

Many factors found to contribute to deaths

2001: 2 deaths

Mark Burkett, 18

Died June 16 in Alachua County
 A recent high school graduate, Burkett had suddenly become "agitated and aggressive" after a football scholarship offer was withdrawn. He had been walking around the house swinging a hammer when he was arrested. He attacked officers in his cell and collapsed shortly after he was shocked with a Taser. He was taken to the hospital, where he remained on life support until he died four days later. The medical examiner noted that Burkett's condition resembled excited delirium, except he had no cocaine in his system. Noting that Burkett apparently was psychotic and had a family history of schizophrenia, a medical examiner found the probable cause of death to be acute exhaustive mania.



Steven Vasquez, 40

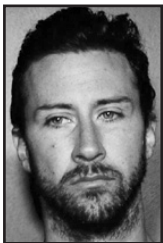
Died Dec. 21 in Broward County
 Vasquez died four days after a struggle with police during which he was shocked with a Taser. A medical examiner found Vasquez had heart disease but called his death an accident, caused by a combination of painkiller and anti-anxiety medications in his system. "Taser gun is not a contributing factor in the death," she added.



2002: 4 deaths

Vincent Delostia, 31

Died Jan. 27 in Hollywood
 Police found him, half-dressed, outside a hotel, bleeding from a cut on the back, sweating and grunting. Police were trying to take him into custody for a mental health evaluation when they shocked him with a Taser. A medical examiner noted he had a history of psychosis, drug abuse and asthma. She excluded the Taser as a contributing factor, pointing out that he was combative following a shock, which had not seemed to affect him. She found the death was an accident, caused by cocaine toxicity.



Henry William Canaday, 46

Died March 27 in Nassau County
 Deputies were trying to arrest him in an undercover drug buy when he fled, screaming, "They're trying to kill me." He collapsed shortly after deputies shocked him with a Taser, and he was dead by the time an ambulance arrived. A medical examiner found his death to be an accident caused by cocaine toxicity, with severe heart disease a contributing cause. The medical examiner also cited the "exertion and stress" caused by his struggle with police.



Gordon Randall Jones, 37

Died July 19 in Orange County
 Jones died after he was shocked with a Taser 14 times in four minutes. A paying guest at a hotel, he was asked to leave after managers noted his behavior seemed strange. He was shocked with the Taser after he ignored officers' orders, passively resisting their efforts to handcuff him. He flailed violently on the floor as deputies shocked him 13 more times in the next four minutes, while some bystanders implored them to stop. He was loaded facedown into an ambulance, where he died on the way to the hospital. A medical examiner found his death to be an accident, caused by positional asphyxia — suffocation from being restrained facedown — and said shocks from the Taser contributed to his death by making breathing difficult. His family sued the sheriff's office and settled for an undisclosed amount.



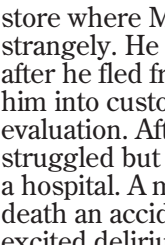
Frederick Stevens Webber, 44

Died Sept. 1 in Volusia County
 Webber was at a campground when he got into a fight. He was shocked with a Taser because he resisted an attempt to handcuff him. Soon after, his eyes rolled back in his head and he stopped breathing. He was declared dead at the scene. The death was ruled an accident caused by cardiac arrhythmia attributed to cocaine-induced, agitated delirium with restraint.

2003: 3 deaths

Louis Morris, 50

Died Oct. 21 in Orange County
 Police were called to a convenience store where Morris had been acting strangely. He was shocked with a Taser after he fled from deputies trying to take him into custody for a mental-health evaluation. After he was handcuffed, he struggled but then collapsed. He died at a hospital. A medical examiner found his death an accident caused by cocaine-excited delirium, with heart disease as a contributing cause. A medical examiner noted Morris was still "agitated and talking after being shocked with Taser."



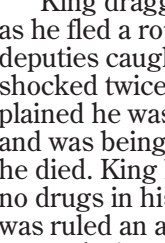
Kerry O'Brien, 31

Died Nov. 10 in Pembroke Pines
 Police were called because O'Brien was running through an intersection pounding on cars. In the lengthy struggle, police shocked him with a Taser and hog-tied him. An autopsy report noted that he was obese and had a history of psychotic behavior. His death was ruled an accident, caused by positional asphyxia.



Lewis King 39

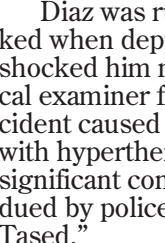
Died Dec. 9 in St. Augustine
 King dragged a deputy with his car as he fled a routine traffic stop. When deputies caught up with him, he was shocked twice with a Taser. He complained he was having trouble breathing and was being taken to a hospital when he died. King had a heart condition but no drugs in his system, and his death was ruled an accident caused by "cardiac arrest during prone restraint."



2004: 10 deaths

Alfredo Diaz, 29

Died April 18 in Orange County
 Diaz was running down the street naked when deputies arrived. Deputies shocked him multiple times. The medical examiner found his death was an accident caused by LSD-induced psychosis with hyperthermia with a "contributing significant condition is that he was subdued by police with a struggle and Tased."



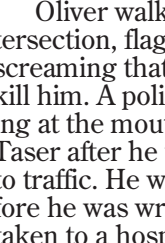
Henry Lattarulo, 45

Died May 22 in Hillsborough County
 Lattarulo had a pair of scissors and a screwdriver and had tried to attack a woman when deputies arrived. He was shocked with Tasers after he fought with deputies. He stopped breathing after he was handcuffed. He had heart disease but the death was ruled an accident caused by cocaine-excited delirium.



Anthony Oliver, 42

Died June 1 in Orlando
 Oliver walked into traffic at a busy intersection, flagging down cars and screaming that someone was trying to kill him. A police officer found him frothing at the mouth. He was shocked with a Taser after he tried to push an officer into traffic. He was shocked five times before he was wrestled into handcuffs and taken to a hospital, where he died 23 hours later. His death was ruled an accident caused by cocaine-excited delirium, with the contributing causes that he was shocked with a Taser and had an enlarged heart.



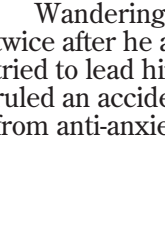
Demetrius Tillman Nelson, 44

Died July 3 in Okaloosa County
 Nelson was driving with a girlfriend and her three children when their car broke down. The couple started to fight, bringing deputies who found Nelson "incoherent and aggressive." He continued to struggle violently even after he was shocked with a Taser. He was in the back of a patrol car when he stopped breathing. His death was ruled an accident caused by cocaine-associated excited delirium.



Jason David Yeagley, 32

Died Aug. 26 in Polk County
 Wandering in traffic, he was shocked twice after he attacked a deputy who tried to lead him to safety. His death was ruled an accident caused by withdrawal from anti-anxiety medication.



2004 (continued)

John Alex Merkle, 40

Died Sept. 20 in Miami
 A former attorney, he had begun using cocaine four years earlier. As he ran into an abandoned house, he screamed that someone was trying to kill him. Police shocked him with a Taser when he didn't acknowledge commands, continuing to kick and scream. Soon after he was handcuffed, he became unresponsive, and he died at a hospital. A medical examiner found his heart was enlarged with a partly blocked artery. His death was ruled an accident caused by excited delirium associated with cocaine intoxication.



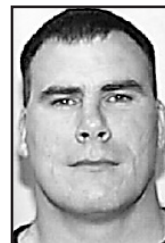
Byron W. Black, 39

Died Nov. 27, in Lee County
 An insurance salesman, Black was first shocked with a Taser as he was being arrested on charges that he set his own car on fire. Several days later, jailers thought he was having a seizure and tried to remove him from his cell. During a struggle, he was pepper-sprayed and shocked with a Taser before he collapsed. A state attorney's office investigation is continuing and his autopsy, including the cause of his death, has not been released. His death, however, has been ruled a homicide.



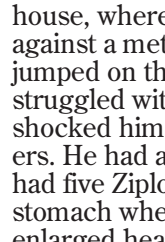
Kevin Downing, 36

Died Dec. 16 in Hollywood
 When police arrived, he was standing in the middle of the street, blocking two lanes of traffic with his work van, and grunting incoherently. Described as "belligerent," Downing was shocked with a Taser before he was taken into custody. Taken to a hospital, he died in the emergency room. A medical examiner found he had an enlarged heart. His death was ruled an accident caused by cocaine psychosis and excited delirium because of a lethal dose of cocaine.



Timothy Bolander, 31

Died Dec. 23 in Delray Beach
 Bolander went to his estranged wife's house, where he was banging his head against a metal fence. Police said he jumped on the hood of a patrol car and struggled with police officers before they shocked him four times with their Tasers. He had a history of cocaine use and had five Ziploc packets of cocaine in his stomach when he died. He also had an enlarged heart. The manner of his death was found to be an accident, the cause cocaine toxicity.



Christopher Hernandez, 19

Died Dec. 28 in Collier County
 He fought with deputies after they ordered him out of a car that had sped recklessly from a nightclub. Deputies used pepper spray and Tasers during the ensuing struggle before restraining him. He remained "verbally abusive" in the hospital before his condition deteriorated. His death was ruled an accident caused by drugs, including ecstasy, MDMA and cocaine, with sickle cell trait contributing.



2005: 8 deaths (through July 26)

Carl Nathaniel Trotter, 33

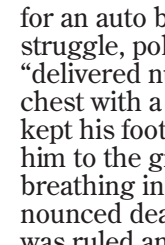
Died Jan. 8 in Escambia County
 Trotter broke into a stranger's home and struggled with homeowners who hit him on the head and continued to fight him even after deputies arrived. A deputy shocked Trotter three times with little apparent effect before Trotter suddenly collapsed and died. A medical examiner declined to rule on whether Trotter's death was a homicide or accident, or on what caused his death, saying, "The immediate and delayed effects of Taser shocks on the cardiovascular system are currently unknown. Excited delirium alone may have caused Mr. Trotter's death, however, the potential effects of the Taser shocks delivered just prior to his cardiorespiratory collapse cannot be ignored."



2005 (continued)

Willie Michael Towns, 30

Died March 5 in DeLand
 He had fled police who were looking for an auto burglary suspect. During a struggle, police used pepper spray and "delivered numerous stun drives" to his chest with a Taser. After that, an officer kept his foot on Towns' chest to hold him to the ground. Towns stopped breathing in an ambulance and was pronounced dead at the hospital. His death was ruled an accident caused by acute cocaine intoxication.



Milton Woolfolk, 39

Died March 11 in Columbia County
 Deputies, who had come to take him into custody for a court-ordered mental health evaluation, shocked him with a Taser when he resisted violently. Once officers had restrained him, he collapsed and was taken to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. A Jacksonville attorney has filed lawsuits against Taser International as well as Columbia County and the deputies involved, alleging that deputies' repeated use of the Taser was "malicious and sadistic," and that the weapon manufacturer had misrepresented and overstated the weapon's safety.



Stanley Wilson 44

Died May 7 in Miami
 Wilson had been dodging in and out of traffic, crying that the devil was after him, when he attacked officers and was subdued with a stun gun. He was taken to Jackson Memorial Hospital, where he was examined and released to officers, who then took him to jail. In jail, officers said he became violent again and had to be restrained. A short time after that, he collapsed and was taken to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead.



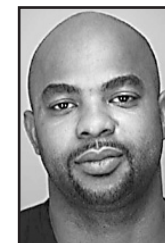
Horace Owens 48

Died June 11 in Broward County
 Owens had broken into a home, screaming "someone's trying to kill me," battered the homeowner and knocked over and broke furniture. When deputies tried to arrest him, he fought back. He died shortly after a deputy fired a Taser at him. A medical examiner noted that Owens was obese and had heart disease. His death was ruled an accident caused by heart disease, with cocaine use as a contributing factor.



Michael Anthony Edwards, 32

Died June 13 in Palatka
 Deputies were called to Edwards' home twice on noise complaints. The second time, they said, he ran into a window, shattering the glass. Deputies found him naked and bleeding. After talking to him failed, deputies shocked him with a Taser. He stopped breathing on the way to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. His girlfriend said he had been taking drugs and drinking. An attorney representing his family says deputies should have taken into account the "strong connection between cocaine, death and Tasers."



Kareem Phoarah Knight, 33

Died June 29 in Miami
 Knight had broken into a home and became violent when officers arrived. He was arrested after being shocked once with a Taser and taken to the hospital where he died. Autopsy results have not been released.



Michael Crutchfield, 40

Died July 17 in West Palm Beach
 Crutchfield, who had a history of drug use, barged into an assisted-living facility, screaming that someone was trying to kill him. He fled when police arrived and was shocked three times with Tasers before he collapsed. He died before an ambulance arrived. Autopsy results are pending.



Sources: Autopsies, police and media reports.

Video online

View surveillance footage of a man being shot with a stun gun, and access an interactive graphic that explains how a Taser works and its effect on the body.

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