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TASER training stunning

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LAKE WORTH -- One by one, they all came tumbling down. "Oh!" . . . "Ah!" . . . "Oh, Ah!" . . . Kerplunk! Even Sgt. Bill Evans, who is affectionately known as "Big Bill."

The police officers stood on blue gym mats Tuesday and took turns being shot by a TASER stun gun as part of their training.

The M26 TASER Stun Gun, which looks like a semi-automatic handgun, knocks grown adults off their feet but leaves only a red sting-like dot on the skin.

"It's used to subdue people who resist arrests or commands, like 'Put your hands behind your head,' " said Lt. Susan Wellborn. "It's one step below using lethal means."

And that's the point -- no blood, and minimal, if any, damage to the officer.

The department has purchased seven TASER units at \$499 each with money seized from drug-related arrests.

Lake Worth officers received their first training on how to use the TASER on Tuesday.

When the officer shoots it at an unwilling arrestee, two probes launch out and attach to the suspect's clothing or skin.

Then 26 watts of electricity go down a wire to give the person a shock. Usually that's enough to subdue the person.

But if the suspect still resists, the officer can pull the trigger until the suspect is down. It works, even through 2 inches of clothing. It can shoot up to 21 feet or can be used as a regular stun gun on someone close.

"Mentally, it disrupts your thought process," said Lt. Raychel Houston, who took the TASER challenge. "Physically, it just knocks you out."

Instructor Mitchell Gray, of DGG TASER in Jacksonville, said half the sheriffs' offices in the state use the device, which has been around for two years.

Gray demonstrated the correct way to pull the probes from the body. He made an L shape with his hand, applied pressure to officer Anthony Williams' back and pulled.

"Are you allergic to Band-Aids," Gray asked.

"No, I'm allergic to TASERs," Williams said.

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