



Star-Telegram/Ross Jirikos

Sgt. Kevin Morton falls to the ground after being shot with the Advanced Taser M26 during a training session Monday.

New stun weapon offers safer option

Fort Worth acquires guns that police say will reduce the likelihood of injuries to suspects and officers.

By NICOLE GULL
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Twenty-six watts of electricity surged through Jorge Rosas' right leg, jolting him into the air.

"It was much, much worse than a charley horse," he said after landing flat on his face.

But it was much better than being shot at with a .38-caliber handgun.

The Fort Worth Police Department is the first in the Metroplex to purchase 10 stun guns that don't release a lethal charge of electricity.

Police said the gun, called the Advanced Taser M26, will reduce the possibility of injury to suspects and officers at crime scenes. The charge incapacitates the suspect's skeletal muscles, police said. Introduced by a company called Taser International in 1999, the gun is used by 800 law enforcement agencies nationwide, police said.

"It's an alternative to the baton or spraying," Lt. Paul N. Jwanowski said. "When you strike someone with a baton, you could do some serious damage."

During a test Monday at the Fort Worth Police Academy, officers attached two long copper wires to Jorge Rosas' belt and ankle. Rosas, a reporter with radio station KRLD/1080 AM, removed his glasses, and Sgt. Stephen Hadley aimed and fired.

Fourteen North Texas police officers, including 10 from Fort Worth, were part of an instructor's seminar and demonstration on how to use the M26. They gasped and watched after Rosas, there to report the story, volunteered to be shot.

Rosas said the initial pin-prick sensation that he felt from the shock spread in less than one second to render complete



Sgt. Stephen Hadley of Glendale, Ariz., prepares to fire the battery-powered Advanced Taser M26. The shock, Hadley said, can penetrate up to 2½ inches of clothing.

immobility.

During the next few weeks, police said, the officers at the meeting will teach other officers how to use the gun.

When an officer points the battery-powered weapon at a suspect standing as far as 21 feet away, a red laser shines on the suspect's body. Two copper wires are shot, the first attaches at the laser's mark, the second lands at an 8 degree angle below the laser, said Hadley, a member of the Police Department in Glendale, Ariz., and master instructor for Taser International.

The shock, Hadley said, can penetrate up to 2½ inches of clothing, immobilize the suspect in less than a half-second and last for five seconds. No injuries are incurred, and the gun doesn't affect pacemakers or heart conditions that the suspect may have, Hadley said.

"T waves replicate the brain waves that tell your muscles what to do," said Hadley, referring to the electricity produced by the gun. "We are not trying to

hurt the suspect. This is simply going for skeletal muscle."

That is why, Jwanowski said, the M26 is an attractive option for situations in which the suspect is particularly combative, such as domestic disputes.

Officer Pete Henz, who works in Fort Worth police recruit training, said the sight of the red laser is sometimes enough to make the suspect comply.

"It's kind of a mental thing," Henz said. "It says, 'I'm about to get shot.'"

The department's 10 Tasers will be distributed to the SWAT unit, the fugitive unit, incident commanders and other crime response units across town, Jwanowski said.

"It's going to be a good thing," Henz said, noting that he wished he had an M26 in the 3½ years he spent on bike patrol. "With the Taser, I don't think anybody will go to the hospital."

JUL 18, 2001



Fort Worth area

Fort Worth police use stun gun to subdue suicidal man

FORT WORTH — Hours after learning how to use a new weapon that leaves people temporarily immobilized by a nonlethal charge of electricity, a Fort Worth police lieutenant put the lesson to use.

Lt. Ed Daniels fired the Advanced Taser M26 at a combative 30-year-old man threatening suicide late Monday at his family's northwest Fort Worth home, said Lt. Duane Paul, a police spokesman.

The officers then subdued the man, who was taken to John Peter Smith Hospital for psychiatric evaluation.

It was the first time the Taser was used by Fort Worth police.

Family members called police to the home in the 10100 block of Buffalo Grove Road about 11:03 p.m., saying the man was tearing up the home and threatening to kill himself. They also told officers the man would probably fight officers.

The officers called Daniels after seeing the man clutching two butcher knives, one to his stomach, before he slammed a door in their faces, Paul said.

When officers went into the house, the man was holding a knife in one hand and a telephone in the other. When he refused to drop the knife, Daniels fired the Taser at the man, Paul said.

+ The so-called stun gun reduces the possibility of injury to suspects and officers at crime scenes, police say.