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## Protesters denounce Taser use, violence Akron crowd rallies at police department after weekend fatality

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About 25 protesters picketed in front of the Akron Police Department on Tuesday morning, criticizing the use of Taser guns and calling for an end to what they say is police brutality.

Richard T. Holcomb, 18, of Akron died after being stunned with a Taser gun by a Springfield Township police officer Saturday morning. An autopsy is planned.

Holcomb's death was the second Summit County fatality this year involving a police Taser. The Jan. 5 death of Dennis Hyde, a 30-year-old Akron burglar, was ruled a homicide, and the stun gun was deemed a contributing factor.

Nationally, 12 deaths have been linked to Tasers.

"We don't want to tie the police department's hands not to use weapons. We're just saying the Taser may not necessarily be the safest way to try to control anybody," said Deborah Calhoun, spokeswoman for the protesters. "The issue is that everyone should be treated with the same level of humanity. Whether they are incarcerated, sane or crazy, they should still have human rights."

She referred to Akron police officers' use of a Taser in April on Anthony Hudson, 43, of Akron, a frequent personality on Warner Cable's public access channel and a former Akron City Council candidate.

Akron police used a Taser on Hudson after officers found him outside his residence wrapped in foil, wearing an athletic supporter outside of his pants and yelling that he was the King of Egypt.

Hudson, who was charged with assaulting the officers, has been found mentally incompetent to stand trial and sent to a mental-health facility until his condition improves.

Calhoun, who criticizes the use of a Taser in this situation, said Hudson has been institutionalized against his will.

"Sometimes you can handle problems verbally. We need better interaction with the police and better communication," Calhoun said.

Former police information officer Capt. Sylvia Trundle was walking by as the protesters walked in front of the police station. She told them that anytime they wanted to talk to police about anything, officers were ready and willing and urged them to come inside to talk.

She was ignored by the protesters. The protesters were made up of several groups, including the Anti-Police Brutality Committee and the American Friends Service Committee.

Calhoun said communication also is lacking when it comes to people talking with police. That, she said, is why there are so many unsolved crimes.

``When I talk to teens, they say they don't try to get a badge number or a car number -- they run. They don't trust the police. They're afraid of being mistreated or charged with something they didn't do. Their rule is to scatter, because they can't catch five or 10 of them at once."

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