

Mason Police Department Use of Force Five Year Study

By Sgt. Don Hanson and Officer Matt Thorne

INTRODUCTION

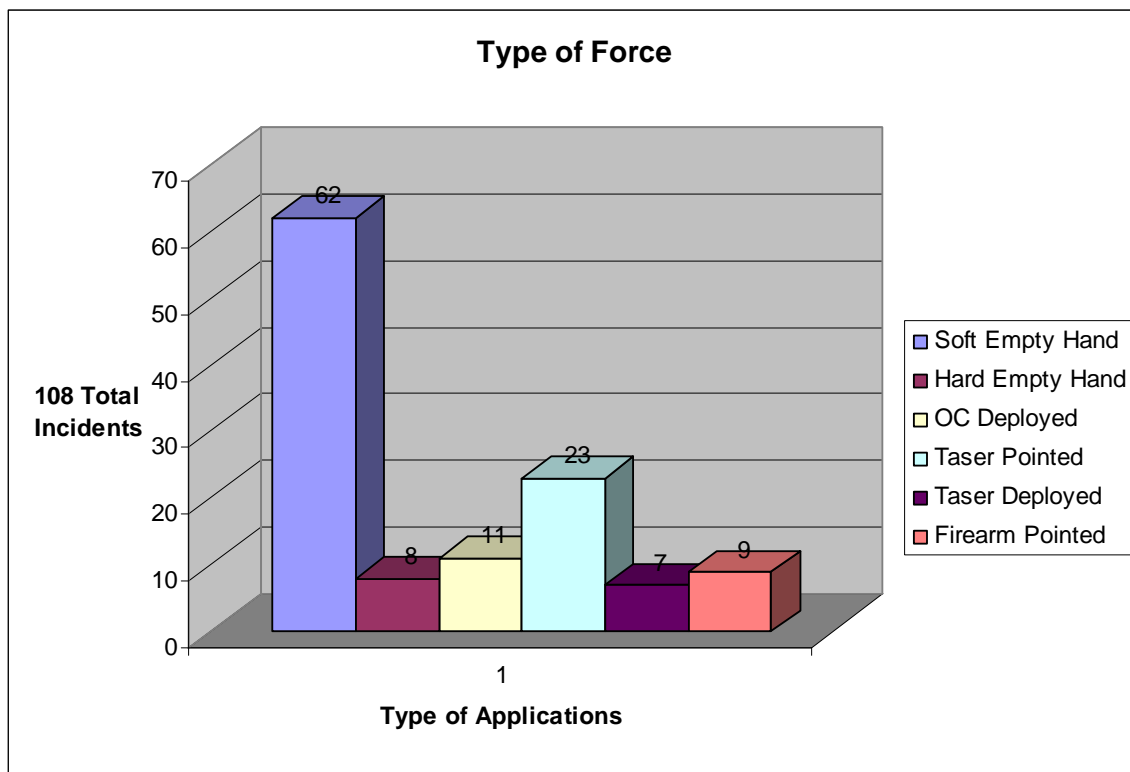
Each year in the Mason Police Department's Annual Report information is provided about the Use of Force that occurred and was reported for that year. Over the years we have tried to capture various and accurate data regarding the circumstances and situations when our police use of force was applied. Our "Use of Force Reports" are required to be written by officers when a certain level of force, or "Officer's Response" to a "Subject's Actions," occurs. A supervisor is then required to review the report and, subsequently, the Chief of Police conducts a final review of the report. Beginning in 2008, we changed our mandatory reporting requirements in an effort to better obtain the information surrounding each incident. Then again in 2009, additional small changes were made in an effort to obtain additional information, especially regarding Taser usage. It has now been a full five years since we made significant changes to our data collection, so we felt a five-year study and report was appropriate to publish for review and informational purposes.



Figure 1 The proper application of handcuffs to an arrested subject

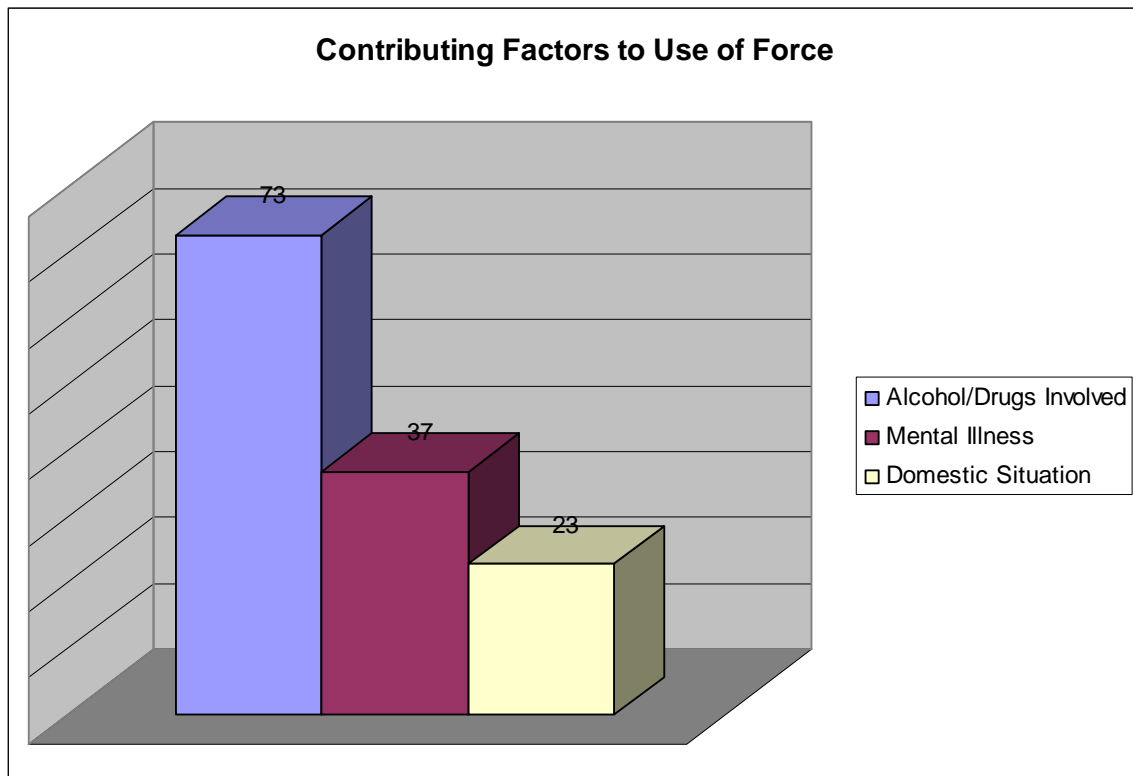
OVERVIEW OF APPLICATION OF FORCE

Since January 1, 2008, there have been 108 documented applications of force requiring mandatory reporting. It is important to understand, too, that one incident may contain various types of resistance by a subject and of force in order to gain compliance. Within those 108 applications, 62 involved the application of “Soft Empty Hand Control,” described as joint locks, pressure points; basically, going hands-on, but not hard strikes to a subject. Also within those 108 applications, 8 did involve “Hard Empty Hand Controls,” described as hand strikes, knee strikes, and more serious applications of force, but still empty handed without the use of any type of intermediate device. A total of 11 incidents involved the deployment of Chemical Agent, commonly called Oleoresin Capsicum, or OC. In 23 of the applications of force, a Taser was pointed at a subject to gain compliance. Merely the pointing of the Taser did not mean the Taser was actually deployed. In 7 incidents the Taser was actually deployed, meaning a Neuro Muscular Incapacitation, or NMI, was attempted. In 9 incidents a firearm was pointed at a subject. Since 2008, a firearm has not been discharged at a subject, meaning there have been no officers who have actually shot or shot at a resisting subject, or to capture a fleeing felon.



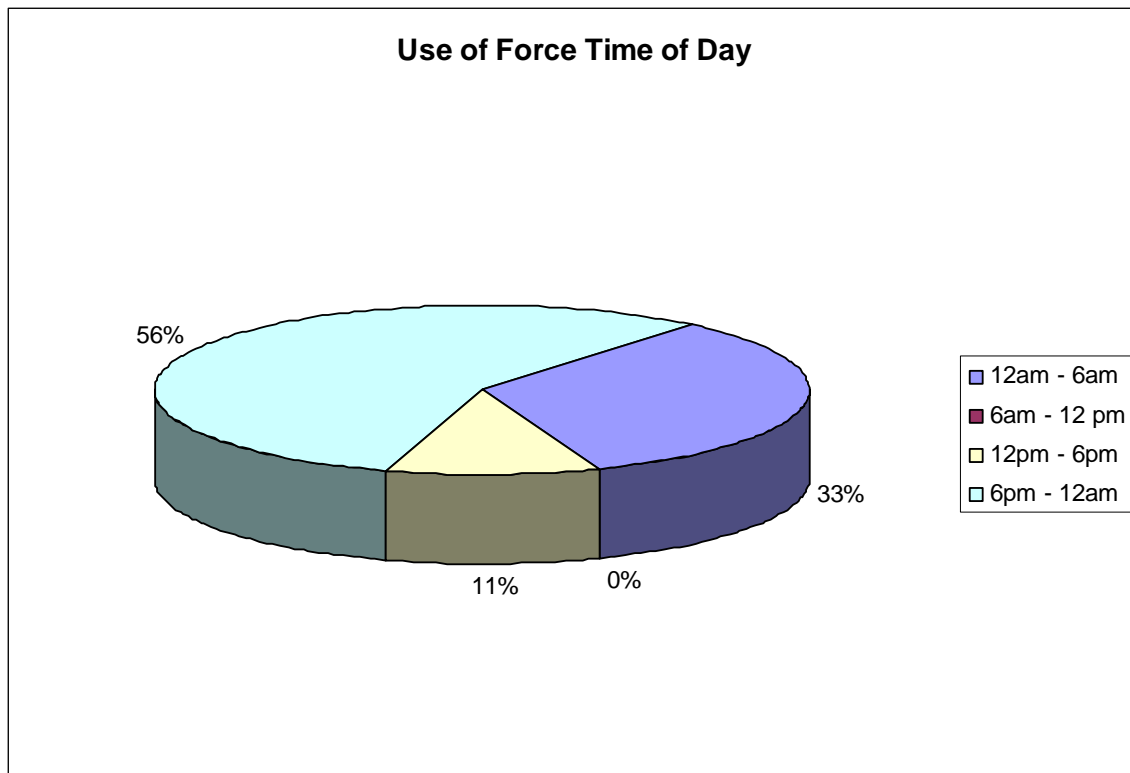
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE NEED TO USE FORCE

There are many contributing factors that may add to why a subject might elect to exhibit actions (resistance) requiring an officer to apply force in order to control him/her. Since 2008, we have been tracking 3: alcohol and/or drug use, mental illness, and domestic situations. During many uses of force, two—or even all three—of the factors have been present, further increasing the possibility a subject may resist in some form or another. During the 108 applications of force, 73 times the resisting subject had been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, and 37 times the subject had mental illness or was in need of mental health care. During 23 of the incidents, officers were responding to a domestic situation.



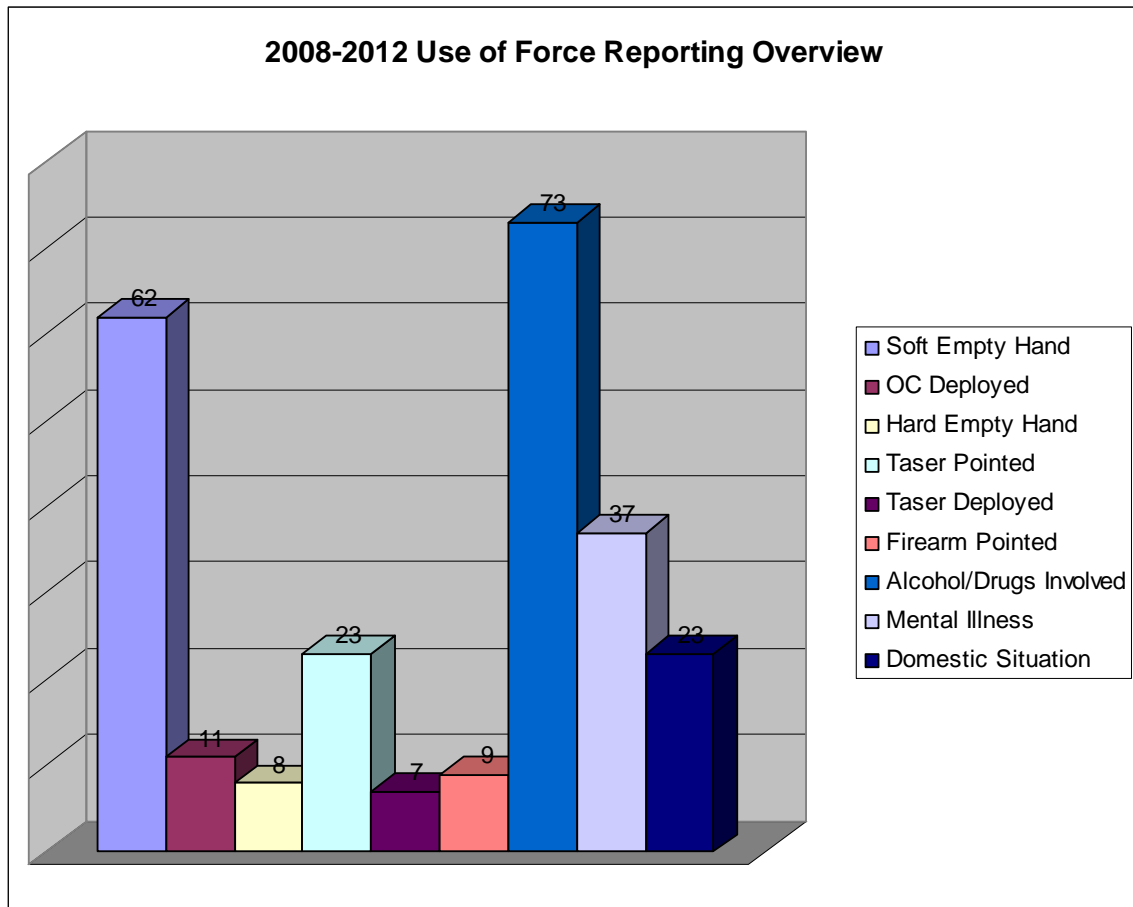
TIME OF DAY WHEN APPLICATION OF FORCE OCCURRED

We decided to break down the 24-hour clock into 4 - 8-hour sections: 6 AM to 12 PM (noon), 12 PM (noon) to 6 PM, 6 PM to 12 AM (midnight), and 12 AM (midnight) to 6 AM. Zero percent of the applications of force had occurred from 6 AM to 12 PM (noon); 11% had occurred from 12 PM to 6 PM; 56% had occurred from 6 PM to 12 AM; and 33% had occurred from 12 AM to 6 AM. Obviously, the late evening to early morning hours are when most incidents requiring police use of force occurred. As previously mentioned, one can also conclude that the majority of incidents where subjects were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and resisted police, requiring the application of force, occurred between 6 PM and 6 AM.



TASER EFFECTIVENESS INFORMATION

As shown on page 2, during the timeline of this report Tasers have been pointed at a subject 23 times. Of those Use of Force Applications, officers gained voluntary compliance from the resisting subjects 74% of the time. A Taser was deployed 7 times since the start of this study, and forced compliance was gained 6 times, or 86% of the time. Overall, Taser usage was 96% effective in gaining the compliance of a resisting subject. This is comparable to data released by Taser, reporting to 94.5% effectiveness, with ideal probe deployment from the X-26 Taser.



Mason Police Department requires, by policy, an annual analysis and report of every level of its application of force. The Department will always require the documentation and review of use of force applications, whether it is to gain the compliance of a resisting suspect, or to the unfortunate application of lethal force. We analyze this data to insure the proficiency and compliance of Mason Police officers with legal and procedural controls; to train for whatever scenario an officer may face; and to reinforce appropriate decision making. The ultimate goal is to protect the lives and well being of the community and to reduce the risk of injury to officers and to those we are forced into applying necessary and reasonable force to.