

# Beneficial Impact of Conducted Electrical Weapons In the Mentally Ill Population

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## OBJECTIVE:

Conducted Electrical Weapons (CEW's) are non-lethal weapons that cause temporary neuromuscular incapacitation (NMI) and pain. The law enforcement community does not consider these weapons a replacement for firearms, but their ability to incapacitate from a distance makes these weapons useful in many situations where lethal force would otherwise be justifiable or where a subject poses an imminent lethal danger to himself.

We reviewed law enforcement-reported data to determine how often a CEW was used in situations involving mentally-ill persons where lethal force would have been justified or where the subject posed an imminent lethal danger to himself.

## METHODS:

TASER International (Scottsdale, AZ), a CEW manufacturer, has maintained a database of voluntarily-reported law enforcement CEW use since 1999.

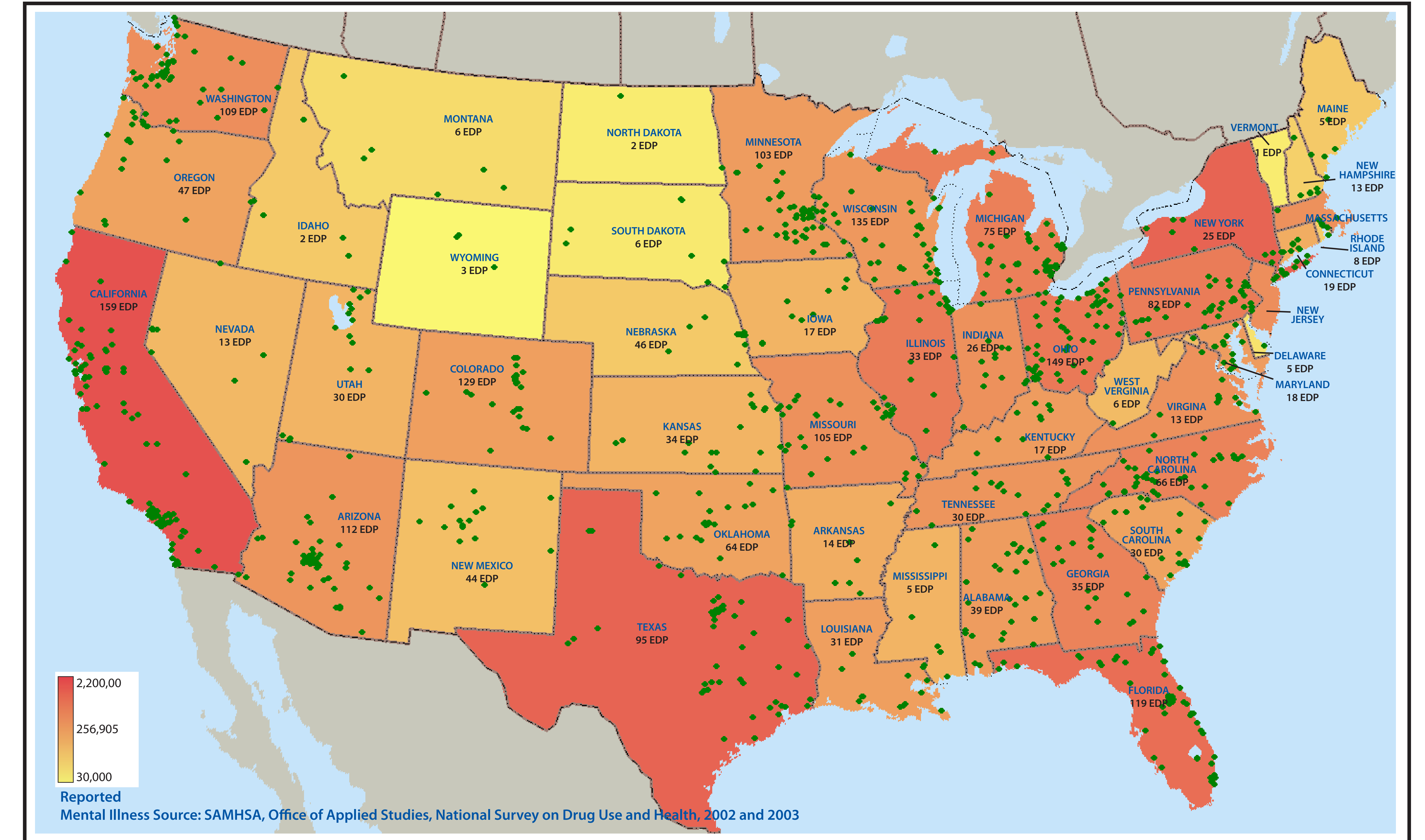
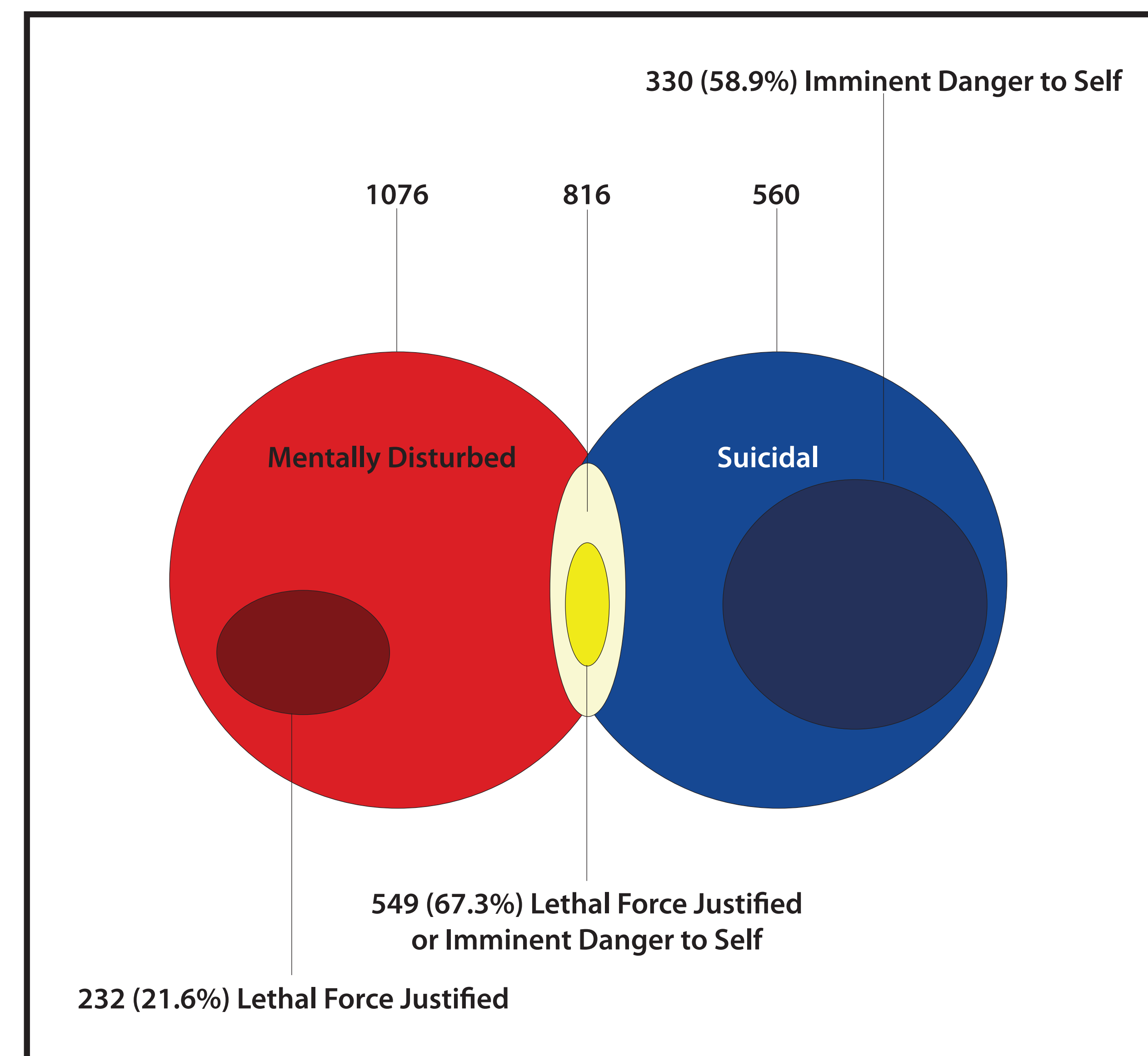
The database includes narratives of law enforcement contact circumstances, subject mental health, whether lethal force could have been justifiable as determined by the reporting officer based on individual department policy, or whether the subject posed an imminent danger to himself.

We queried this database and descriptive statistics were applied to the data.

## RESULTS:

There were a total of 10,608 reports of CEW use in the database over a 72 - month period. A subset of this total was 2,452 reports of CEW use in mentally-ill persons.

Of these reports of CEW use in mentally-ill persons, 1,111(45.3%) were in situations where lethal force would have been justified according to the reporting officer or where the subject posed an imminent lethal danger to himself.



## CONCLUSIONS:

CEW use appears to play a significant role on the type of force that is used by law enforcement in contacts with mentally-ill persons. In the database we queried, 45.3% of the CEW uses were in situations where lethal force would have been justified or in situations where the subject posed an imminent lethal danger to himself.

Although this data is subject to reporting limitations, the results suggest that in a significant number of law enforcement contacts with mentally-ill persons, escalation of the contact to lethal force or suicide was prevented by a CEW. We recommend further investigation to better understand the impact and benefits of CEW use in contacts with the mentally-ill population.