

AUG 23, 2001

# Santa Fe seeks to purchase 'tasers' for '21st century' policing

By The Associated Press

**SANTA FE** — Zap, you're caught.

The Santa Fe Police Department wants to buy nonlethal weapons, Advanced Taser M-26s, which Chief John Denko said would "bring us up into the 21st century."

The device looks like a cross between a handgun and a child's toy, but it's capable of propelling two wire-backed probes packing 50,000 volts across a room — enough punch to ensure a "500-pound gorilla will go like a little baby," Denko said.

Lt. Robert Romero, the department's SWAT commander, subjected himself to a demonstration Tuesday as he explained the weapon to the city's Public Safety Committee.

A sharp pop of compressed nitrogen, about as loud as a pellet gun, sent two barb-tipped probes into Romero's back. His muscles locked up, and he yelped and would have collapsed if two other

officers hadn't held him.

But seconds after the jolt of electricity ended, Romero continued lecturing on the merits of the M-26, apparently unaffected except for two 21-foot-long wires trailing from the probes embedded in his back.

"It's like being stung by a bee," said Romero, who told committee members the only other effects were slightly sore muscles and a tingling sensation. His fellow officers had to use small pliers to

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Santa Fe Police Chief John Denko

tug the barbs free later.

The device delivers enough electricity to cause uncontrollable muscle contractions and drop a full-grown man, but it's safe enough not to disrupt heart rhythms or pacemakers, Romero said.

Dropping a troublemaker to the ground could keep a situation from escalating into one in which a police officer has to use a firearm, he said.

Public Safety Committee vice chairman Michael Trujillo and District At-

torney Henry Valdez both submitted to shocks from the device before voting with fellow committee members to recommend the City Council look for money to buy tasers for every officer on the force.

Each Advanced Taser M-26 costs about \$399, Romero said. Single-use cartridges containing the nitrogen propellant, wires and barb-tipped probes cost about \$20 each.

Denko said Santa Fe has about 140 officers.

Romero and Denko told commission members the costs of outfitting the entire department with the Advanced Taser M-26s would be less than a settlement the city would have to pay if it lost even one wrongful-shooting lawsuit involving a gun.

Officers would continue to carry guns as well, because some situations call for the use of deadly force, Romero said.