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# Tasers on Campus

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# Tasers on Campus

Submitted by:Michelle Haberland

8/16/2016

**Question:** Does the University have, or plan to develop, a policy on the presence and use of tasers on our campus? Will there be an education program for the University community to advise students, faculty and staff on the possession and use of electroshock weapons on our campus? Is there a policy that will address the presence of tasers in "high risk" areas, where accidental discharge could be especially dangerous (e.g., in certain labs with combustible or explosive chemicals, in the Child Development Center where that kind of voltage could pose an especially high risk of serious injury to a child, etc.)?

**Rationale:** Does the University have, or plan to develop, a policy on the presence and use of tasers on our campus? Will there be an education program for the University community to advise students, faculty and staff on the possession and use of electroshock weapons on our campus? I have attached a brochure that outlines the weapons policy at University Georgia

**Response:** 8/22/2016: From Maura Copeland, Legal Affairs:

Response to RFI "Tasers on Campus"

Question: Does the University have, or plan to develop, a policy on the presence and use of tasers [sic] on our campus?

Rule: In the 2016 legislative session, the Georgia General Assembly passed and Governor Nathan Deal signed House Bill 792, regarding possession of electroshock devices – usually referred to as "Tasers" – on public university campuses.

The new law, which took effect July 1, applies to all public postsecondary institutions in the state, including property leased by the institutions. It permits all individuals 18 years of age or older or those currently enrolled in classes on a public institution's campus to carry "electroshock weapons" – Tasers, stun guns, and similar devices – for the purpose of self-defense.

What does the law say?

- Any individual aged 18 or older or currently enrolled in classes may carry a Taser, stun gun, or similar device while on campus.
- Individuals are not required to obtain a permit or license to carry an electroshock device.
- Electroshock devices can only be used “in defense of self or others.”
- Electroshock devices may be carried in any building owned or leased by the institution, including residence halls.
- The law does not specify a carrying method; devices may be carried openly or concealed.
- Colleges and universities may not create policies to prohibit electroshock devices on campuses.
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Answer: No new policy will be promulgated as a result of this legislation, which outlines the legally permitted presence and use of electroshock devices.

University Police have been working with the University System of Georgia to prepare for this legislation taking effect, and our officers have all been made aware of the new law and the possibility that individuals may legally be equipped with these devices. We are, as always, dedicated to ensuring the safety of our campus and the members of our community.

Question: Will there be an education program for the University community to advise students, faculty, and staff on the possession and use of electroshock weapons on our campus?

Answer: No such program is planned at this time. Students, faculty, and staff should recognize that electroshock devices have simply been removed from the definition of prohibited weapons on campus. This puts electroshock devices on the same legal footing as baseball bats or fists. These items are not per se illegal to possess on campus. However, they may not be used to inflict harm on someone else except in defense of self or others.

Members of the campus community who have additional questions regarding the law and its effects may direct such questions to the Office of Public Safety at (912) 478-5234 or to the Office of Legal Affairs at (912) 478-7481.

Question: Is there a policy that will address the presence of tasers [sic] in “high risk” areas, where accidental discharge could be especially dangerous (e.g. in certain labs with combustible or explosive chemicals, in the Child Development Center where that kind of voltage could pose an especially high risk of serious injury to a child, etc.)?

Answer: Under the law, colleges and universities are not permitted to create policy prohibiting the possession of these devices in any place on campus. The University Fire

Marshal has advised that the risk of combustion due to accidental discharge of an electroshock device in a laboratory is very low, especially where the fume hoods are being operated and the lab is properly monitored. Further questions regarding specific laboratories may be directed to the Office of Facilities Services--Environmental Health and Safety, at (912) 478-7165.

The Office of Legal Affairs has already communicated with the Child Development Center to address this issue. Other departments with specific policy concerns should consult the Office of Legal Affairs at (912) 478-7481 to receive advice regarding the options for legally managing these concerns.

Attachment: [Weapons-Zero-Tolerance \(UGA's Policy\)](#)