



David R. Crana/Staff Photographer

Sheriff's training officer Sam Sdehnel fires an M-26 Taser gun into a target. The weapon shoots a dart in a suspect.

The shock treatment

Sheriff adds new electric-dart-firing Tasers to arsenal

By Holly Edwards
Staff Writer

PALMDALE — Confronted with a 14-year-old girl threatening to kill herself and slash her mother with a butcher knife, Palmdale sheriff's deputies swiftly deployed a new tactical weapon.

It was the electrically charged Taser gun acquired by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department that instantly brings the most out-of-control suspects to the ground. It is being deployed countywide, including in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The May 17 incident occurred in a Palmdale mobile home park, and illustrated how effective the new M-26 Tasers can be, said Deputy Bryan Riley, training deputy at the Palmdale sheriff's station.

"There are no long-term injuries and it stops people in their tracks," Riley said. "With the old Taser, someone focused or mentally disturbed could continue their assault. With the M-26, they drop immediately."

The weapon shoots a dart into the combative suspect and an electrical charge is sent from the Taser to the dart, explained Sgt. Mike McDermott of the sheriff's headquarters bureau, one of the few sheriff's officials who have volunteered to be shocked by the device.

"Take the shock you get when you touch an electrical socket, increase it many times, and imagine that being sent throughout your body," McDermott said.



The Santa Clarita station already has about a dozen of the new Tasers and is expected to receive about a dozen more. Countywide, nearly 300 of the weapons will be deployed at a cost of about \$120,000, officials said.

"It's a very intense, extreme shock to your system."

Countywide, nearly 300 of the weapons will be deployed at a cost of about \$120,000, sheriff's officials said.

"Eventually we'll have one in every patrol car," said Sgt. Jim Morrow, who oversees training at the Santa Clarita station. "In the past, we only had two of the old Tasers on hand, and there was always a time lag between when we asked for the Taser and when we got it. The new ones will be readily available."

Not only does the new Taser do a better job of incapacitating a combative suspect, Morrow said, it also has a 21-foot range — six feet longer than the range of

the old Taser — which creates a larger safety cushion for the deputy wielding the weapon.

The Tasers will primarily be used on assaultive suspects who are not armed, he said, adding that deputies will use bean bag shotguns or rubber-pellet guns to deal with suspects armed with a knife or gun.

The Palmdale station was among the first to acquire the M-26s last year in a Sheriff's Department pilot project, while the Santa Clarita and Lancaster stations just recently obtained their first supply of the weapons.



L.A. County Sheriffs Will Now Carry Tasers

The deputy winced in pain and was unable to control his muscles after being shot. Fortunately, it was all part of a calculated demonstration at a press conference announcing the county-wide deployment of the Advanced Taser conducted energy device. Camera crews recorded the event and the deputy who had volunteered to be show by the taser was not injured by the less-lethal device.

As part of a continued commitment to protect the residents of Los Angeles County, Assistant Sheriff Larry Waldie, on behalf of Sheriff Lee Baca, announced the deployment of more than 290 of these conducted energy devices. The M-26 Advanced Taser is designed to transmit electric pulses which temporarily disrupt the body's central nervous system. The device will aid deputies in handling and apprehending assaultive high-risk suspects. The taser has been deployed at all Sheriff's stations and custody facilities and can now be carried by trained deputies. In the past, tasers were

only carried by supervisors.

The new design of this device has many improvements over the original energy technology introduced in the early 1980s. The device is now shaped like a handgun. This physical redesign takes advantage of muscle memory functions of traditional handgun training. Its built-in laser sight and a 21-foot range will improve accuracy and increase the number of situations where it can be safely used. The increased power to 26 watts will cause electro-muscular disruption. It is designed well within electrical safety standards and has advanced weapon tracking technologies that record the time and date of each firing. Most importantly, with more than 20 years of field use, there has never been a death attributed directly to taser technology, making it an effective less-lethal device. "Any effective less-lethal tool we can give our deputies reduces the possibility of a deadly confrontation," said Assistant Sheriff Waldie.



Sheriff's Introduces New Stun Devices

From City News Service

MONTEREY PARK — A veteran Los Angeles County sheriff's lieutenant allowed himself to be zapped by a special new taser May 24 — one that has advantages over the model that is in use.

"It's not something you really like to do every day, but it's important to demonstrate it," said Lt. Mike McDermott, 51, who has only been shocked once before by the device during a training session.

The M-26 Advanced Taser has several advantages over the one that is now in use, said Deputy Darren Harris. Among those advantages, he said, are:

- It has a port that records data each time it's fired;
- It automatically shuts off after five seconds, and has an override button that can shut it off sooner;
- It has a 21-foot cord, about six feet longer than the present taser;
- It has an 18-26 watt range compared to the present 7-14 watt range; and
- It is powered by compressed nitrogen rather than black powder, so is not classified as a firearm.

The device, which looks like a handgun, transmits electric impulses to shock and temporarily disable a "combative, high-risk" suspect.

Deputies deploy newest Tasers

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The Santa Clarita station has about a dozen M-26s in stock and is slated to get a dozen more in July, said Morrow. The Palmdale station has nine M-26s in stock and is expected to get six more, while the Lancaster station is earmarked to receive 16 new Tasers, officials said. While the Santa Clarita station recorded fewer arrests

and use-of-force incidents during the last two years than the Palmdale and Lancaster stations, it is slated to receive more Tasers than the Antelope Valley stations.

Sheriff's officials explained that they base deployment of the Tasers at each station on the total number of patrol cars on duty during the hours of peak service, which is typically Saturday night.