



Calif. Man Tased by Police in Own Home After Calling for Paramedics

The incident began on the evening of June 29, 2009, just before midnight, when Peter McFarland, an IT consultant and a cancer survivor, and his wife Pearl returned home following a charity fundraising event they had attended. Negotiating a long flight of stairs leading to their home, Mr. McFarland tripped and fell, injuring his leg. Mrs. McFarland then called paramedics who came to the house and treated the injuries.

So far so good, but as the paramedics were leaving, two sheriff's deputies arrived on the scene, apparently determined to take firm control of Mr. McFarland. "All of a sudden, they just showed up, McFarland recalled, "they came in here like there was a fire going on, like a gunfight was going on," he told KGO-TV, the ABC affiliate station in San Francisco.



Peter McFarland was tased by officers in his own home in 2009

At some point, McFarland had said that if he had had a gun, he would shoot himself in the head. That, McFarland said, was just hyperbole, something he said while tired and in pain. But the sheriff's deputies apparently felt that such a statement was tantamount to a citizen waiving his Fourth Amendment rights to be free from illegal search and seizure.

As a result, the deputies informed McFarland that they were going to take him to a hospital "for an evaluation." Then, when McFarland, supposedly a free citizen, refused, the deputies responded: "Stand up. Put your hands behind your back or you're going to be tased."

It's worth noting at this point that McFarland had committed no crime, was not suspected of having committed a crime, and did not invite the police to his house. His call was to paramedics via 911 for medical assistance. Fortunately, the incident was caught on film — by the deputies themselves via camera mounted to the taser.

In the video (below), McFarland can be seen continuing to refuse the demands made by the police officers. Finally, an exasperated McFarland has had enough, and he is seen ordering the interlopers to leave. Meanwhile, his wife pleads with the officers not to use their tasers on her husband because he has a heart condition. They ignore her pleas.

When McFarland stands up to go to his bedroom, the police fire their taser, repeatedly, while demanding in an imperious tone that McFarland "stop resisting." According to McFarland's attorney John Scott, McFarland was subsequently arrested and jailed, charged with resisting arrest. Those charges were eventually dismissed by a judge.



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on September 1, 2010

The department responsible for the thugs wielding the tasers defends their actions. In a statement [[PDF](#)], the Sheriff's Department said it was "confident the actions of our deputies will be found to have been both within the law and department policy."

McFarland's attorney disagrees. "There's got to be a problem in terms of training and on supervising deputy sheriffs in the county; it's hard to imagine something so shocking could happen," he told KGO-TV.



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