

Stunning control

Boca police to arm officers with TASER stun guns

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Criminals running away from the law may soon be getting a jolt of reality.

The Boca Raton Police Department will begin arming its uniformed patrol officers with TASER stun guns.

The gun, which can be used to subdue unruly suspects from 21 feet away, is considered the hottest non-lethal item on the law enforcement market.

"This is the latest and

greatest of stun guns and the most effective," Boca Police Chief Andrew Scott said.

For \$60,790, the department will receive 85 model M26 Advanced TASERs, manufactured by Arizona-based TASER International.

The model, resembling a semi-automatic handgun, is only sold to law enforcement, said Steve Tuttle, director of government affairs. Boca Police purchased the M26s in black with yellow striping, hoping subjects do not mistake it for a gun.

Introduced in 1999, the M26 Advanced TASER offers 26 watts (50,000 volts) with a low amperage rate that will not cause heart problems or effect pacemakers. It does leave a small, red mark on the

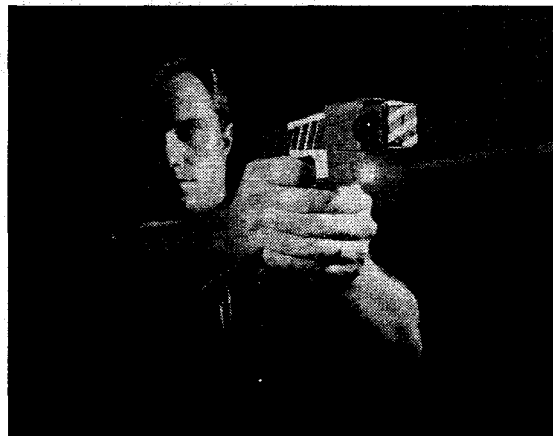
skin where the two probes carrying the voltage make contact, Tuttle said. Older TASERs administer seven to 14 watts and are sometimes unable to inhibit stronger, more focused subjects, he added.

"This was designed to stop goal-oriented, focused individuals," Tuttle said. "It does not use pain to stop the bad guy."

Considered an electro-muscular disruption weapon, the TASER will "overwhelm the central nervous system and cause muscles to lock" for about five seconds, Tuttle said. Chief Scott said that it's enough time to take a subject into custody safely.

"We can subdue a violent subject at a safe distance," he said.

The gun also keeps a



TASER POWER:

The Boca Raton Police Department will soon be receiving 85 model M26 Advanced TASERs for its officers to carry for protection.

Submitted photo

log of the date, time and number of times fired – something useful in police litigation.

Currently, Boca police officers are equipped with handcuffs, two extra bullet magazines, pepper spray, an expandable baton, and a firearm. Scott said the stun guns could replace the pepper spray or baton.

"This is just another tool for the tool box," Tuttle said.

More than 100 law enforcement agencies in Florida use stun guns,

including half of all sheriffs' offices.

Boca officers will receive eight hours of training on the guns and if requested, can be stunned by the TASER.

Tuttle said most officers walk in skeptical of the results, and walk out as believers.

"[Police] are not looking for toys or gadgets. They are looking for weapons that put people down," he said. "It's not a magic bullet, but it's as close as you can get."