finally, Part V illustrates how the model statute

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16 Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 287 (“A small number of circuits and the Supreme Court of the United States have not yet addressed the issue.”); Mears, supra note 15 (“Hundreds of . . . [t]aser-related lawsuits have been working their way through lower state and federal courts, but the Supreme Court so far has refused to address the issue of what the officers call a useful pain technique.” (internal quotation marks omitted)).

17 See infra Part II.E (establishing that Illinois is not one of the four states that currently has a statute in place regulating the use of tasers by law enforcement); infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin to adopt). If Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin all adopted the same statute, or at least very similar statutes, then it would not only improve regulation of taser use by law enforcement at the state level, but it would also help eliminate some of the federal issues with taser regulations. See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 287 (“Most circuit courts are split on the issue, and this poses a particular problem for federal law enforcement agents who carry ECDs and must cross jurisdictional lines in the course of their law enforcement duties.”). While this Note is only dealing with taser regulation at the state level, Woolfstead advocates that the solution at the federal level is for the Supreme Court to deliver a ruling on the issue. Id. at 326.

18 See infra Part II (focusing heavily on the Seventh Circuit, the Abbott decision, and states that currently have statutes addressing taser use by law enforcement).

19 See infra Part III.A (analyzing Florida’s current statute for the use of tasers by law enforcement); infra Part III.B (explaining the importance of Florida’s statute’s training requirements for future regulations); infra Part III.C (addressing the importance of including a warning requirement and a medical requirement in future state statutes); infra Part III.D (discussing taser technology that law enforcement should be required to use).

20 See infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute for taser regulation for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin); infra Part IV.B (elaborating on areas of the proposed statute where there may be resistance to its enactment).
addresses and alleviates the current problems governing the use of tasers.\(^{21}\)

II. BACKGROUND

The current system for regulating taser use by law enforcement creates inconsistencies throughout different law enforcement agencies, states, and federal appellate courts.\(^{22}\) For instance, problems arise because the public does not understand or appreciate the benefits that tasers provide to law enforcement.\(^{23}\) Additionally, case law varies widely on the correct way to analyze excessive force claims that arise from law enforcement’s improper use of tasers.\(^{24}\) Finally, only a few states have

\(^{21}\) See infra Part V (concluding the proposed model statute addresses the inconsistencies surrounding when an officer may lawfully deploy a taser).

\(^{22}\) Michelle E. McStravick, Note, The Shocking Truth: Law Enforcement’s Use and Abuse of Tasers and the Need for Reform, 56 VILL. L. REV. 363, 386–88 (2011); see Woolfstead, supra note 15 (providing an in-depth analysis of the different circuits’ views on tasers relating to excessive force claims); see also infra Part II.C (reviewing the current case law on excessive force claims arising from law enforcement’s use of the taser); infra Part II.D (analyzing the varying opinions of the different federal circuit courts as to the location of the taser on the Use-of-Force Continuum); infra Part II.F (discussing the states that have currently adopted statutes to regulate the use of tasers by law enforcement). McCray and Anderson wrote: “states do not uniformly or consistently govern or regulate officers’ use of Tasers. This means that Taser policies vary greatly between police departments, often leading to vague, outdated and inaccurate guidelines that result in misunderstanding about the misuse of these allegedly non-lethal weapons.” McCray & Anderson, supra note 15. There is an equal concern for the varied taser polices between police departments as there is for the different polices between circuits. J.J. Hensley, ACLU: Rules Vary on Police Taser Use, ARIZ. REPUBLIC (June 29, 2011), http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/20110629/arizona-police-taser-aclu-research.html?hclick_check=1, archived at http://perma.cc/XT6S-7QHC; McCray & Anderson, supra note 15; Justin Murphy, Watchdog Report: Taser Use, Guidelines Vary in Suburbs, DEMOCRAT & CHRON. (Feb. 3, 2013), http://www.democratandchronicle.com/article/20130203/NEWS01/302030016/, archived at http://perma.cc/4EGD-6M2U; see Part II (discussing the inconsistencies with taser regulation between the circuits).


\(^{24}\) See infra Part II.C (explaining how courts have applied the Graham test by using additional factors). An additional hurdle for suspects to overcome, which is not discussed
enacted statutes that provide law enforcement with concrete regulations governing the use of tasers.\textsuperscript{25} Three state statutes in particular—Arkansas, Georgia, and Florida—provide a template that other legislatures may implement in the future to improve officers’ and communities’ understanding of lawful taser usage.\textsuperscript{26}

To appreciate the importance of improved taser regulation, it is first necessary to be aware of how tasers work and what the benefits are of allowing law enforcement to use the device.\textsuperscript{27} Part II.A provides background on tasers and explains how the technology affects both law enforcement and suspects.\textsuperscript{28} Next, Part II.B establishes the potential problems of using tasers on certain classes of suspects.\textsuperscript{29} Part II.C provides the current law on excessive force claims involving taser use.\textsuperscript{30} Then, Part II.D explains where tasers are located on the Use of Force Continuum.\textsuperscript{31} Part II.E explores the Seventh Circuit’s views relating to the Abbott decision.\textsuperscript{32} Finally, Part II.F discusses the current state statutes in effect that govern law enforcement’s use of tasers.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{25} See infra Part II.E (discussing the Seventh Circuit’s decision in Abbott).
\textsuperscript{26} See infra Part II.F (evaluating the Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and New Jersey state statutes that specifically address taser use by law enforcement).
\textsuperscript{27} See infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin to adopt to improve the regulation of taser use by law enforcement).
\textsuperscript{28} See infra Part II.A (providing a general overview of tasers).
\textsuperscript{29} See infra Part II.B (explaining the issue and danger that may be present for certain classes of suspects if law enforcement officers are allowed to use a taser).
\textsuperscript{30} See infra Part II.C (providing the current law for the use of tasers by law enforcement).
\textsuperscript{31} See infra Part II.D (summarizing the Use-of-Force Continuum and its relation to regulating the use of tasers by law enforcement).
\textsuperscript{32} See infra Part II.E (clarifying the Seventh Circuit’s stance on law enforcement’s use of taser after the Abbott decision).
\textsuperscript{33} See infra Part II.F (discussing state statutes that are currently in effect that address law enforcement’s taser usage).
A. An Overview of Tasers

Law enforcement officers are well aware of the inherent risks associated with their line of duty.34 Over 1500 officers across the United States have been killed while on duty since 2004.35 Statistically, these numbers are significantly lower than may be expected since the number of annual assaults against officers can reach as high as 60,000 and the number of officer injuries can exceed 16,000.36

Jack Cover addressed law enforcement’s safety needs when he created the taser, which allowed officials to effectively apprehend suspects while using non-deadly means.37 However, it is TASER International that transformed the taser into the device that is currently used by law enforcement.38 Officers can deploy tasers in two modes—drive stun mode

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36 Deaths, Assaults & Injuries, supra note 34 (posting statistics from 2003 to 2012, which included at least 60,000 assaults against officers in the years 2004, 2007, and 2008 and over 16,000 injuries to officers in the years 2003, 2004, and 2005).

37 Bruce Webber, Jack Cover, 88, Physicist Who Invented the Taser Stun Gun, Dies, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 16, 2009), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/16/us/16cover.html?_r=0, archived at http://perma.cc/NHE3-LNRY. Originally, the abbreviation was T.S.E.R, which stood for Thomas Swift Electric Rifle named after a favorite childhood book of his Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle. Webber, supra; Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 291–92 (discussing Jack Cover’s invention). However, in an interview with The Washington Post, Jack Cover claimed that the abbreviation was changed to TASER “because we got tired of answering the phone ‘T.S.E.R.’” See Webber, supra (quoting Jack Cover from his interview with The Washington Post). Jack Cover died in 2009 at the age of 88. Id. His wife was quoted as saying, “[h]e used to say he saved 100,000 lives.” See id. (quoting Jack Cover’s wife).

38 See Sussman, supra note 23, at 1348 (providing a discussion of TASER International’s past and why they are considered to have “popularized” these devices). Other scholars refer to the devices as “Thomas A. Swift Electric Rifles,” “Conducted Electrical Weapons,” “electronic control devices,” or “stun guns.” See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 287 (referring
and dart stun mode. Each mode provides officers with different advantages and disadvantages. However, the main differences between the modes are how law enforcement officers initiate contact with the suspect and the resulting harm to the suspect.

To illustrate, a taser deployed in dart stun mode fires two dart-like projectiles at the suspect, and upon contact, the projectiles penetrate the suspect’s skin. TASER International eliminated the use of gunpowder to propel the darts and now uses compressed nitrogen. The suspect is first...
given an initial five-second shock, but the officer can send additional shocks throughout the suspect’s body with the wires remaining connected to the device, which can cause temporary paralysis. Further, dart stun mode enables the officer to hit a suspect from a distance of over twenty feet.


44 See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 292–93 (explaining how the “barbs” remain connected by “insulated wires” after being fired and how “[t]he electrical impulse instantly overrides the victim’s central nervous system, paralyzing the muscles throughout the body, rendering the target limp and helpless”); Fabian, supra note 42, at 766 (“[t]he electrical shock lasts for about five seconds, and people typically recover after ten seconds”); Sussman, supra note 23, at 1350 (discussing how the duration of a shock can be extended in dart stun mode by an officer holding the trigger and that dart stun mode results neuromuscular incapacitation); How Does a TASER CEW Work, supra note 43 (“[t]he probes deployed from a TASER CEW carry fine wires that connect to the target and deliver the TASER into his neutral network. These pulses delivered by the TASER CEW overwhelm the normal nerve traffic, causing involuntary muscle contractions and impairment of motor skills”); TASER, TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL 8–9 (2007), available at http://www.taser.com/images/support/downloads/downloads/mk-inst-x26c-001_rev_a_x26c_manual.pdf, archived at http://perma.cc/BG8E-HNVY (explaining the proper use of a taser). The Taser X26C Operating Manual states:

When the X26C is deployed, it delivers a [ten]-second Shaped Pulse energy burst of short-duration electrical impulses. The CID displays a countdown from [ten] to [zero] indicating how many seconds remain in the current burst. The burst can be stopped at any time by positioning the safety switch to the down (SAFE) position. Pulling the trigger two more times during the burst cycle will increase the total electrical discharge cycle time to [thirty] seconds. Continuously holding the trigger will result in continuous discharge until the trigger switch is released or, the DPM is depleted.

TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra, at 8–9.

45 See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 293 (“Tasering technology has developed firing speeds of up to 220 feet per second and can reach distances of up to twenty one feet.”); Miller, supra note 43, at 73 (stating that a taser deployed in dart mode can be shot from twenty-one feet, with the darts or probes traveling at “200–220 feet per second”).
Comparatively, when an officer uses a taser in drive stun mode, the officer must be within a short enough distance to make contact with the taser to the suspect, as the officer must physically touch the suspect with the taser.\textsuperscript{46} When applied, drive stun mode sends shocks to the area of the suspect’s body in contact with the taser.\textsuperscript{47} The shocks persist as long as the device remains in contact with the suspect.\textsuperscript{48}

Technological advancement of tasers is ever evolving.\textsuperscript{49} Notably, tasers are currently being developed to leave no physical injuries to suspects.\textsuperscript{50} Because of this, legal concepts such as the De Minimis Injury Exception (“DME”), which requires alleged victims to show an “actual injury,” arise in this area of law.\textsuperscript{51} Another major advancement in taser technology is the TASER CAM.\textsuperscript{52} The creation of the TASER CAM is particularly important for regulating excessive force claims.\textsuperscript{53} The TASER CAM is

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{46} See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 292–93 (“In drive stun mode, the operator removes the dart cartridge and pushes two electrode contacts located on the front of the taser directly against the victim.”) (quoting in part Mattos v. Agarano, 661 F.3d 433, 443 (9th Cir. 2011)); Sussman, supra note 23, at 1350 (“In drive stun mode, the taser is pressed against the subject’s body . . . .”).
\item\textsuperscript{47} See Sussman, supra note 23, at 1350 (“[D]rive stun mode . . . causes a painful current to run through the specific body area to which the taser is applied.”).
\item\textsuperscript{48} TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra note 44, at 23 (“Drive-stun is only effective while the device is in contact with the subject or the subject’s clothing. As soon as the device is moved away, the energy effect stops.”).
\item\textsuperscript{49} See generally Douglas B. McKechnie, Don’t Daze, Phase, Lose Me, Bro! Fourth Amendment Excessive Force Claims, Future Nonlethal Weapons, and Why Requiring an Injury Cannot Withstand a Constitutional or Practical Challenge, 60 U. KAN. L. REV. 139, 179–82 (2011) (analyzing nonlethal police weaponry).
\item\textsuperscript{50} See infra Part III.C–D (discussing the DME and how the technological advancements have created devices that do not leave marks).
\item\textsuperscript{51} See supra Part III.D (evaluating technological advancements for tasers). However, there are some scholars that believe that the DME is not constitutional. Bryan N. Georgiady, Note, An Excessively Painful Encounter: The Reasonableness of Pain and De Minimis Injuries for Fourth Amendment Excessive Force Claims, 59 SYRACUSE L. REV. 123, 163 (2008) (“The Supreme Court should resolve this issue, and hold that actual injury requirements impinge upon the Fourth Amendment right to freedom from unreasonable seizures.”).
\item\textsuperscript{53} Quentin Hardy, Taser’s Latest Police Weapon: The Tiny Camera and the Cloud, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 21, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/21/technology/tasers-latest-police-weapon-the-tiny-camera-and-the-cloud.html?pagewanted=all, archived at http://perma.cc/Ci6SC-CFBJ; TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra note 44, at 23. Another attachment, not included in the main text of the Note because it is not specifically addressed in the proposed model statute is the Anti-Felon Identification Tags (“ID Tags”). Id. at 13. The ID Tags also further accountability for officers. Id. The ID Tags help determine when a taser is used, where it was used, and which officer deployed the device. Id. As the taser is deployed, twenty-four identification tags, labeled with a serial number, are expelled from the device like “confetti.” Id. (“Every time a [taser] [c]artridge is deployed, at least [twenty-four] small
CAM works by recording a video as soon as the taser is armed and continues to record until the officer disarms the device, which allows them to be used by officers for defensive purposes. Thus, these technological advances will have an effect on the regulation of taser usage by law enforcement. Injuries resulting from taser use also may vary depending on the suspect tased.

B. Categories of Individuals Who May Be at a Heightened Risk When Tased

An officer who deploys a taser at a suspect sends electricity into the person’s body that was not there before the tasing. As a result, the effect of that electricity could differ depending on the person who was tased. Therefore, tasing certain groups of individuals such as children, pregnant women, the physically disabled, the elderly, or those suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol may have an adverse effect on the suspect’s well-being.

confetti-like AFID tags are ejected. Each AFID is printed with the serial number of the cartridge deployed, allowing law enforcement agencies to determine the registered owner of the cartridge and track citizen use if ever used in a criminal act.

See TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra note 44, at 23 ("The TASER CAM is activated any time the safety switch is in the up (ARMED) position. This assists citizens to capture vital information prior to, during, and after the potential deployment of the X26C."). The little camera is capable of recording up to two hours of video. See Hardy, supra note 53 ("can record two hours of video during a shift"); TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra note 44, at 23 ("The TASER CAM records approximately 1.5 hours of MPEG 4 video before recording over previous files (continuous loop system."). Rick Smith, TASER’s co-founder, was quoted as saying, “One big reason to have these is defensive . . . . Police spend $2 billion to $2.5 billion a year paying off complaints about brutality. Plus, people plead out when there is video.” See Hardy, supra note 53 (quoting Rick Smith) (internal quotation marks omitted).

See infra Part IV.A (providing a proposed model statute that incorporates technological advances into its language, as well as safeguards to provide against injuries that are not visible).

See infra Part II.B (discussing individuals that may be at a heightened risk due to the dangers associated with tasers).


See Michael L. Storey, Comment, Explaining the Unexplainable: Excited Delirium Syndrome and its Impact on the Objective Reasonableness Standard for Allegations of Excessive Force, 56 St. Louis U. L.J. 633, 636–37 (2012) (discussing suspects who were tased while suffering from Excited Delirium Syndrome); Black, supra note 57 (writing that some suspects may suffer from cardiac arrest by being tased).

See Fabian, supra note 42, at 768 ("Tas[ing] vulnerable suspects such as the elderly, those with heart problems, minors, restrained suspects, or those who are high on drugs may increase their risk of heart failure or asphyxiation. And shocking suspects multiple times may also increase a suspect’s risk of serious health problems. All of the foregoing factors should be accounted for when crafting laws and policies that govern taser use by law enforcement.

55 See infra Part IV.A (providing a proposed model statute that incorporates technological advances into its language, as well as safeguards to provide against injuries that are not visible).

56 See infra Part II.B (discussing individuals that may be at a heightened risk due to the dangers associated with tasers).


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For example, a phenomenon known as Excited Delirium Syndrome (“EDS”) could account for a majority of taser-related deaths. EDS is a concept that has gained more recognition in recent years and seems to “explain[] complex situations where an individual dies during police contact from injuries insufficient to otherwise cause death.” EDS victims “suffer from increased rates of adrenaline,” which means officers must be able to quickly identify these individuals to properly respond.

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60 Sussman, supra note 23, at 1358–59.
61 See Storey, supra note 58, at 636–37 (“Excited Delirium Syndrome is considered to be a cause of death that explains complex situations where an individual dies during police contact from injuries insufficient to cause death.”). Amnesty International suggests:

[1]n the past few years the term has been used increasingly by medical examiners to explain sudden deaths in custody of individuals in a highly agitated state—usually under the influence of drugs or with some form of psychosis—who suffer a surge of adrenaline and collapse after struggle and police restraint.

‘Less Than Lethal’?: The Use of Stun Weapons in US Law Enforcement, AMNESTY INT’L 26 (Dec. 2008), available at http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/010/2008, archived at http://perma.cc/U8UF-GR9Q; Storey, supra note 58, at 637 (quoting ‘Less Than Lethal’?: The Use of Stun Weapons in US Law Enforcement). However, the American Medical Association has not yet recognized EDS as a diagnosis. Storey, supra note 58, at 642 (“Currently, Excited Delirium Syndrome is not a diagnosis recognized by the American Medical Association or found in the leading diagnostic manuals, which invariable makes it difficult for medical personnel or police officers to identify.”).

62 See Storey, supra note 58, at 637 (explaining that individuals experiencing EDS “suffer from increased rates of adrenaline, and ultimately, the anxiety caused by the adrenaline results in a heart attack or a failure of the respiratory system”); Greg Meyer, Less Lethal Issues
According to Amnesty International, death resulting from EDS is more common in suspects who were under the influence of drugs at the time. For instance, one study showed that suspects who used unlawful drugs accounted for a vast majority of deaths in taser cases. In cases where a suspect is experiencing EDS, experts suggest that the officer should use a taser to resolve the situation, as it is the best course of action for everyone involved.

See Sussman, supra note 23, at 1358–59 (“[I]n 2006, researchers found that [70%] of the taser related deaths examined involved illicit drug use . . . ”). Statistics also show that in 2009 over 35,000 people died as a result of drug use. Lisa Girion et al., Drug Deaths Now Outnumber Traffic Fatalities in U.S., Data Show, L.A. TIMES (Sept. 17, 2011), http://articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/17/local/la-me-drugs-epidemic-20110918, archived at http://perma.cc/8C9J-H9WF. Simply put, this is one death every fourteen minutes. Id. To that end, an overwhelming majority of deaths in taser cases were a result of drug users disrupting the community, as opposed to officer’s improper use of tasers. Sussman, supra note 23, at 1355–64. Comparatively, by the time a reader finishes this Note, tasers will have saved one life and drugs will have taken away two lives. Girion et al., supra; see also supra note 43 (referencing a comment made previously in the Note on how Taser.com claims a taser is responsible for saving a life every thirty minutes and therefore by the time a reader finishes the Note one life will have been saved as a result of a taser).

Meyer, supra note 62. Greg Meyer, an expert on use of force cases, has written: “[s]everal doctors, I’m listening to at various seminars teach that the [taser] is the best way to quickly subdue such an individual and stop the hyperactivity [or excited delirium] that occasionally leads to sudden deaths following restraint, regardless of what police tool or tactic was used.” Id. Greg Meyer’s profile reads:

Greg Meyer, a retired Captain from the Los Angeles Police Academy, served [thirty] years, including eight years as a commanding officer. Greg is a member of the National Advisory Board of the Force Science Research Center, a member of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) . . . . Greg has served as a use of force expert witness in his official capacity for the Los Angeles City Attorney and Los Angeles District Attorney, as well as privately across the United States. He specialized in risk management issues including policy, training, equipment, tactics, supervision and review processes, with a focus on injury reduction during lethal and nonlethal encounters.

In addition, individuals at both ends of the age spectrum, the young and the elderly, are more susceptible to the harms associated with tasers. However, these individual’s actions are still capable of causing police interaction and may call for officers to use non-deadly force on them. For example, in October 2013, police officers received a call regarding a suicidal eight-year-old girl. Upon arrival, the officers found the young girl directing a four-and-a-half inch knife at her chest. When an officer attempted to move closer to her, the girl pointed the knife at him instead. The officer then deployed a taser in dart stun mode against the child, subduing her. As a result of the officer’s actions, the child and the officers were removed from the harmful situation without major injury. The police chief of the department said that “he [felt] terrible about the

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66 See infra Part II.B (listing individuals who are more prone to the harms associated with being tased).


68 Id. The original call stated that the young girl had already stabbed herself in the leg; however, after the medical examination following her tasing, it was reported that there were not stab wounds to the girl. Hult, supra note 67; Heather Smith, What Could Justify Using a Taser on an 8-Year-Old Girl?, ACLU (Oct. 11, 2013), https://www.aclu.org/blog/criminal-law-reform-free-speech/what-could-justify-using-taser-8-year-old-girl, archived at https://perma.cc/LD5F-PBC3.


70 Hult, supra note 67. After pointing the knife at an officer, and before being tased, the little girl redirected the knife back at her chest. Id.

71 Id. Chief Bob Grandpre was quoted as saying: “[the officer] quite possibly saved the juvenile’s life that night . . . .” See Nicks, supra note 69 (quoting Chief Bob Grandpre). Yet, the family believed that the officer, who was responsible for safely resolving the situation, should be punished. Id. Her mom asked: “[h]ow much harm could she have done?” Id. (quoting Dawn Stenstrom, the young girl’s mother). Her father also was quoted as saying: “They say it was for her own safety, but there is no justification for that.” Id.
incident,” but stated that officers “can’t control if the threat is [eight or eighty years of age].”73

Officers encounter a wide variety of individuals throughout their shift, some of whom may be suffering from disabilities such as deafness or blindness.74 All the same, officers are faced with the task of communicating with suspects, with or without a disability, during chaotic situations.75 Scholars have identified and advocated for a warning requirement, which would prevent law enforcement from tasing suspects who did not have an opportunity to comply with an officer’s instructions.76 The American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (“ACLU of Northern California”) has expanded beyond just a basic warning requirement and advocated that both a verbal and visual warning be given before an officer deploys a taser on a suspect.77

The ACLU of Northern California, as well as other scholars, also warn of the potential dangers that tasers could have on the human body and how the effects of a taser could vary from person to person.78 Injuries can range from no injuries at all, to minor bruising, head trauma, or even cardiac arrest.79 Because not all injuries are visible to officers in tasing

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73 Id. (quoting the Police Chief Bob Grandpre of the Pierre, South Dakota Department).
75 See supra Part I (describing the facts of the Abbott decision, and demonstrating how police encounters escalate very quickly and can turn into chaotic and dangerous situations for all parties involved).
76 See McStravick, supra note 22, at 393 (“A warning to suspects should be mandatory before firing a [taser] whenever it is possible, and so long as it would not be futile, in order to give a suspect the opportunity to stop resisting and follow orders.”); ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 18.
77 See ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 18 (providing the language of the ACLU of Northern California’s warning proposal).
78 Fabian, supra note 42 at 768; McStravick, supra note 22, at 392; Spriggs, supra note 23, at 514; Sussman, supra note 23, at 1355–64; Michael R. Smith et al., A Multi-Method Evaluation of Police Use of Force Outcomes: Final Report to the National Institute of Justice 3–15–3–16 (2010) (indicating that some police agencies have their officers tased before that officer being allowed to use a taser on a suspect); ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 15; USA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S CONTINUING CONCERNS ABOUT TASER USE, supra note 23, at 15–16.
79 See Black, supra note 57 (describing how tasing incidents could result in cardiac arrest); Catherine Paddock, Study Suggests Taser Use by US Police is Safe, MED. NEWS TODAY (Oct. 9, 2007, 2:00 AM), http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/84955.php, archived at http://perma.cc/32Y5-E5A7 (discussing how some individuals who were tased had to be admitted to the hospital because they have suffered a head injury as a result of falling after
situations, the ACLU of Northern California recommends that all suspects who have been tased receive medical attention.\(^\text{80}\)

The trend in the United States is for police agencies to give their officers the ability to use tasers in the field, as the device has been used more than 1,750,000 times.\(^\text{81}\) The number of law enforcement agencies that allow tasers increased at a booming rate over the past decade and tasers are now used in a vast majority of agencies.\(^\text{82}\) In 2006, only 38.89\% of law enforcement agencies allowed tasers.\(^\text{83}\) That number jumped in 2010 to around 63.89\% of agencies.\(^\text{84}\) Finally, in 2012, a little over 94\% of law enforcement allowed the use of tasers in their departments.\(^\text{85}\) Thus, it appears that tasers are solidified as a tool in law enforcement's arsenal, and therefore, the safety of their use is something that the legislature must confront.\(^\text{86}\)

C. Excessive Force Claims and the Graham Factors

When a suspect claims to be the victim of excessive force by law enforcement, 42 U.S.C. § 1983, which protects against state actors infringing upon a protected right that under the United States Constitution, provides a cause of action.\(^\text{87}\) Excessive force claims that

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\(^{80}\) ACLU of N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19.

\(^{81}\) See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 293 ("Still, it is important to note that while [t]asers have been deemed safe for use and have been used over 1,750,000 times by law enforcement, no use-of-force technique can be considered completely safe.").

\(^{82}\) Sussman, supra note 23, at 1349; Hardy, supra note 53; USA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S CONTINUING CONCERNS ABOUT TASER USE, supra note 23, at 1.

\(^{83}\) USA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S CONTINUING CONCERNS ABOUT TASER USE, supra note 23, at 1 ("More than 7000 law enforcement agencies in the US, out of a total or 18,000, now count tasers as part of their arsenal.").

\(^{84}\) See Sussman, supra note 23, at 1349 (stating that 11,500 agencies allow taser use by their officers). To get 63.89\%, it is assumed that in 2010 there were still around 18,000 law enforcement agencies since there were 18,000 agencies in 2006 and 18,000 in 2012. Id.; USA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S CONTINUING CONCERNS ABOUT TASER USE, supra note 23, at 1.

\(^{85}\) See Hardy, supra note 53 ("Rick Smith, [TASER’s] co-founder and chief executive, says [tasers] are used by 17,000 of the 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States"); Sussman, supra note 23, at 1349 (discussing the growth of the taser use by law enforcement and quoting Rick Smith from the article).

\(^{86}\) See supra notes 81–85 and accompanying text (providing statistics and the steady rise of law enforcement agencies that are allowing officers to carry and use tasers).

\(^{87}\) See 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (2012) ("Everyone who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory or the District of Columbia, subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the
occur while law enforcement officers are making an arrest are further “properly analyzed” by Fourth Amendment standards. 88 As a result of these excessive force claims, the United States Supreme Court established a balancing test in *Graham v. Connor.* 89

The court in *Graham* developed a test that balances the suspect’s actions against the appropriateness of the officer’s decision to deploy his taser during the incident. 90 In determining this, the *Graham* test looks to three factors: (1) whether the crime was severe enough to justify the level

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88 See U.S. CONST. amend. IV (“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath and affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”). See generally *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 394 (1989) (“Where, as here, the excessive force claim arises in the context of an arrest or investigatory stop of a free citizen, it is most properly characterized as one invoking the protections of the Fourth Amendment, which guarantees citizens the right ‘to be secure in their person . . . against unreasonable . . . seizures of that person.’”) *Woolfstead*, supra note 15, at 287 (“In *Graham v. Connor*, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that excessive force by police officers ‘in the course of making an arrest, [or] investigatory stop’ constitutes a seizure under the Fourth Amendment.” (quoting *Graham*, 490 U.S. at 388)); Fabian, supra note 42, at 768 (“If the alleged excessive force occurred during an arrest or investigatory stop by law enforcement, the § 1983 claim is properly analyzed using the reasonableness standard of the Fourth Amendment.”). Other claims that fall under the protection of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 may bring other constitutional concerns, but are not the focus of this Note. McStravick, supra note 22, at 370–71. “Claims brought by incarcerated individuals are analyzed separately under the Eight Amendment band against ‘cruel and unusual punishment.’” *Id.* (quoting U.S. CONST. amend. VII).

89 *Graham*, 490 U.S. at 396; McStravick, supra note 22, at 372; Sussman, supra note 23, at 1373–74. The three factors are collectively now known as the “the *Graham* multifactor balancing test or the *Graham* factors.” *Woolfstead*, supra note 15, at 299. This Note will refer to these factors as the *Graham* test. See Part II.C (discussing the *Graham* decision).

90 *Woolfstead*, supra note 15, at 299 (“Whether a law enforcement officer, in the specific situation, made an objectively reasonable decision.”).
of force used; (2) whether the suspect posed an immediate threat to law enforcement; and (3) whether the suspect actively resisted arrest or evaded arrest by flight. Although the Supreme Court established the *Graham* test to decide an excessive force claim, other courts have expanded the test to go beyond the original three factors. For example, some courts have asked “whether the action takes place in the context of affecting an arrest,” “whether a warrant was used,” or “whether more than one arrestee or officer was involved.” Other courts have looked at “the possibility that the suspect may be armed” or “whether the plaintiff was sober.” Further, some courts have asked “whether the officer gave a warning before using the [taser],” “whether other dangerous exigent circumstances existed,” and “whether the officer applied repeated shockings.” In sum, courts have considered a total of twelve factors to determine whether officers used tasers excessively against suspects.

Additionally, there are a few federal circuit courts that recognize the De Minimis Injury Doctrine (“DME”) in the context of excessive force claims. Under the DME, individuals wishing to file an excessive force claim based on the alleged improper use of a taser by law enforcement must prove they suffered some form of physical injury as a direct result of the excessive force. Examples of de minimis injuries include “light
bruises, scrapes, or sprains that can heal without medical attention." 99 Currently, the Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, and Eleventh Circuits still use the DME.100 The Circuits’ varying stances on taser regulation can further be seen when reviewing the level of force that each Circuit associates with the device.101

D. Tasers’ Place on the Use-of-Force Continuum

In addition, courts are divided on where the taser is located on the Use-of-Force Continuum (“Force Continuum”), which evaluates the suspect’s resistance when considering the appropriate amount of force an officer may use against the suspect.102 Some circuits determine the taser’s location on the Force Continuum based on the mode in which the taser was deployed.103 However, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive

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for third parties—including courts—to determine with certainty how much pain was really caused by an officer’s use of force.

Id. 99 Id. at 136. 100 See Mance, supra note 38, at 641 (“While most circuits have rejected a requirement that plaintiffs demonstrate an actual physical injury to state a claim for excessive force under the Fourth Amendment, the Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, and Eleventh Circuit have not.”). 101 See infra Part II.D (reviewing the different Circuit’s views on the level of force a taser exerts when used by law enforcement).

102 See generally Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 303–04 (explaining the circuits differing views on what level of a force a taser constitutes); Miller, supra note 43, at 72–73 tbls. 1–2. Miller explains in his article the six levels of force an officer can use against a suspect. Miller, supra note 43, at 72–73 tbls. 1–2. The first level permits, at most, only “[o]fficer presence” when a suspect is not resisting. Id. At the second level, when the suspect is “[v]erbal[ly] resist[ing],” an officer may not use more force than “[v]erbal commands.” Id. Next, level three authorizes an officer to use “[h]ands-on tactics” and chemical spray when the suspect is passively resisting. Id. Miller defined passive resistance as “[t]he subject fails to obey verbal direction, preventing the officer from taking lawful action.” Id. Level four then allows officers to use “[i]ntermediate weapons,” such as batons, tasers, strikes, and other non-deadly force against a suspect who is actively resisting. Id. Miller defined active resistance as: “[t]he subject’s actions are intended to facilitate an escape or prevent an arrest.” Miller, supra note 43, at 72–73 tbls. 1–2. The fifth level deals with suspects who are aggressively resisting and permits officers to use “[i]ntermediate weapons, intensified techniques, [and] non-deadly force.” Id. A suspect is aggressively resisting when “[t]he subject has battered or is about to batter an officer, and the subject’s action is likely to cause injury.” Id. Finally, the last level of suspect resistance is where the suspect is resisting with deadly force. Id. When a suspect is using deadly force to resist an officer, the officer is able to use deadly force against the suspect. Id. Miller defined deadly force resistance as “[t]he subject’s actions are likely to cause death or significant bodily harm to the officer or another person.” Id. 103 See Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 304 (“Not only do the different circuits hold that [t]asers constitute different levels of force, most holding that [t]asers are a gray area between trivial and lethal force, but also some circuits differentiate between [t]asers used in drive stun and dart stun mode.”). See generally Abbott v. Sangamon Cnty., Ill., 705 F.3d 706, 728, 732 (7th Cir. 2013) (noting a difference between whether the device was deployed in dart stun mode “against a nonviolent misdemeanor,” as opposed to an individual who had a taser used on them in drive stun mode for actively resisting). Drive stun mode may be appropriate
Simply Stunning!

overview of the circuit courts’ views as to the level of force a taser possesses because a vast majority of the circuits have not established where to place the taser on the Force Continuum. The Sixth Circuit classifies tasers as “substantial force,” the Seventh Circuit equates tasers to pepper spray, and the Ninth Circuit states that dart stun mode is an “intermediate level of force.” The conflicting opinions have caused a
shift in law enforcement’s evaluation for when taser usage becomes excessive.\textsuperscript{106}

Officers now look to the level of resistance that the suspect demonstrates to determine if taser use is appropriate.\textsuperscript{107} Law enforcement analyzes a suspect’s resistance, as either passive resistance or active resistance.\textsuperscript{108} Passive resistance occurs where “the subject fails to obey verbal direction, preventing the officer from taking lawful action,” while active resistance occurs where “the subject’s actions are intended to facilitate an escape or prevent an arrest . . . [and] is not likely to cause injury.”\textsuperscript{109} Law enforcement agencies shifted to analyze the suspect’s resistance, to determine when an officer may deploy his taser to “mitigate public concern and guide officers on proper electronic weapon use.”\textsuperscript{110} To that extent, officers must consider the effect their actions will have on the community’s perception of tasers.\textsuperscript{111}

Over the past decade, a few incidents occurred that caused the public to question the appropriateness of taser use on a suspect.\textsuperscript{112} The tasing of is an intermediate level of force but expressly refused to make a determination on \cite{Abbott}.

\textsuperscript{106} See Miller, supra note 43, at 72 (“In an attempt to mitigate public concerns and guide officers on proper electronic control weapon use, many agencies have changed their use policies based on the level of suspect resistance encountered.”); supra Part II.E (emphasizing how the Seventh Circuit in \textit{Abbott} acknowledged the type of mode used in each instance).

\textsuperscript{107} Miller, supra note 43, at 72.

\textsuperscript{108} See \textit{Abbott}, 705 F.3d at 711, 728, 732 (comparing Travis’ active resistance, to his mother’s passive resistance); Fabian, supra note 42, at 776–89 (analyzing the difference between an officer tasing a suspect who is passively resisting and a suspect who is actively resisting); Spriggs, supra note 23, at 516 (advocating that “law enforcement agents should be prevented from applying tasers to subjects practicing genuine passive resistance by remaining unresponsive or verbally uncooperative . . . .”).

\textsuperscript{109} Miller, supra note 43, at 72–73 (illustrating the use-of-force continuum and defining the levels of resistance).

\textsuperscript{110} Id. at 72.

\textsuperscript{111} Id. at 72–73 (“After the introduction of newer and more powerful electronic control devices, many agencies integrated their public development into the use-of-force continuum at a level to be used when suspects only passively resisting the actions of the officer. The use of electronic control weapons in these low-intensity situations led to considerable media attention and public controversy. In response to this scrutiny and to mitigate citizen complaints, many agencies increased the required level of resistance by suspects to warrant use of this device from passive resistance to active physical resistance.”).

\textsuperscript{112} See Brooks v. City of Seattle, 599 F.3d 1018, 1020–21 (9th Cir. 2010) (discussing a case that involved a pregnant woman being tased after being stopped for speeding); Torres v. City of Madera, 648 F.3d 1119, 1121 (9th Cir. 2011) (involving an officer who mistakenly shot a suspect when trying to tase him); Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88 (discussing the tasing of Andrew Meyer on the University of Florida’s campus); Sussman, supra note 23, at 1330 n.33 (citing to Torres v. City of Madera, which was discussed by the author); Chris Dettro, Taser Use in Best Buy Parking Lot Didn’t Violate Policy, Police Say, SJ-R.COM (Apr. 2, 2013).
2015] Simply Stunning! 927

a University of Florida student, Andrew Meyer, for resisting officers, after a speech by Senator Kerry, is one of the more well-known incidents.113 It was during this tasing that Meyer famously shouted, “[d]on’t tase me bro!”114 Then there was the tasing of a pregnant woman and her boyfriend in a Best Buy’s parking lot for being uncooperative and touching officers after their vehicle was hit by another individual.115 One of the more recent

http://www.sj-r.com/breaking/x766890485/Taser-use-in-Best-Buy-parking-lot-didnt-violate-policy-police-say?zc_p=0, archived at http://perma.cc/NE52-HWVB and http://perma.cc/PRW9-BCHP (providing details of a tasering incident that was captured on video in a parking lot at Best Buy in Springfield, Illinois); Hult, supra note 67 (describing a situation where an eight-year-old girl was tased to prevent her from harming herself with a knife).


114 Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88; Oppmann, supra note 113. When Senator Kerry ended the time for questions to be asked and answered, University of Florida student Andrew Meyer stepped up to the microphone and proceeded to bombard Senator Kerry with questions before his microphone was turned off. Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88; Oppmann, supra note 113. Meyer’s questions included: “whether [Kerry] and Bush were both members of the secret society Skull and Bones at Yale University.” Associated Press, Student Tasered, Arrested at Kerry Forum, NBCNEWS (Sept. 18, 2007, 8:15 PM), http://www.nbcnews.com/id/20835952/, archived at http://perma.cc/K383-2477. Officers instructed Meyer to leave, however he refused, and left officers no choice but to remove him. Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88; Oppmann, supra note 113. The events and “ensuing struggle” that followed ended with officers tasing Meyer in drive stun mode. Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88; Oppmann, supra note 113. Meyer, before being tased, can be heard saying, “Don’t tase me bro!” Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88; Oppmann, supra note 113. “Meyer’s plea . . . became an instant pop culture catchphrase and helped bring the debate over taser use to the public forum.” Spriggs, supra note 23, at 487–88. After his arrest, Meyer was quoted as saying to the officer, “I am not mad at you guys, you didn’t do anything wrong. You were just trying to do your job.” See Oppmann, supra note 113 (quoting police reports).

Meyer would later release an apology saying that “I made the decision to supersede the rules, and for that I apologize. I should have acted calmer and obeyed the directives of the officers. If I had, none of the subsequent issues would have arisen.” Letter from Andrew Meyer, University of Florida student, to the University of Florida Police Department, (Oct. 25, 2007), available at http://www.gainesville.com/assets/pdf/GS105271030.PDF, archived at http://perma.cc/AD29-ZUJ8 (quoting Andrew Meyer). An example of the video is available on YouTube. UF Police Taser Student During Kerry Forum, YOUTUBE (Sept. 17, 2007), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaiWCS10C5s, archived at http://perma.cc/MYS5-Q7DM.

115 Dettro, supra note 112. On March 30, 2013, Frederic Thomas was inside of Best Buy when an elderly man hit his pregnant girlfriend’s, Lucinda White’s, vehicle in the parking lot. Id. The officer was discussing the situation with White and filling out reports, while Thomas continued to interrupt and be a nuisance. Id. Thomas was given an ultimatum to go away or be placed under arrest, but Thomas refused to leave. Id. Thomas halted the
incidents involved a pregnant woman, who was tased after she was stopped for speeding. These real life examples demonstrate the difficult job that law enforcement officers encounter when they are asked to deescalate intense situations, while also balancing the suspect’s safety, their safety, and the community’s safety. The Seventh Circuit recently decided a case that dealt with this type of situation.

On November 23, 2004 . . . Brooks [was stopped] for speeding in a school zone. The situation deteriorated rather quickly. Brooks claimed that she had not been speeding . . . and then repeatedly refused to sign a Notice of Infraction . . . . Brooks refused to leave her car, remaining in it with the ignition running and her door shut. Officer Jones then showed Brooks his [t]aser, explaining that it would hurt ‘extremely bad’ if applied. Brooks told them she was pregnant . . . . Officer Jones demonstrated the [t]aser for [Brooks]. Brooks still remained in the car, so Officer Ornelas opened the door and reached over to take the key out of the ignition, dropping the keys on the floorboard. Officer Ornelas then employed a pain compliance technique, bringing Brook’s left arm up behind her back, whereon Brooks stiffened her body and clutched the steering wheel in order to frustrate her removal from the car. Officer Jones discharged the [t]aser against Brook’s thigh . . . . Officer Jones tased her two more times . . . . The third tasing moved Brooks to the right, at which point Officers Ornelas and Jones were able to extract her from the car through a combination of pushing and pulling. She was immediately seen by medical professional, and two months later delivered a healthy baby.

See supra notes 114–16 and accompanying text (noting that officers struggle in difficult situations about whether to deploy their tasers).
E. The Seventh Circuit & Abbott

The case law surrounding law enforcement’s use of tasers grew significantly since the devices were first addressed by the Seventh Circuit in Forrest v. Prine. The Seventh Circuit’s most recent, and now leading, case is Abbott v. Sangamon County, Illinois. In Abbott, officers were called to the Abbott residence to assist with animal control, but the situation ended with Cindy and her son, Travis, both receiving multiple shocks from tasers. Travis and Cindy each filed suit, claiming that excessive force was used against them when they were tased. These claims

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119 Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 315. Forrest v. Prine involved a suspect who was tased on two different occasions within twenty-four hours. 620 F.3d 739, 741–42 (7th Cir. 2010); Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 315 (discussing cases in the Seventh Circuit that involved law enforcement’s use of tasers and citing to Forrest). Mr. Forrest claimed that the second tasing, while he was already in a holding cell, was excessive force. Forrest, 620 F.3d at 741–42. The case states:

On March 8, 2007, the police responded to a 911 call from Mr. Forrest’s son, who reported that Mr. Forrest was hitting people in their home . . . . The police forcefully entered the home, and an altercation ensued during which Mr. Forrest struck a police officer in the face. In order to subdue Mr. Forrest, the police employed a taser device several times. Several police officers then escorted Mr. Forrest to the Rock Island County Jail . . . . Mr. Forrest was escorted to a holding cell for the strip search . . . . The officers observed that Mr. Forrest appeared to be under the influence of something, possibly alcohol. Mr. Forrest removed most of his clothing, but refused to remove his underwear . . . . Officer Prine warned Mr. Forrest that he would employ the taser if he did not comply with the strip search commands. Mr. Forrest called the officers “faggots” and used other expletives . . . . Mr. Forrest eventually removed his underwear but would not comply with the rest of the strip search commands . . . . Officer Prine testified that he did not believe that it was safe to approach Mr. Forrest any closer. Officer Prine finally employed his taser on Mr. Forrest . . . . The officer testified that he aimed the taser gun at Mr. Forrest’s upper back . . . . Officer Prine testified that, as he fired the taser, Mr. Forrest “kind of bent down.” . . . One taser discharge hit Mr. Forrest’s face, near his eye; another dart stuck in his arm.

Forrest, 620 F.3d at 741–42; Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 315 (discussing and citing to Forrest, 620 F.3d at 741–42). Summary judgment was affirmed in favor of Officer Prine. Forrest, 620 F.3d at 741. This Note is only addressing tasing instances before the arrest of a suspect. See McStravick, supra note 22, at 370–71 (suggesting that there are other constitutional concerns for suspects after being arrested).

120 See generally Abbott, 705 F.3d at 731 (deciding that in the Seventh Circuit an officer cannot deploy a taser in dart mode on a suspect who is only passively resisting law enforcement).

121 Id. at 709–12; see supra Part I (describing the Abbott facts for the real life scenario in the Introduction of this Note).

122 Abbott, 705 F.3d at 709. Besides the excessive force claims, both Travis and Cindy each additionally sued for false arrest and false imprisonment. Id.
provided the Seventh Circuit with a basis for deciding future excessive force cases involving law enforcement’s use of tasers.\footnote{Id. at 731 (balancing Cindy’s and Travis’s actions against the decisions of the officers to use a taser on each).}

First, the Seventh Circuit reaffirmed that the Graham test continues to be the foundation of excessive force claims against law enforcement.\footnote{Id. at 724. The decision mentions multiple times that a reasonable standard is the correct standard to apply. Id. An individual who is unfamiliar with excessive force claims may fail to make the connection that the reasonableness standard is the Graham test, until they read the three factors used in the case. Abbott, 705 F.3d at 724; Kelly, supra note 1 (discussing Graham and the reasonableness standard applied in excessive force claims).} In deciding this, the court looked to three factors: (1) the severity of the crime; (2) whether the arrestee posed an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others; and (3) whether he or she actively resisted arrest or attempted to flee and evade arrest.\footnote{Abbott, 705 F.3d at 727. Cindy was tased a total of two times throughout the entire incident. Id. at 711. However, in Travis’s situation, it is unknown exactly how many times he was tased while resisting officers. Id. at 727. Although, the facts of the case suggest that he was tased at least three to four times. Id. at 728, 734.} Neither Cindy nor Travis challenged the officer tasing them the first time; however, both contended that the additional times they were tased were unwarranted.\footnote{Id. at 727, 729. Cindy was tased a total of two times throughout the entire incident. Id. at 711. However, in Travis’s situation, it is unknown exactly how many times he was tased while resisting officers. Id. at 727. Although, the facts of the case suggest that he was tased at least three to four times. Id. at 728, 734.} The court held that Travis continued to resist officers; therefore, the second tasing did not constitute excessive force.\footnote{Abbott, 705 F.3d at 728, 734.} On the other hand, the court remanded Cindy’s excessive force claim because “no reasonable officer could have understood Cindy’s conduct after the first tasing . . . to be active physical resistance.”\footnote{Abbott, 705 F.3d at 732–34. In the Abbott decision, the case cited another Seventh Circuit decision to help determine when force is reasonable. Id. at 729 (citing Cyrus v. Town of Mukwonago, 624 F.3d 856, 858–60 (7th Cir. 2010)). Cyrus was a case about a twenty-nine-year-old male that suffered from bipolar disorder. Cyrus, 624 F.3d at 858–60. Officers tased Cyrus in excess of five times in both dart stun mode and drive stun mode after trespassing. Id. The male was unarmed at the time and died as a result of the altercation. Id. at 860, 863. At trial the medical examiner was unable to identify the exact cause of death, and instead listed a total of eight factors that aided in his death. Id. at 860–61. One of the factors listed by the medical examiner was “the electrical shock from the [t]aser.” Id. at 861. The court wrote that “[f]orce is reasonable only when exercised in proportion to the threat posed.” Id. at 863.}

Second, the court in Abbott held that tasers are equivalent to pepper spray on the Force Continuum.\footnote{See supra note 123 and accompanying text (discussing where Abbott established the location of the taser on the Force Continuum).} In the decision, the court reasoned that tasers are non-lethal, an intermediate level of force, and less forceful than other police weapons.\footnote{Abbott, 705 F.3d at 726.} Finally, the case drew a clear distinction between
the modes in which an officer may lawfully deploy a taser. The key factor the court considered was whether the suspect was actively or passively resisting law enforcement. The court was unequivocal for this point, stating, “it is unlawful to deploy a taser in dart mode against a nonviolent misdemeanant.” Nevertheless, lower courts may vary in applying Abbott, similar to how they applied Graham, and therefore, taser regulation may not be any better off than it was before Abbott. A few states, for that reason, have adopted statutes to solidify the law for law enforcement’s use of tasers.  

F. State Statutes Currently in Effect

As a result of the lack of guidance provided by the Supreme Court, a few states have taken steps to ensure that law enforcement and the community know the parameters for when a taser may be lawfully deployed by officers, primarily by adopting state statutes. Four states that adopted statutes governing tasers include Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and New Jersey. Of these statutes, New Jersey’s is unique because it is

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131 Id. at 726, 728, 730, 732. The facts state that Travis “does not contend that he had ceased resisting or fighting with Sweeny at that point. Indeed, it is undisputed that Sweeny used the taser until Travis stopped fighting but did not use it thereafter . . . .” Id. at 729. The court held that it was not excessive force for the officer to use a taser in drive stun mode while Travis was actively resisting the officers. Id. at 728-29. However, the court did find that it was excessive to tase Cindy in dart stun mode because Cindy was “subdued” and “made no movement” after she had been tased the first time, or simply put she was only passively resisting officers at that point. Id. at 732-33.

132 Id. at 712, 728–29, 732–33; Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 396 (1989) (evaluating how a suspect’s resistance can be used as a factor to determine whether excessive force was used by an officer); see Kelly, supra note 1 (citing Graham while analyzing the decision of Abbott v. Sangamon Cnty., Ill.).

133 Abbott, 705 F.3d at 732; see Kelly, supra note 1 (discussing the type of resistance that the Graham court used to determine whether tasering is excessive).

134 See supra Part II.C (explaining how the Graham factors have been expanding beyond the three factors that the Supreme Court established in the case).

135 See infra Part II.F (reviewing the current state statutes that regulate law enforcement’s use of tasers).

136 See generally, ARK. CODE ANN. § 5-73-133(c) (2005) (allowing law enforcement to use tasers); FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717 (West Supp. 2012) (setting the parameters for law enforcement’s use of tasers); GA. CODE ANN. § 35-8-26 (West 2012) (establishing law to govern the use of tasers by officers); N.J. STAT. ANN. § 2C:39-3(h) (2005) (preventing the use of tasers by anyone, including law enforcement).

137 Ark. Code Ann. § 5-73-133(c); Fla. Stat. Ann. § 943.1717; Ga. Code Ann. § 35-8-26; N.J. Stat. Ann. § 2C:39-3(h); see Fabian, supra note 42, at 790–91 (discussing the states that currently have statutes in place to regulate taser use by law enforcement); Spriggs, supra note 23, at 496–97 (analyzing the various state statutes that are currently in place).
the only statute that denies both civilians and law enforcement the ability to use tasers.138

Meanwhile, the Arkansas, Georgia, and Florida statutes vary regarding the depth in which they discuss tasers and the guidelines established for law enforcement.139 For example, the Arkansas and Georgia statutes simply state that “training” is required by law enforcement, while Florida’s statute actually provides detail on the training requirements.140 Florida’s statute requires officers to renew their training yearly in order to carry a taser in the field after completing a “basic skills course.”141

Additionally, Florida’s statute is the only one that mentions the type of mode in which an officer may fire a taser, and is titled “Use of Dart-Firing Stun Guns.”142 Consequently, Florida’s statute only focuses on the “dart-firing,” or dart stun mode, and fails to mention drive stun mode at all.143 Moreover, where the other state statutes are silent, the Florida statute limits the situations in which a taser may be fired in dart stun mode to those in which the suspect is actively resisting the officer and demonstrating “the apparent ability to physically threaten the officer or others[,] or . . . [i]s preparing to or attempting to flee or escape.”144 This language is taken almost directly from the Graham decision.145

138 Fabian, supra note 42, at 790; see N.J. STAT. ANN. § 2C:39-3(h) (“Any person who knowingly has in his possession any stun gun is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree.”).
140 Ark. Code ANN. § 5-73-133(c) (“Any law enforcement office using a taser stun gun shall be properly trained in the use of the taser stun gun and informed of any danger or risk of serious harm and injury that may be caused by the use of the taser stun gun on a person.”); Fla. Stat. ANN. § 943.1717 (“After completing the basic skills course, each law enforcement . . . officer who is authorized . . . to use a dart-firing gun must complete an annual training course . . . [which] must be a minimum of [one] hour duration.”); Ga. Code ANN. § 35-8-26 (“The Georgia Public Safety Training Center shall provide council approved training to peace officers for the use of electronic control weapons and similar devices.”); see infra Part III.B (demonstrating why this requirement is needed in a state statute).
142 See id. (“A decision by a law enforcement officer . . . to use a dart-firing stun gun must involve an arrest or a custodial situation during which the person . . . escalates resistance to the officer from passive physical resistance to active physical resistance and the person: (a) Has the apparent ability to physically threaten the officer or others; or (b) Is preparing or attempting to flee or escape”).
143 Id.; see Fabian, supra note 42, at 791 (explaining adopted state statutes); Spriggs, supra note 23, at 496–97 (discussing the current state regulations pertaining to law enforcements’ taser usage).
144 Id. (whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others, and whether he is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight”).
In summary, with the current regulations in place, courts have expanded the *Graham* factors and caused confusion for suspects, officers, and the community regarding when an officer’s use of a taser is excessive.\(^{146}\) While the Seventh Circuit has provided more guidance for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin with *Abbott*, there is nothing preventing lower courts from applying the decision differently, a result similar to what occurred in the circuit courts following *Graham*.\(^{147}\) Accordingly, other states have adopted statutes in an effort to provide consistency in the law surrounding taser usage by law enforcement, and therefore, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin may also want to codify their taser regulations in state statutes.\(^{148}\)

### III. Analysis

In *Abbott*, the Seventh Circuit confirmed that excessive force claims stemming from the use of tasers by law enforcement will continue to be analyzed by the *Graham* test.\(^{149}\) However, the actual impact of the case provides a false hope that the case resolved the gray areas surrounding the use of tasers by law enforcement in the Seventh Circuit.\(^{150}\) Further, *Abbott* fails to guarantee that judges and courts will apply the standards in the same manner for future excessive force claims involving tasers.\(^{151}\) Lower courts have already shown they are willing to expand the current analysis, which furthers the inconsistencies in these types of excessive force claims.\(^{152}\)

\(^{146}\) *See supra* Part II.C (discussing the *Graham* factors and how lower courts have taken it upon themselves to expand their analysis of these issues to include additional factors).

\(^{147}\) *See supra* Parts II.C, II.E (reviewing the *Graham* decision, the current law on taser regulations for law enforcement, and the recent Seventh Circuit decision, *Abbott*).

\(^{148}\) *See supra* Part II.F (reviewing current statutes that directly address the use of tasers by law enforcement); *infra* Part IV (amending Florida’s current statute to provide greater consistency for regulating taser usage in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin).

\(^{149}\) *See supra* notes 124–28 and accompanying text (discussing how *Abbott* applied the *Graham* test).

\(^{150}\) *See Kelly*, *supra* note 1 (entitling his article: “The Seventh Circuit Provides Guidance on False Arrest and the Use of the Taser”); *supra* Part II.C (explaining how lower courts have expanded the original three *Graham* test factors). The Seventh Circuit opinion is still missing an opportunity to solidify the current feelings of the Seventh Circuit by placing them in a statute, similar to the one established in Florida. *Fla. Stat. Ann.* § 943.1717 (West Supp. 2012); *see supra* Part II.F (discussing the current state statutes in place that regulate law enforcement’s use of tasers).

\(^{151}\) *See supra* Part II.C (explaining the original factors in the *Graham* test and the additional factors that other courts have later included in their analysis).

\(^{152}\) *See supra* Part I (discussing the Supreme Court’s lack of a stance on taser regulation for law enforcement).
Additionally, Abbott still fails to provide officers with clear and concrete guidance on when they are authorized to tase a suspect.153 The alarming statistics of assaults against officers and the number of law enforcement killed while on duty highlight the importance of supplying officers with a quick, non-deadly weapon.154 Further, regulations that fail to address the DME create inconsistency in excessive force claims arising from law enforcement’s improper use of tasers.155 As a result, other scholars have suggested that states enact statutes to establish consistency and to ensure that the taser is still a non-lethal tool that officers have at their disposal.156 Although tasers are safer than other non-deadly methods, such as batons, this is only true if officers use the device in a reasonable manner.157 No method of controlling suspects through force is perfect, and tasing is no exception.158

Thus, Part III.A demonstrates why Florida’s statute should be the foundation from which future statutes are built.159 Further, Part III.B advocates that continued training is necessary to ensure that law enforcement adheres to the taser regulations in place.160 Next, Part III.C

153 See supra notes 93–96 and accompanying text (listing additional factors that lower courts have used to expand upon the original three factors established in the Graham test); see also Part II.F (discussing states that have statutes to detail appropriate uses of tasers by law enforcement).

154 See Miller, supra note 43, at 72–73 (evaluating the Force Continuum and the different types of suspect resistance); Deaths, Assaults & Injuries, supra note 34 (providing statistical data on the number of assaults against law enforcement).

155 See supra Part II.A (providing background to technological advancements of tasers and why the DME needs to be addressed in future regulations).

156 Fabian, supra note 42, at 765 (“[L]aws governing [t]aser use by law enforcement can be improved by providing officers more guidance about when [t]aser use is appropriate . . . .”); McStravick, supra note 22, at 383–84 (“Explicit state regulations, similar to the one adopted in Florida, would resolve many of the inconsistencies in current case law and provide a uniform standard for state law enforcement agencies to apply in the field without fear of repercussions due to the uncertainty of a particular course of action.”); Spriggs, supra note 23, at 518 (“By developing this proposed regulation and incorporating it as a state or federal statute, law enforcement officers will be enabled to safely and effectively deploy tasers in appropriate situations without fear or lawsuits or disciplinary actions.”).

157 Hult, supra note 67. Greg Connor says that “[r]ates of injury are lower for officers and suspects with [t]asers than with batons and other less-than-lethal devices . . . but we have to talk about reasonableness with the use of force.” See id. (demonstrating that “Greg Connor [is] a professor emeritus at the University of Illinois and . . . is a police trainer who specialized in the use of force.”).

158 McCray, supra note 15 (“A study published . . . by the American Heart Association’s Circulation Journal confirms that the misuse of a [t]aser can cause sudden cardiac arrest and death.”).

159 See infra Part III.A (providing an analysis on Florida’s current state statute addressing taser use by law enforcement).

160 See infra Part III.B (explaining why proper training requirements must be in place for any taser regulation to be successful).
argues that officers must provide a warning to the suspect before deploying their taser, and that all suspects who have been tased receive medical attention. Finally, Part III.D proposes that technological advances can be used to hold officers accountable for their decisions in situations where a taser has been used. Legislatures should look at Florida’s current statute as a starting point for drafting a regulation to guide law enforcement’s use of a taser.

A. Florida’s Statute Provides a Solid Foundation to Build upon for States Like Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin

Florida’s statute articulates guidelines for taser use that can be utilized by law enforcement, the community, and the courts, and therefore, provides consistency and stability to this area of law. However, Florida’s statute is not without flaws. First, the Florida statute regulates the use of tasers in dart stun mode, but fails to address the acceptable situations for law enforcement to use drive stun mode. This is a problem for tasers that can be utilized in two modes because the officer is only given guidance on how to properly handle the device in one of those modes. If officers are allowed to operate a taser in both modes, then

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161 See infra Part III.C (advocating for both a verbal and non-verbal warning requirement, as well as medical requirements for suspects who have been tased).
162 See infra Part III.D (suggesting that technological advances can be used to eliminate excessive force by law enforcement in situations involving tasers).
163 See FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717 (West Supp. 2012) (providing the language that Florida uses to govern law enforcement’s use of tasers); infra Part III.A (analyzing Florida’s state statute).
164 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717.
165 See supra Part III (analyzing how the current systems of regulating taser usage by law enforcement could be improved).
166 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; see supra Part III.A (discussing the omission of drive stun mode from the Florida statute). One scholar recognized:

The law does not, however, account for situations where a passively resisting suspect poses an apparent threat to officers or others . . . . Thus, a better rule would be that officers may only use a [t]aser when: (1) the suspect is actively resisting; or (2) the suspect is passively resisting but has the apparent ability to physically threaten the officer or others.

Fabian, supra note 42, at 793–94. While these additions would strengthen the Florida statute for only dart stun mode usage, it still fails to separate the types of resistance to the type of mode used on the suspect. Id. It is likely that when separating the different modes in the statute, one mode may be better fit for passive resistance and the other mode for active resistance. See supra Part II.D (discussing where different Circuit Courts have placed the taser on the Force Continuum).

167 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; see Woolfstead, supra note 15, at 292–93 (discussing the two different modes that a taser may be deployed); Fabian, supra note 42, at 765–66 (providing a discussion on the effects of a taser deployed in dart stun mode); Mance, supra note 38, at 607 (describing how a taser is used in dart stun mode); Spriggs, supra note 23, at 490 (discussing...
statutes should address both modes to provide the best clarification possible for officers on the device’s appropriate use.\textsuperscript{168}

Additionally, the Florida statute fails to require that officers provide a proper warning to the suspect before deploying their taser.\textsuperscript{169} Without officers giving a proper warning, individuals have no advance notice of the officer’s intent to deploy the device.\textsuperscript{170} However, if a proper warning is required, individuals will be presented with the choice to obey the commands of the officer and avoid being tased.\textsuperscript{171}

The Florida statute also fails to include provisions that mandate medical treatment for all tased suspects.\textsuperscript{172} By including a medical requirement, suspects will be able to obtain the potential medical treatment they need, while also providing law enforcement officers and agencies with the medical paperwork necessary to prove the suspects were not harmed during the arrest.\textsuperscript{173} Finally, Florida’s statute is silent when it comes to mandating that law enforcement utilize the most up-to-date technology for tasers.\textsuperscript{174} A provision that requires equipping officers with a TASER CAM, or a similar device, would ensure that every tasing incident is recorded, and thus provide evidence for or against excessive

\textsuperscript{168} See supra Part II.A (discussing the different taser modes); supra Part III.B (evaluating the benefits for including guidelines for both tasers modes in a statute).

\textsuperscript{169} F LA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; see infra Part III.C (proposing that a warning requirement is included in a statute for the States in the Seventh Circuit).

\textsuperscript{170} See infra Part III.C (providing a discussion on the warning requirements to include in the proposed model statute).

\textsuperscript{171} See supra notes 113–16 (discussing tasing incidents where suspects were given the opportunity to comply with an officer’s instructions, but failed to do).

\textsuperscript{172} F LA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19 (discussing the ACLU of Northern California’s proposal to include medical requirements in regulations for taser use by law enforcement).

\textsuperscript{173} ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19 (suggesting that officers who transport suspects after receiving a medical evaluation obtain a “clearance form”). Wake Forest University School of Medicine conducted a study of around 1000 cases that involved the use of tasers by law enforcement and found that only 0.3% of suspects were admitted into hospitals. Paddock, supra note 79; Winslow et al., supra note 79. In fact, 99.7% of suspects who were tased had mild or no injuries. Paddock, supra note 79; Winslow et al., supra note 79. However, of the 0.3% of suspects, which accounted for three suspects, falls caused two of the suspects to have head injuries. Paddock, supra note 79; Winslow et al., supra note 79. Without a medical examination it is possible that these injuries would go unnoticed by law enforcement because they are not visible. Paddock, supra note 79; Winslow et al., supra note 79.

\textsuperscript{174} F LA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; see Hardy, supra note 53 (discussing the TASER CAM); see also TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra note 44, at 23 (listing the TASER CAM in the TASER X26C manual as a possible attachment for the device).
force claims. Florida’s statute provides the most detailed guidelines for regulating the use of tasers by law enforcement, especially with its training requirements, and therefore provides the best foundation for future taser regulations.

B. Proper Training is Essential to Eliminating Excessive Force Claims Arising from the Use of Tasers

Reinforcing the importance of training officers is the first step to clarifying the ambiguities surrounding the use of tasers by law enforcement. A training requirement is necessary to not only ensure that law enforcement officers are capable of properly using tasers for their own safety, but also to minimize any danger the device may present to suspects. For the public to accept tasers as an appropriate safety measure for law enforcement, officers must be knowledgeable of the tasers’ capabilities and the risks they present to certain victims. In addition, officers must bear the responsibility of using the device properly in the field and under the appropriate circumstances, which will help to project tasers in the best light possible to the public.

175 TASER X26C OPERATING MANUAL, supra note 44, at 23 (stating that the camera is turned on as soon as the safety switch for the taser is turned off and allows for the device to record the incident).


177 See infra Part III.B (discussing the importance of including training requirements in a statute regulating taser use by law enforcement).

178 McCray, supra note 15. McCray stated:

[Law enforcement officers have a legitimate interest in protecting themselves and the public during potentially violent encounters, and for the victim, a taser is generally a less lethal alternative to a firearm. But history demonstrates that law enforcement agencies have failed to create and implement [t]aser polices that effectively educate officers about the risks involved and ensure that officers only use [t]asers when actually necessary.]

Id.; see also supra Parts II.A–B (describing the dangers that tasers present).

179 See supra Parts II.A–B (discussing the harm that tasers can inflict). However, I respectively disagree with other scholars that certain limitations should be placed on which individuals can be tased. See supra Part II.B (discussing the categories of individuals that some believe law enforcement should be banned from using a taser on).

180 See Spriggs, supra note 23, at 489 (discussing how the “opinions . . . were evenly divided” on the Andrew Meyer situation); Miller, supra note 43, at 72 (“The use of electronic control weapons in these low-intensity situations led to considerable media attention and public controversy.”); see also supra notes 68–73, 113–16 and accompanying text (providing a description of the Andrew Meyer incident, an eight year old being tased, and two other tasing incidents involving pregnant women that grasped the public’s attention).
Florida’s statute provides an excellent starting point by mandating that officers go through a training course before being issued a taser. Florida’s statute provides the best guidance for drafting a training requirement, because it requires officers to complete a “basic skills course” and “an annual training course.” The constant training will help imbed taser regulations and tactics into an officer’s memory for when it comes time to use the device in the field. This is important because without continuous proper training, the officer may unintentionally forget information vital to the proper handling of a taser.

181 See FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717 (West Supp. 2012) (“The basic skills course required for certification as a law enforcement officer must include instruction on the use of dart-firing stun guns. The portion of the basic skills course on the use of dart-firing stun guns must be a minimum of [four] hours’ duration.”).

182 Id.

183 See id. (requiring that law enforcement receive yearly training on tasers).

184 Sussman, supra note 23, at 1349–50 n.33 (discussing cases involving officers who mixed up their guns with their taser). The facts in Torres v. Madera are:

Police officers arrested Everardo . . . and placed [him] in the back seat of a patrol car. Everardo awoke . . . and began yelling and kicking the rear car door from the inside . . . . Officer Noriega, one of several police officers on site that evening, was standing a few feet directly behind the patrol car when she first heard Everardo yelling. She recalls telling her fellow officers that whoever was closest should tase Everardo because he could injure himself if he kicked through the glass window . . . . Officer Noriega herself was closest, so she approached the car . . . opened it with her left hand . . . [and] reached down with her right hand to her right side, unsnapped her holster, removed the Glock, aimed the weapon’s laser at Everardo’s center mass, put her left hand under the gun, and pulled the trigger, all without looking at the weapon in her hand . . . . The parties agree that Officer Noriega had intended to reach immediately below her holstered Glock on her dominant right side, and that she had intended to use her [t]aser in dart-tase rather than touch-tase mode. Everardo died later that evening.

Torres v. City of Madera, 648 F.3d 1119, 1121 (9th Cir. 2011); Sussman, supra note 23, at 1349–50 n.33 (citing to Torres, 648 F.3d at 1121). This case is used to demonstrate how officers in the field are capable of having memory lapses that improved or increased levels of training could hopefully prevent. See supra Part III.B (analyzing the benefits of including continuous training requirements). Ideally, if the proposed statute at the end of this Note would have been in place in California at the time of this incident a number of different steps could have prevented a result ending in death. See infra Part IV.A (providing the language of the proposed model statute). For example, the officer would not have been allowed to use dart stun mode on this suspect. FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; see also supra Part III.B (evaluating the benefits of including training requirements in a statute). Additionally, a warning would need to be issued before deploying the taser, including a visual warning of the device. See infra Part III.C (providing a dialogue as to why a warning requirement should be included in a statute). Upon providing the visual warning, the officer could have noticed that it was not a taser she was holding, but was her firearm instead. Torres, 648 F.3d at 1121. Finally, proper or continued training may have taught or reminded the officer in the above situation.
Future statutes should follow Florida’s lead and require yearly training. Ideally, this training will require officers themselves to endure the discomfort caused by tasers before being allowed to use the device on others. In 2010, a majority of officers allowed to use tasers were to double check the weapon they are using before firing it. See supra Part III.B (discussing the need for a statutory training requirement).

185 See supra Part II.F (discussing the different types of training requirements present in current state statutes). The ACLU of Northern California’s proposal is also vague on the training requirements that should be imposed. ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 17; Spriggs, supra note 23, at 513 n.167 (suggesting that “[t]he model regulation by the ACLU of Northern California is a good starting point for clear and effective taser regulation”). “The [t]aser shall only be used by officers and supervisors trained in its deployment and use. Officers shall use the [t]aser in a manner that is consistent with departmental orders and training guidelines.” ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 17. However, by allowing different departments to have different guidelines it does not correct the concerning problem of providing consistency in taser regulation. Id.; see supra Part II (discussing the current problems with the inconsistency in regulating taser usage by law enforcement). In fact, this very idea contradicts the ultimate goal of this Note. See infra Part IV (providing language for a proposed statute for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin). Therefore, the training requirement in the statute would be a minimum amount of training that officers have to go through. See infra Part IV.A (using language that indicates that the training in the statute is only the minimum amount that is required). It would seem counter-productive to put a ceiling on the amount of education that officers can receive about the device and impact on using it. See supra note 184 (describing an incident where an officer mistakenly fired her firearm instead of her taser). Michelle McStravick referenced a study from the Government Accountability Office, where they researched seven agencies and concluded that: “[o]f the seven agencies observed, the report noted that only four to eight hours of training were required for an officer to carry a [taser] as compared to sixty to 100 hours required for a firearm.” McStravick, supra note 22, at 388. The study McStravick noted, influence this Note’s proposed statute to include a requirement for a minimum number of hours of continuous annual training that an officer must complete before being issued a taser. Id. This minimum number of hours being proposed will be higher than the one hour of annual training in the Florida statute and require training for both drive stun mode and dart stun mode. FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717 (“[t]he annual training course on the use of dart-firing stun guns must be a minimum of [one] hour duration”).

186 McStravick, supra note 22, at 390 (“One officer who was shot with a [taser] said, ‘[i]t is the most pain I ever felt in my life . . . [] I felt like my muscles were going to explode.’ Another officer . . . compared the [taser] shock to sticking a finger in a light socket over and over.”). “The Police Executive Research Forum conducted a survey of a stratified, random sample of approximately [1000] municipal, county and state law enforcement agencies.” See Smith et al., supra note 78, at 3–1 (indicating that the survey was performed in 2010 and funded by the National Institution of Justice); Sussman, supra note 23, at 1348 n.20 (citing to the 2010 survey). The survey concluded that roughly 63.7% of the agencies required an officer to be tased before being allowed to use a taser. Smith et al., supra note 78, at 3–15–16. In contrast, a greater number of agencies, 77.4%, required that their officers have “chemical sprays” used on them before they are allowed to use the chemicals on suspects. Id. It seems logical, since both are non-lethal alternatives, that the number of agencies requiring their officers to be tased should be closer to the amount that require their officers to be sprayed with chemicals. Smith et al., supra note 78, at 3–15–16; see supra Part ILE (explaining that the Abbott decision found that pepper spray and tasers were similar a level of force).
subjected to this type of training, with the logic that officers will take into
consideration the discomfort of being tased before unnecessarily
deploying their taser on a suspect. 187 To move forward with taser
regulations, statutes should require constant training for law enforcement
officers to have the best chance at minimizing improper use of the device
and limiting excessive force claims. 188

Rather than requiring a complete ban against law enforcement’s
ability to use a taser on certain suspects, such as the old or young, proper
training should instead be employed to deal with the potential problems
that arise with tasing these types of suspects. 189 Restrictions should not be
placed on individuals just because they are too young or too old, pregnant,
or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. 190 Past incidents demonstrate
that these classes of individuals are just as capable of ignoring an officer’s
instructions or placing themselves and others in danger; therefore, a taser
may in fact be the best solution to subduing these suspects. 191 Most
individuals that are tased by law enforcement leave officers with no
alternative by continuously refusing to follow officers’ instructions. 192

187 See supra note 186 (supplying statistical data on the number of agencies that already
require an officer to go through this type of training before being issued a taser).
189 ACLU of N. Cal., supra note 59, at 18. The ACLU of Northern California provided a
policy that stated, “[a]lthough not absolutely prohibited, deputies should give additional
consideration to the unique circumstances involved prior to applying the Taser. Criteria to
consider: . . . (3) Individual[s] who may be at greater risk include: (a) Pregnant women; (b)
Elderly person; (c) Children; (4) Person with known health problems . . . .” Id.; see supra Part
II.B (discussing other scholar’s concerns about the effects tasers can have on certain people).
Additionally, special training can be required to deal with situations involving excited
delirium. Meyer, supra note 62. The training would include recognizing situations where
the officer should call for medical backup before making contact with the suspect, but should
not wait for their arrival and should “go ahead and subdue the suspect.” Id.
190 See supra Part II.B (discussing how there are some that believe law enforcement should
be banned from tasing certain categories of individuals).
191 See Meyer, supra note 62 (discussing Greg Meyer’s claim that, according to doctors,
tasers may be the best solution to subdue suspects experiencing EDS); supra notes 68–73
(describing an incident where a suicidal eight-year-old girl pointed a knife at herself and
towards an officer who attempted to help her); supra notes 115–16 (describing two different
situations where pregnant woman failed to obey officers commands by either failing to exit
a vehicle upon instruction or by making physical contact with an officer while he was
performing his duties).
192 See supra notes 113–16 (providing examples of individuals who could have easily
avoided being tased had they simply obeyed the officer’s instructions); supra note 114
(providing an apology issued by Andrew Meyer for not listening to officers at the time);
supra Part I (providing another example of two individuals who were tased because they too
would not follow officers’ instructions).
Thus, statutorily required training with respect to taser usage could eliminate numerous potential problems. Legislatures should base the structure of a training program off of Florida’s statute, where the law requires additional yearly training in conjunction with any initial training program before permitting an officer to use a taser in the field. The law must allow officers to use their best judgment when dealing with groups of individuals, including those at both ends of the age spectrum or pregnant women. Proper training, rather than straight restrictions, is vital to the success of any state statute regulating law enforcement’s lawful use of tasers. Still, there are other provisions that may be included in a statute, such as a warning or medical requirement, which could improve the regulation of law enforcements use of tasers.

C. Statutes Should Require Officers to Give a Warning Before the Deployment of a Taser and Seek Medical Treatment for All Tased Suspects

To ensure that law enforcement officers effectively use tasers, all state statutes must implement a warning requirement. A visual and verbal warning requirement, similar to the one suggested by the ACLU of Northern California, will ensure that all suspects, including those with visual and hearing impairments, have an opportunity to obey instructions before the police take physical action. The opportunity to see and hear a warning during loud and chaotic situations will benefit non-impaired

193 See supra Part III.B (analyzing the benefits of mandating strong training requirements for the officers who are allowed to use a taser in the field).
194 See supra Part III.B (evaluating the benefits of including a training requirement in statutes that regulates the use of tasers by law enforcement); supra Part II.F (comparing Florida’s training requirement with other State statutes).
195 See supra notes 68–73 (providing an example of a valid reason to taser an eight-year-old child); supra notes 115–16 (illustrating two valid examples of when pregnant woman have been tased).
196 See infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute that rejects restrictions on categories of individuals who may be tased and instead elects to focus on more stringent training requirements).
197 See infra Part III.C (analyzing warning requirements and medical requirements that could be implemented into statutes regulating taser usage by law enforcement).
198 ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 18. The ACLU of Northern California suggests:

Unless it would otherwise endanger officer safety or is impractical due to circumstances, a verbal announcement of the intended use of the taser shall precede the application of taser device in order to:
1. Provide the individual with a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.
2. Provide other deputies and individuals with a warning that a taser device may be deployed.

Id.
199 See supra Part III.C (demonstrating why it would be beneficial to require officers to give a warning requirement).
individuals as well because the two warnings will give suspects multiple opportunities to obey an officer’s order.\textsuperscript{200} Additionally, law enforcement will be accountable for documenting why the warnings were not given.\textsuperscript{201} Requiring officers to include an additional couple of lines on their police reports regarding the warnings that were given is not a huge burden because reports are completed after all police incidents regardless of whether a taser was used.\textsuperscript{202} Nevertheless, no such requirement exists in the Arkansas, Georgia, or Florida statutes despite scholars’ recognition that a warning requirement is needed.\textsuperscript{203} Law enforcement officers and potential suspects will all benefit by the inclusion of this requirement and thus, a warning requirement should be included in any state statute accepted by Illinois, Indiana, or Wisconsin.\textsuperscript{204}

In addition to adding warning requirements, taser regulations must also be capable of adapting to new technology in the field.\textsuperscript{205} Technological advances in tasers will play a major role in how states draft proper regulations.\textsuperscript{206} Statutes should include a medical examination requirement as a final safety measure for the protection of both the suspect who was tased and the law enforcement officer who engaged the taser.\textsuperscript{207} Again, the ACLU of Northern California provided suggested language for such a provision.\textsuperscript{208} The group proposed the simple requirement that a

\textsuperscript{200} ACLU of N. Cal., supra note 59, at 18 (suggesting that both a visual and verbal warning be given). Additionally, the warning requirement may have prevented at least one officer from accidently shooting a suspect because they believed they were firing a taser and not a gun. See supra note 184 (explaining the details of Torres and expressing how a warning requirement may have prevented the accident from occurring).

\textsuperscript{201} ACLU of N. Cal., supra note 59, at 18 (quoting the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Department’s taser regulations: “[t]he fact that a verbal and/or other warning was given or reason it was not given shall be documented in any relevant reports”); see supra Part II.A (discussing how the TASER CAM provides additional safeguards for police accountability in taser cases).

\textsuperscript{202} See ACLU of N. Cal., supra note 59, at 18 (suggesting that officers must explain in their reports why a warning was not given).


\textsuperscript{204} See infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute for the states in the Seventh Circuit to include warning requirements for officers before their deployment of a taser against a suspect).

\textsuperscript{205} See infra Part II.A (providing background to new taser technology).

\textsuperscript{206} See supra Part II.A (discussing the background of tasers and the current technological advancements for the devices).

\textsuperscript{207} See infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute which includes the provision for a medical examination to be given to all suspects who have been tased).

\textsuperscript{208} ACLU of N. Cal., supra note 59, at 19 (“Persons who have been subjected to the [t]aser electronic immobilization device, either the darts or the probes, shall be treated . . . .”).
medical examination take place regardless of the taser mode used.209 This examination will provide documentation of any injuries that a suspect may sustain, which victims or officers can use as evidence either in support of or against an excessive force claim.210 Further, statutes should include the requirement that states “if the tase[d] suspect loses consciousness, officers shall immediately request fire rescue and an ambulance.”211 This way, if something goes wrong during the use of a taser, help will be available for the tased suspect as soon as possible.212

As a final proposal, the ACLU of Northern California mentioned that “[a] thorough physical examination with particular emphasis on injuries secondary to the fall should be performed.”213 This will provide additional protection for a suspect’s invisible injuries.214 The ACLU of Northern California’s suggested medical requirements are valued additions for the furthered safety of taser use by law enforcement, and thus legislatures should include such a provision in future regulations.215

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209 See supra Part III.D (providing the language recommended so that individuals, regardless of which mode they were tased in, can receive medical attention).
210 ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19 (“The transporting officer shall obtain medical clearance from the appropriate medical facility physician prior to booking the suspect.”). This language can be used both as a safeguard for injured suspects and also for the officers against suspects who bring unwarranted suits. See infra Part IV.A (amending Florida’s statute to provide safeguards for suspects and officers). Additionally, if an officer used excessive force in a tasing incident, then the medical documentation will be readily available for a victim to access. See supra Part III.C (evaluating medical requirements to include in statutes).
211 ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19 (emphasis omitted); see supra Part III.B (explaining the training requirement). The training should also include the recommendation of Meyer, who suggests that in incidents where time allows, officers should call an ambulance in before deploying a taser on an individual who may suffer from excited delirium. Meyer, supra note 62; see supra Part II.B (discussing the new concept of excited delirium).
212 ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19 (explaining how an officer trained to recognized EDS would have hopefully called for help before deploying their taser).
213 Id.
214 See id. (“One easily overlooked aspect of injury in a tase[d] subject is that of falling from a standing position. Potential injuries include: fractures, contusions, and intracranial hemorrhage.”); supra Part II (discussing the potential dangers of tasers). Most likely this type of training would have to be in unison with the medical personal in the area. See supra note 22 (explaining how regulation of tasers differs amongst police agencies). The process of medical examination may vary depending on the resources available in the area. See supra note 22 (discussing how there are variances between police agencies’ regulations regarding the use of tasers). This minor inconsistency from department to department has a less of an effect on taser regulations than other inconsistencies, as long as a medical examination is required in some form. See supra Part II (discussing the inconsistencies in the current regulation of law enforcement’s use of tasers).
215 See infra Part IV.A (drafting a model statute that includes a medical examination provision).
Some scholars do not believe that a DME has a place in excessive force claims involving tasers.\textsuperscript{216} However, those opposing a DME are fearful of the rare situations where an officer uses excessive force by using a taser against a suspect and leaves them without a physical injury.\textsuperscript{217} New weapon technology, like the taser, does not leave the same injuries as former tools used by law enforcement because the technology in this field focuses on reducing the amount of injury to a suspect, while still providing enough pain and discomfort so that the officer may subdue the suspect.\textsuperscript{218} Thus, advancements in technology have raised concerns that if a DME is included in the applicable law, those suspects who suffer from actual abuse of force by law enforcement may be unable to bring a claim because of the inability to prove any injury.\textsuperscript{219} Yet, legislatures should quickly dismiss these concerns when other safeguards to taser usage are read alongside the DME.\textsuperscript{220} To that end, a consistent evaluation of the

\textsuperscript{216} Mance, supra note 38, at 638–45, 655 (advocating that the Fourth Circuit join the First, Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, Tenth, and D.C. Circuit Courts in not recognizing the De Minimis Injury Doctrine).

\textsuperscript{217} McKechnie, supra note 49, at 188; Mance, supra note 38, at 645. Mance suggests:

In light of the increasingly common use of tasers in everyday law enforcement and the ever growing number of taser related death[,] currently in the hundreds[,] there is reason to think that the approach taken by the federal district courts in the Fourth Circuit of only granting the rarest plaintiff the opportunity to make his case is inadequate for dealing with the very real issue of taser related police brutality.

\textsuperscript{218} McKechnie, supra note 49, at 188. Douglas B. McKechnie, an assistant professor of law, wrote: “[t]he future of nonlethal weapons lies in the development of devices that use pain, disorientation, temporary blindness, and perhaps even stress and anxiety to detain the target . . . . The . . . goal is to avoid causing physical injury while seizing and arresting the target.” Id. at 139, 188. “Gone will be the days when police use a nightstick to subdue an arrestee. As the state’s devices evolve, they will not cause the same sort of harm as a nightstick.” Georgiady, supra note 51, at 189. See generally McKechnie, supra note 49 (discussing the future of new weapon technology and the effect that it will have on the De Minimis Injury Exception and Fourth Amendment excessive force claims).

\textsuperscript{219} McKechnie, supra note 49, at 189. McKechnie further writes that:

Employing a de minimis injury exception appears to reduce potentially frivolous excessive force claims by arrestees. In light of future nonlethal weapons on which police officers will likely rely to detain arrestees, however, a de minimis injury exception to such claims loses its luster. Indeed, if future nonlethal weapons are as enthusiastically adopted as the [t]aser, it is possible that police officers will almost exclusively rely on an arsenal of nonlethal devices to detain arrestees. For those circuits that permit district courts to employ a de minimis injury exception or require some more-than-insignificant quantum of injury, a citizen’s right to be free from the state’s excessive force could soon evaporate.

\textsuperscript{220} See supra Part III.B (evaluating training requirements for state statutes); supra Part III.C (analyzing the possible additions of a warning requirement and a medical requirement for

https://scholar.valpo.edu/vulr/vol49/iss3/13
level of force for both modes of the taser is critical to the success of taser regulation.\textsuperscript{221}

D. Law Enforcement Agencies That Allow Taser Use Should Require That Their Officers Also Be Equipped with a TASER CAM

Any taser regulations must consider the availability of technological advancement in the field.\textsuperscript{222} Often, the \textit{Graham} test proves to be difficult for suspects to overcome because of the biased facts presented by each party.\textsuperscript{223} The TASER CAM, while costly upfront, can potentially save law enforcement agencies and states money, as well as free up court time that previously would have been wasted on unwarranted excessive force claims.\textsuperscript{224} Parties from either side will have trouble arguing against video evidence that captured the entire incident, preventing a lot of cases from requiring an expensive and time consuming trial.\textsuperscript{225}

To that end, an ideal statute will require that officers, who are trained to carry tasers in the field, also be equipped with a TASER CAM or similar type of recording device.\textsuperscript{226} In addition to protecting officers, the camera will also protect suspects because the TASER CAM can provide a higher level of accountability for officers, under the logic that it is highly unlikely that an officer will voluntarily abuse their position of power with a taser knowing that they are being recorded.\textsuperscript{227} If the TASER CAM requirement

\textsuperscript{221} See supra Part II.D (explaining the inconsistencies among the Circuits on where the taser fits on the use of force continuum).

\textsuperscript{222} See supra Part II.A (discussing the technological advancements of tasers).

\textsuperscript{223} Sussman, supra note 23, at 1374–75. The problem for defendants began right away during the trial process, starting with establishing the facts for the judge and jury to hear. \textit{id.} at 1374–75. “When deciding if a reasonable jury could conclude that the force was excessive, courts engage in \textit{Graham} balancing by looking at the facts as asserted by both parties[,] in other words, courts weigh the stories told by ‘honorable police officers’ against the stories told by ‘blameworthy troublemakers.’” \textit{id.}

\textsuperscript{224} See Hardy, supra note 53 (“The new cameras sell for [$1000]”); supra note 54 (quoting Mr. Smith’s statement about the billions that are spent on “complaints about brutality”).

\textsuperscript{225} See supra note 54 (providing dollar amounts that are spent on excessive force cases). Video was able to protect an officer who shot and killed an individual. Hardy, supra note 53. The individual’s wife would later say that her husband did not have a gun in his hand, but only a cellphone. \textit{id.} However, after recorded video had been viewed, the officer was “exonerated.” \textit{id.}

\textsuperscript{226} See supra note 54 (explaining how the entire event is captured).

\textsuperscript{227} See TASER CAM, TASER.COM (2014), available at http://www.taser.com/products/on-officer-video/taser-cam, archived at http://perma.cc/KD8K-C4ZC (“The TASER CAM law enforcement video recorder offers increased accountability—not just for police officers, but for the people they arrest. Without video, it can be the officer’s word against the suspect’s word. Now with the TASER CAM recorder, every potential TASER X26 deployment can be documented with full audio and camera video.”); supra Part III.D (discussing TASER’s reasoning behind the benefits of having recorded the tasing incident). Doug Wyllie wrote
was implemented, officers and suspects would be accountable for explaining their actions in light of video evidence, which would help confirm or dispel their stories.228

In short, when officers are called to assist and protect the community and are then met with uncooperative individuals, the concern shifts from the suspect’s safety to the safety of the public and law enforcement.229 Suspects have as much control over being tased as do the officers who determine it is proper to tase the suspect.230 Requiring officers to be properly trained, and to give multiple warnings before deploying a taser, will solidify this concept.231 Further, a medical requirement provision will allow suspects who have been tased to have any seen or unseen injuries treated.232 By mandating a medical review requirement, medical documents of the event and potential injuries will be available for review.233 At its core, the medical review requirement is an additional obligation meant to further safety, while advocating for the continued use of tasers by law enforcement.234 Next, including a DME extension will eliminate unwarranted claims from suspects against officers.235 Finally, a

“[i]t has become pretty-widely accepted that the body-worn video camera will eventually become standard equipment for just about every American police officer.” Wyllie, supra note 52 (quoting the PoliceOne Editor and Chief, Doug Wyllie).

228 See supra note 54 (explaining how the TASER CAM records video of the incident).

229 See supra notes 68–73, 113–16 (describing incidents where law enforcement officers were requested to assist in protecting their community).

230 See supra note 114 (providing Andrew Meyer’s apology to law enforcement for doing their job).

231 See supra Part III.A (analyzing how a training requirement could be properly included in a statute regulating taser usage by law enforcement); supra notes 68–73, 113–16 (providing examples of cases where suspects’ refusals to cooperate were the cause for the tasing). There are two ways that suspects could prevent being tased. See supra Part III.C (evaluating warning requirements for officer to give before deploying a taser). First, the suspect can refrain from placing themselves in situations, most likely breaking the law in some fashion, where law enforcement is being forced to become involved. See supra notes 68–73, 113–16 (demonstrating how suspect’s actions leave officers no choice but to use force). Second, after law enforcement has arrived on the scene, suspects can deescalate the situation by obeying the officer’s commands. See supra notes 68–73, 113–16 (describing incidents that led to suspects being tased for failing to obey officer’s commands).

232 See supra Part III.D (analyzing the benefits of including a medical requirement in a statute).

233 See supra Part III.D (recommending that suspects who have been tased be medically examined).

234 See supra Part II.A (providing statistics on the dangers associated with being an officer, the benefits of tasers, and how agencies that allow tasers have continued to rise over the past decade).

235 See supra Parts II.C, III.C (discussing and analyzing the DME); Part III.D (explaining how the TASER CAM would help hold officers accountable for their actions).
strong statute will have to incorporate new taser technology. In excessive force cases it is easily forgotten why law enforcement officers were called to the scene in the first place—the suspect’s previous actions leading up to the tasing are often overlooked. Therefore, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin can allow law enforcement to continue to utilize the taser, a non-deadly type of force, by improving regulation through implementing state statutes. 

IV. CONTRIBUTION

This Note advocates for the continued use of tasers by law enforcement but recognizes that the current system provides little guidance for officers, which creates inconsistencies within this area of the law. However, implementing a model state statute that is based on statutes currently in place can eliminate the inconsistencies and fear of tasers. The best way to further the holding of the Seventh Circuit’s recent decision in Abbott is for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin to enact statutes modeled after preexisting laws, such as the one in Florida. The lower courts have already demonstrated how inconsistencies can quickly develop when dealing with taser regulations, and have left law enforcement officers to decipher these inconsistencies as potentially dangerous situations unfold. Accordingly, the following proposed statute corrects flaws in Florida’s statute and supplements the goal of eliminating inconsistencies by providing officers with proper guidelines regarding the lawful use of a taser. First, Part IV.A provides a comprehensive state statute modeled off of Florida’s existing law. Next, Part IV.B offers commentary on areas where there may be opposition and addresses why

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236 See supra Parts II.A, III.D (explaining the current technological advancements that should be taken into consideration when drafting a statute directed at regulating tasers).
237 See supra notes 68–73, 113–16 (providing details of tasing incidents).
238 See supra Part III (analyzing provisions to include in statutes to regulations that deal with law enforcement’s use of the taser); supra note 43 (listing the taser as a non-deadly type of force).
239 See supra Part II (providing background for the current law regulating the use of tasers by law enforcement).
240 See supra Part III (advocating that the current regulations of tasers can be improved by adopting the proposed model statute).
242 See supra Part II (discussing the current inconsistencies of regulating taser use of law enforcement); supra Part II.C (providing a discussion on the Graham factors and how current courts have used additional factors to decide excessive force claims).
243 See infra Part IV.A (providing the language of the proposed model state statute for regulating taser use by law enforcement).
Tasers, when properly used, are capable of providing safe resolutions to incidents for both officers and suspects, and thus states should enact the proposed statute to provide consistency for law enforcement’s use of tasers.

A. Proposed Statute for States in the Seventh Circuit

The proposed provisions discussed in this Note are capable of merging into the existing Florida statute to create an improved and customized statute for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. A new statute will help provide both consistency throughout the states and give law enforcement concrete guidelines on when officers can lawfully deploy a taser. The following provides the proposed model state statute that should be adopted to provide suspects, officers, and communities with a consistent understanding for when law enforcement may properly deploy a taser:

Law Enforcement’s Use of Tasers dart-firing stun guns

(1) Definitions.
(a) Active Resistance. The subject’s actions are intended to facilitate an escape or prevent an arrest.
(b) Passive Resistance. The subject fails to obey verbal direction, preventing the officer from taking lawful action.

(2) Warning Requirement. Before using a taser an officer must provide warning, unless it would otherwise endanger officer safety or is impractical due to the circumstances, by:
(a) giving a verbal warning of intent to use the taser, and

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244 See infra Part IV.B (highlighting the areas of the proposed model statute in Part IV.A where there may be resistance to implementing the statute).
245 See supra Part III.B (expressing the need to address both taser modes in the statute); supra Part III.C (advocating for the inclusion of a warning requirement); supra Part III.B (analyzing the importance of strong training requirements); supra Part III.D (discussing the need for a medical requirement, as well as implementing the De Minimis Injury Exception for the taser usage by law enforcement). The regular font is text that comes directly from FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717. The author has used italic font for the recommended additions to the statute. Finally, text that has a line through it, is recommended to be removed from Florida’s statute by the author.
246 Subsection (2) from the original Florida statute was not included in the main text to preserve space because it referenced specifically training for Florida and would be removed in its entirety for a proposed statute in Illinois, Indiana, or Wisconsin.

(2) The Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission shall establish standards for instructing law enforcement, correctional, and correctional probation officers in the use of dart-firing stun guns. The instructions standards must include the effect a dart-firing stun gun may have on a person.

FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717.
(b) giving a visual warning, by:
   (I) displaying the electrical arc in drive stun mode;
   or
   (II) displaying the taser in dart stun mode.

(3) **Drive Stun Mode.** A decision by a law enforcement officer, correctional officer, or correctional probation officer to use drive stun mode must involve an arrest or custodial situation, during which the person who is the subject is demonstrating passive resistance by continuous refusal to obey an officer’s command, after having been properly warned in accordance with subsection (2).

(4) (1) **Dart Stun Mode.** A decision by a law enforcement officer, correctional officer, or correctional probation officer to use dart stun mode (a dart firing stun gun) must involve an arrest or a custodial situation during which the person who is the subject, has been properly warned in accordance with subsection (2), and is demonstrating active resistance to the officer from passive physical resistance to active physical resistance and the person:
   (a) having Has the apparent ability to physically threaten the officer or others; or
   (b) is preparing or attempting to flee or escape.

(5) **Medical Requirement.** A thorough physical examination shall be given to all suspects that have been tased in either dart stun mode or drive stun mode. The transporting officer shall obtain medical clearance from the appropriate medical physician before booking a suspect.

(6) **De Minimis Injury Exception.** If the suspect has been cleared by subsection (4) to have de minimis, non-permanent, injuries as a result of being lawfully tased as detailed in this statute, then the suspect cannot bring suit against an officer or the state for excessive force.

(7) (3) The basic skills course required for certification as a law enforcement officer must include instruction on the use of tasers in both dart stun mode and drive stun mode and dart-firing stun guns. The portion of the basic skills course on the use of dart-firing stun guns must be a minimum of [four] hours duration.

(8) (4) A law enforcement officer, correctional officer, or correctional probation officer who has not received the dart-firing stun gun training described in subsection (3) and who is authorized by his or her employing or
appointing agency to carry a taser dart-firing stud gun after the effective date of this act must complete, before issuance and use of a taser dart-firing stun gun, the [four-hour] dart-firing stun gun training described in subsection (3). or an equivalent training course provided by the officer’s employing appointing agency in accordance with the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission standards outline in subsection (2).

(9) After completing the basic skills course, each law enforcement, correctional, and correctional probation officer who is authorized by his or her agency to use a taser dart-firing stun gun must complete an annual training course on the use of a taser for both dart stun mode and drive stun mode. The annual training course on the use of dart-firing guns must be a minimum of one hour every four months. 1 hour duration.

(10) All law enforcement agencies that allow tasers, must also equip those officers with digital recording video devices.247

B. Commentary

The proposed model statute above provides Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin with an opportunity to further regulate tasers, as well as eliminate inconsistencies that have plagued this area of the law in the

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247 The definitions for active resistance and passive resistance used throughout the statute are taken by Michael Miller’s definitions. Miller, supra note 43, at 72–73. The phrasing for § 2 was taken from ACLU of Northern California’s recommended polices. ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 18 (“[u]nless it would otherwise endanger officer safety or impractical due to circumstances” and “a deputy may, but is not required to display the electrical arc . . . . Deputies should not remove a [t]aser cartridge in order to display an electrical arc”); see supra Part III.C (analyzing the ACLU of Northern California’s suggestion for both a visual and verbal warning before an officer deploys his taser); supra Part III.C (advocating for the inclusion of a warning requirement, as well as using the wording provided by the ACLU of Northern California: “unless would otherwise endanger officer safety or is impractical due to the circumstances”). The language for § 3 was taken from Florida’s current statute. See FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717 (using language from the original subsection (1) of the Florida statute to alter for passive resistance). Language was taken from the policy recommendation of the ACLU of Northern California’s to create § 5. ACLU OF N. CAL., supra note 59, at 19 (using language provided by the ACLU of Northern California for phrases such as “[a] thorough physical examination,” “[t]he transporting officer shall obtain medical clearance from the appropriate medical facility physician prior to booking the suspect,” and for recommending that a medical examination be performed regardless of the type of taser mode used). Language for § 6 was created by the discussion provided in Parts II.A, III.C–D. See supra Parts II.A, III.C–D (explaining the DME). For § 9, the language was kept as a minimum amount of training that is required. FLA. STAT. ANN. § 943.1717; see McStravick, supra note 22, at 387–88 (discussing a study that analyzed training requirements).
Florida’s statute provides a strong foundation, but additional safeguards and sections of clarification should be added to allow law enforcement to continue to benefit by having tasers to use as a safety tool. The proposed statute expands upon Florida’s existing statute by providing guidelines for when a taser can be utilized in both taser modes. Further, the statute has been expanded to protect both suspects and officers by solidifying strong training requirements and by adding medical requirements, a warning requirement, and a requirement that utilizes the technological advances in tasers by recording the incident.

Critics may contend that there is not always enough time for an officer to provide both verbal and visual warnings. This is a real concern for officers who are constantly forced to make split-second decisions and who have to quickly adjust to escalating situations. However, in response to this argument, the ACLU of Northern California’s proposal provides a one-line exception to the two-step warning requirement, “[u]nless it would otherwise endanger officer safety or is impractical due to circumstances.” Hence, if officer safety is the main objective advocated in this Note, it is only practical to include a way to bypass the warning requirements in necessary circumstances, where there is otherwise not enough time to provide warnings, to prevent suspects from harming themselves, officers, or others in the community.

Additionally, the proposed model statute focuses on adding safeguards to eliminate the public’s fear of law enforcement abusing their ability to have tasers in the field. Critics may additionally argue against the proposed statute including a DME. However, this resistance is unfounded because of the safeguards built into the statue. The medical examination requirements that are included in the model statute require that medical personnel examine every individual tased, regardless of the
taser mode or whether an injury is visible.\textsuperscript{258} Further, other technological advances, such as the TASER CAM, may eliminate the need to even address the degree of injury because the court could view the incident on tape.\textsuperscript{259}

Finally, critics will likely argue that a statute should include a subsection that bans the use of tasers on certain categories of suspects.\textsuperscript{260} However, this is not a valid argument because tasers are being used to safely subdue suspects from harming themselves, officers, and others in the community, and sometimes those suspects may fall into a class of people that an officer would be prohibited from tasing.\textsuperscript{261} Thus, supplementing the training requirements that Florida’s statute already has in place and including other safety provisions, rather than placing a strict ban on the usage of the taser on classes of suspects, better addresses the issue.

In short, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin should adopt the proposed model statute to provide consistency in the regulation of taser use by law enforcement. The model statute allows suspects, officers, and communities to view the same guidelines and the model statute will provide additional safeguards to further protect both suspects and law enforcement from excessive force claims.

V. CONCLUSION

Had the events from the situation in Part I arisen after Illinois adopted the proposed model statute drafted in Part IV of this Note, the Abbott decision would likely have not come to pass.\textsuperscript{262} First, the officer would have known before going on duty whether he could lawfully use his taser in dart stun mode against a suspect who is only passively resisting. Second, had the officer blatantly ignored the statute and lied about the event leading up to the tasing of Cindy, the lower courts would have had at their disposal, courtesy of the TASER CAM, video evidence that would contradict the officer’s lies. Thus the proposed model statute provides the necessary guidelines that officers, the courts, and communities need to successfully regulate law enforcement’s use of tasers.

\textsuperscript{258} See supra Part III.C (analyzing medical requirements that may be implemented in a statute)

\textsuperscript{259} See supra Parts II.A, III.D (explaining technological advances and how soon courts may be able to view recorded video of incidents involving tasers).

\textsuperscript{260} See supra Parts II.B–II.C (discussing why these restrictions cannot logically be put into enforcement); supra note 73 (providing a quote from Police Chief Grandpre, expressing an officer’s inability to control who the suspects are that create threats).

\textsuperscript{261} See supra notes 68–73, 113–16 (providing incidents where tasers were lawfully used to deescalate situations to prevent harm done to the suspect or the officers).

\textsuperscript{262} See supra Parts I, II.E (explaining the facts of Abbott).
Tasers are a device that can, when properly regulated, be used to safely resolve dangerous situations while protecting those who protect society. The current system is flawed; thus, for the benefit of both officers and the community, the information and guidelines that are available need to be solidified in writing in a state statute. The proposed model statute has the potential to eliminate, or at the very least, lower inconsistencies with the lawfulness of law enforcement officers’ use of tasers. Therefore, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin should adopt the proposed statute to eliminate inconsistencies in this area of law, because “[w]hen a police officer is killed, it’s not an agency that loses an officer, it’s an entire nation.”263

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263 About ODMP, supra note 35 (quoting Chris Cosgriff, the founder of Officer Down Memorial Page).

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