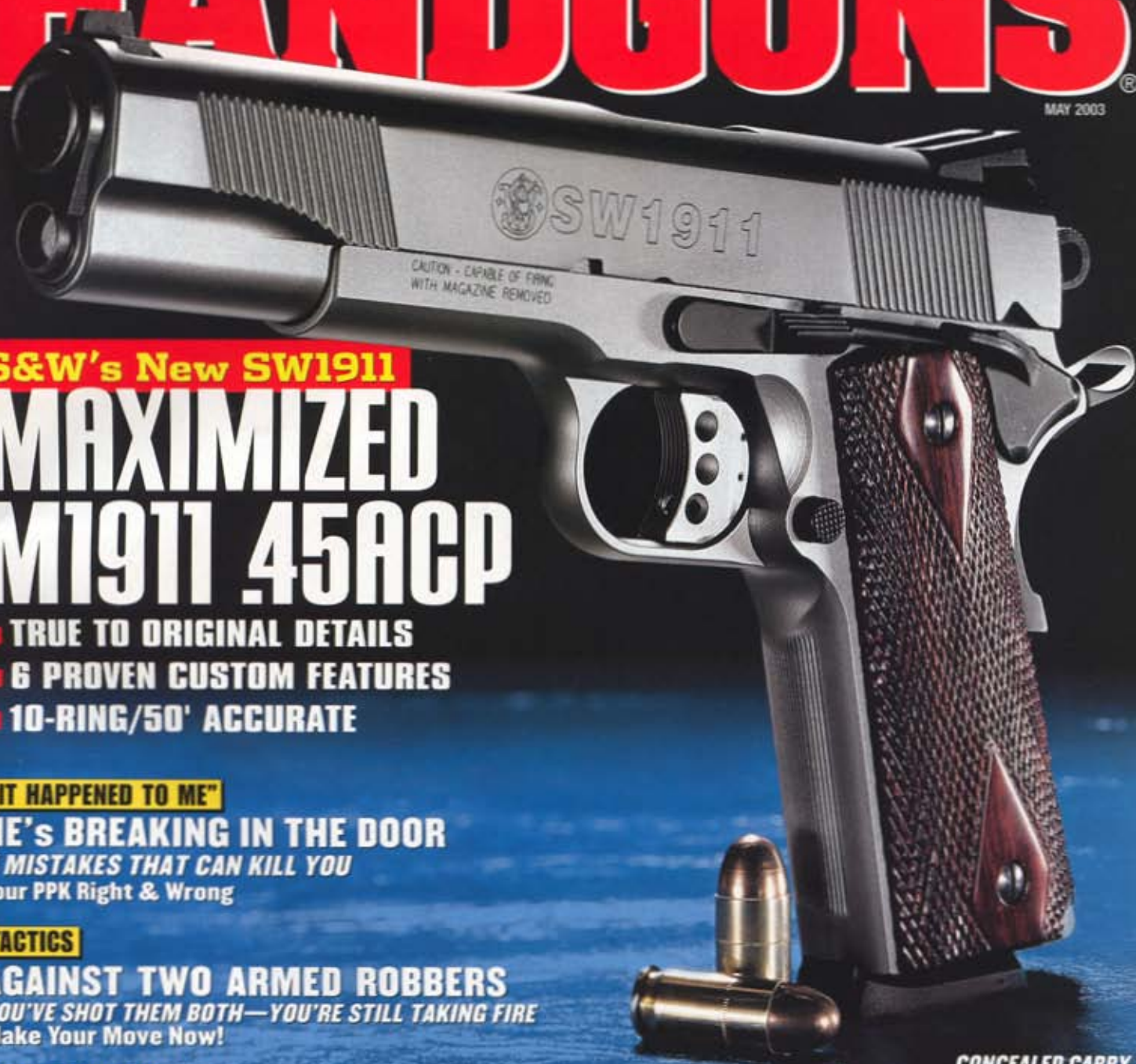


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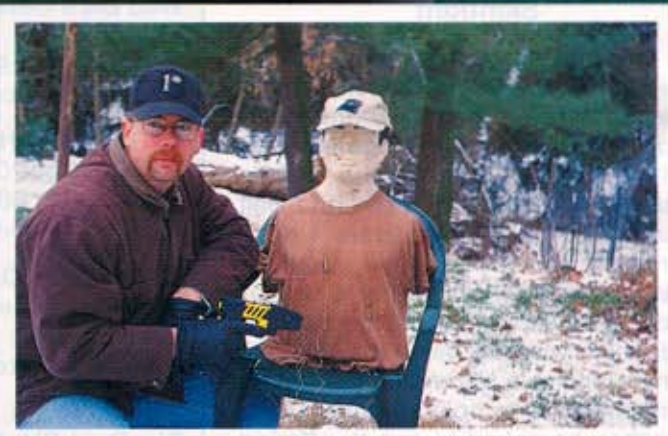
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The TASER M26 has a built-in laser sight.



The TASER M26 should be a useful addition to the less-than-lethal force arsenal.



The M26 fired at my training partner from 10 feet.

TODAY'S TASER

Up close & personal with the new face of TASER technology!

By Paul Markel

The concept of the TASER electronic weapons system is not new; the first generation TASER was introduced in 1974. "Taser Guns" have been in service for decades, seen both on the streets and on movie screens, thanks to Hollywood's attraction to their novelty. Things were going along fine for the Tasertron TASER system, until that fateful day in California and the Rodney King incident. Like the 9mm Silvertip hollow-point after the FBI Miami Shootout, the TASER, not the criminal's actions, took the brunt of the blame for what went wrong that day.

However, most clouds have silver linings if you only look hard enough. Just as the FBI Shootout renewed interest in the 10mm cartridge which led us to the now popular .40 S&W round, the Rodney King incident sent the TASER back to the shop for serious refitting. What we have today from TASER International is a far more advanced and practical product than what was available 10 or 15 years ago.

The concept of the TASER has changed little; the unit fires two needle-pointed probes, which are attached to wires. When the probes strike the human target and stick, they complete the circuit and electrical wattage is transferred to the subject, causing a good deal of pain and, in the majority of cases, temporary incapacitation. What has changed dramatically is the actual TASER unit itself.

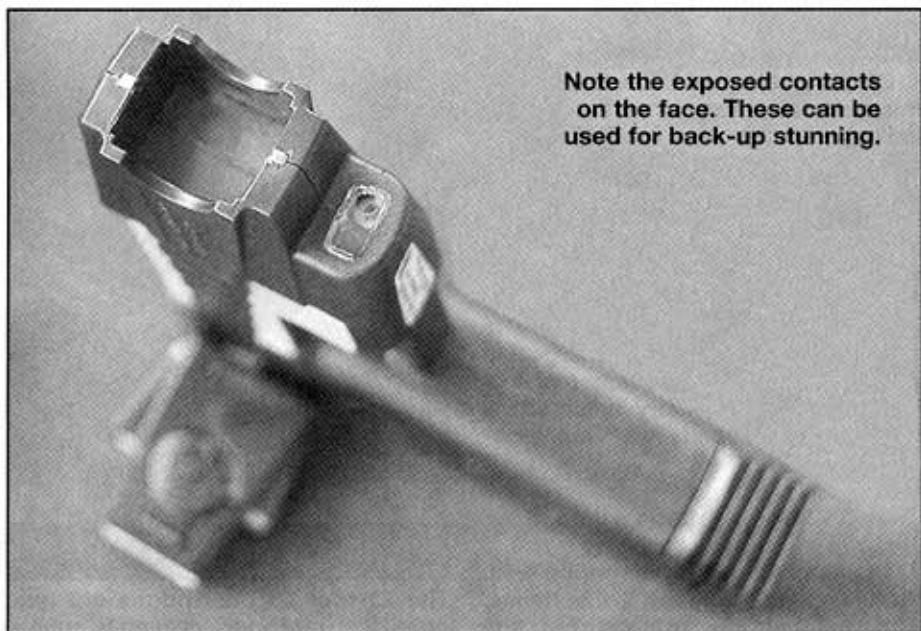
Keep It Simple

Whether we are discussing firearms, less-than-lethal tools or communication gear, the reality gap between the engineer's design table and the street officer has always been a stumbling block. What looks good on paper and may work in a sterile testing environment often proves to be overly complex and fails when taken to the field.

"Too many moving parts" is often the culprit whenever gear fails on the street. The truth is, the more complex the product, the greater chance of a



The ADVANCED TASER M26 Law Enforcement model with extra cartridges.



Note the exposed contacts on the face. These can be used for back-up stunning.

TODAY'S TASER

breakdown. Another reality is the fact that a police officer already has a full plate when it comes to his or her job. Regarding less-than-lethal tools and techniques, they need to be simple, straightforward, with as few "moving parts" as possible.

TASER M26

The new ADVANCED TASER M26 was designed with all of the above concerns in mind. As a matter of fact, the only part that needs to be moved to fire is the safety lever. Leaving behind the old squarish wand design, the new ADVANCED TASER looks and feels like a pistol. Most importantly, it points like a pistol. Firing is accomplished by flipping up the safety a la Beretta 92 or S&W auto. To fire, press the rubber encapsulated trigger button.

There are crude fixed sights on top of the weapon but the primary aiming device is the built-in laser sight. The laser is activated when the safety is moved to the "off" position. Pushing the safety down turns off the laser and deactivates the unit. The safety lever should always be in the "off" position when loading or unloading TASER cartridges.

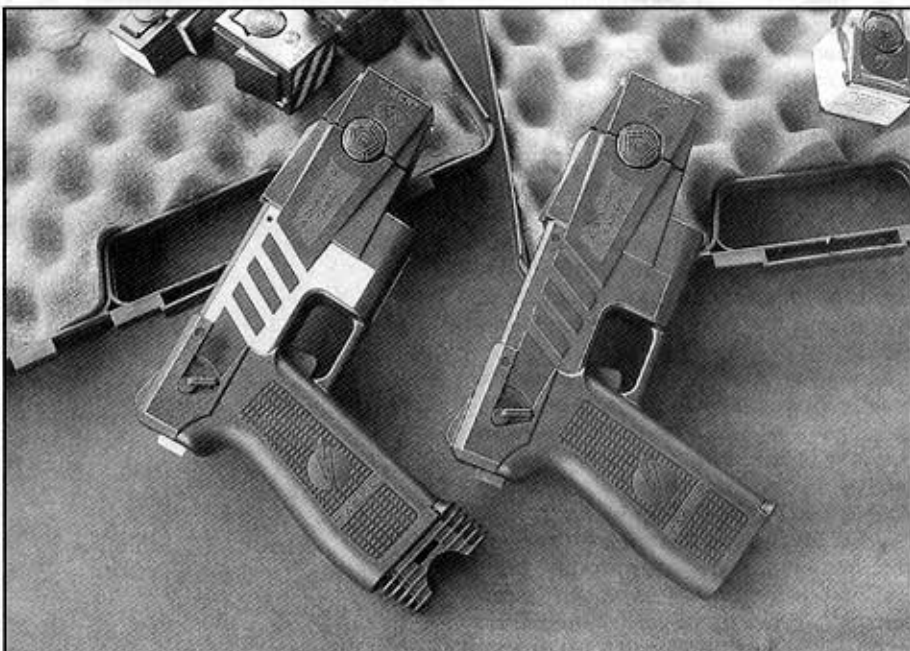
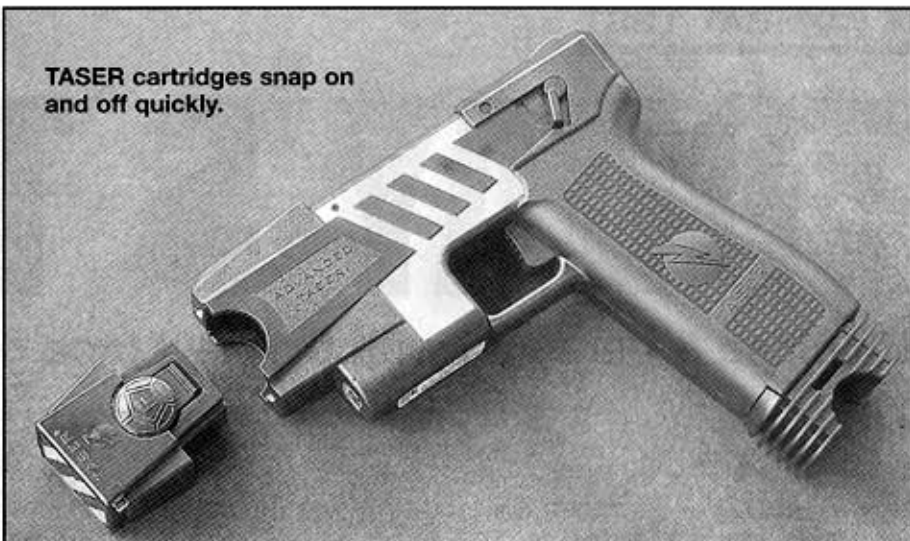
The unit is powered by eight AA batteries, which are housed in the pistol grip. Battery status is given each time the unit is activated. When the safety is pushed up, a red battery indicator light located on the back of the gun illuminates. A fully charged battery is indicated by a pulsing light. A steady, non-pulsing red light means that the unit has enough juice to fire but the batteries should be replaced as soon as possible. No light means no juice. Extreme cold temperatures will produce low battery indications.

On the subject of batteries, TASER International advises that the battery indicator is calibrated for DURA-CELL ULTRA brand alkaline batteries. For proper function of the unit, these batteries should always be used. TASER International also recommends nickel metal hydride rechargeable batteries for better performance in the cold and increased number of pulses. The ADVANCED TASER has a rechargeable port on the weapon for easy recharging. However, the battery indicator will not function properly with rechargeable batteries.

How It Works

To prepare the M26 unit for the field, the user will first install the batteries. After the batteries are installed, the

TASER cartridges snap on and off quickly.



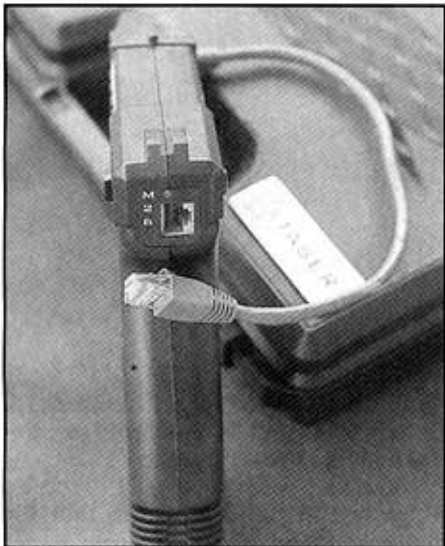
The L.E. TASER M26 (left) and the M18L Civilian model (right). Yellow stripes are available for the M18L as well.



The 21-foot L.E. cartridges are quickly discerned from the 15-foot Civilian ones. L.E. is striped, civilian is solid yellow.



A special adapter allows a spare cartridge to be stored under the grip.



The Dataport and coupling cable allow the time and date of each shot to be downloaded to a standard PC.

first test is simply to remove the safety and check the red battery indicator light. You should also immediately notice whether or not the laser sight is working.

With the batteries and sight working properly, the user will now check the function of the TASER electronics. With the TASER cartridge removed—that is, no cartridge on the front of the gun—remove the safety and press the trigger. The silver metal contacts on the top and bottom of the “muzzle-area” will arch with blue sparks just like your standard handheld stungun. The gun will spark for five seconds but you should flip the safety down after a second or two so as not to waste battery life. These metal contact probes also allow the unit to be used like a standard stungun. This same spark test can be used to test status of rechargeable batteries.

After these function checks are successful the unit is ready to fire. Test firing can be easily accomplished by using the target included with each unit. A heavy silver foil target with the outline of a man is provided. The target should be affixed to a thick/sturdy

TODAY'S TASER

piece of cardboard. Light cardboard will not provide enough resistance and the metal probes will shoot right through.

Installing a TASER cartridge is simple. With the safety in the down position, grasp a cartridge in the non-firing hand (the black/yellow striped area is the front) and snap it in place. That's it. There is no top/bottom, so the cartridge cannot be loaded upside down. To remove the cartridge simply pinch the side locking buttons and pull it off.

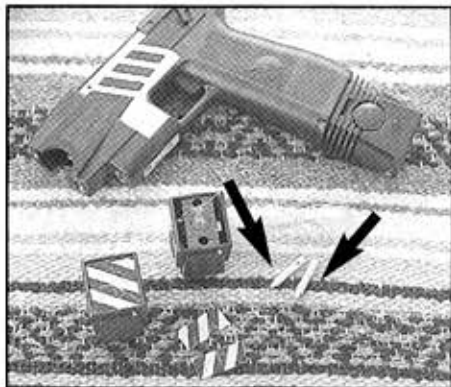
Installing a cartridge on a charged unit takes only a second or two and the TASER is ready to fire. Each cartridge holds two needle-pointed probes attached to 21 feet of insulated wire. The probes do have a small barb on the end to help hold them in place.

Special Features

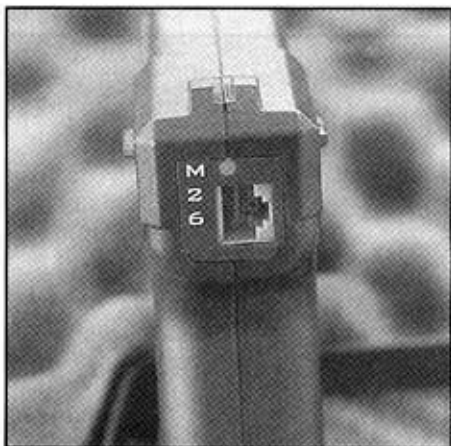
The ADVANCED TASER system was designed with liability and responsibility in mind. Located in the rear of the unit is a Dataport. Each time the unit is fired the internal micro-processor records the exact date and time. By using the included coupling cable and software provided by TASER International, any supervisor or administrator can download the firing data to determine when and how often the unit has been fired.

All of the cartridges for the TASER M26 are also serialized. When a cartridge is fired, up to 40 AFIDs, or identification tags, are expelled as well. The confetti-like ID tags all have the specific serial number of that cartridge imprinted on them. I found in application that the AFIDs scatter over about a five-yard area when fired outdoors. The wind will obviously have an effect on their disbursement.

Another intelligent feature of the M26 is an adapter, which replaces the battery compartment cover. This adapter allows a second/spare car-



A loaded and fired L.E. cartridge. Note the needle-point probes.

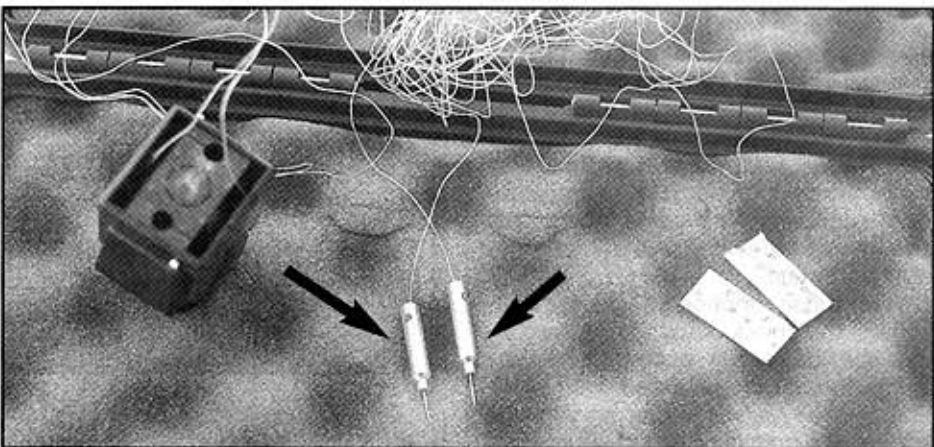


Battery strength is indicated by the red light on the unit's rear.

tridge to be carried on the unit for immediate use.

Available Products

While we have focused primarily on the M26 Law Enforcement model, TASER International does have two units available for purchase by the private citizen. The M18L and M18 TASER units are nearly identical to the M26 with three primary differences. First, the M18 models have 18 watts of power versus the 26 watt M26. The cartridges for the civilian units have a solid yellow face versus the yellow and black striped L.E. models. The probes on the civilian cartridges are attached



A closer look at the needle-point probes of a fired cartridge.



The 3D man struck by TASER probes from a distance of 10 feet.

to 15-foot wires instead of the 21-foot L.E. units. I know what you are thinking and, no, the cartridges are not interchangeable between the M26 and M18 TASERS.

The third major difference between the L.E. and non-L.E. models is the Dataport. The data download capability is not available for the citizen model. The M18L unit has a built-in laser sight which functions just as the M26 does. The M18 comes with fixed sights only and is obviously the most economical. I should also note that, like the L.E. units, the 15-foot cartridges are serialized as well.

The Wrap

A local Sheriff's Office has just introduced the TASER M26 as a tool for not only their patrol units but the Jail and Courthouse as well. During training with their officers they found an excellent incapacitation success rate. However, the deputies have not yet had their first field use. Field success stories from other agencies across the country have been highly favorable.

Whether a police officer or private citizen, one must understand that the TASER is an addition to their self-defense arsenal, not a replacement of all existing tools. The dynamics of hostile encounters are so fluid that no single tool is ideal for all situations.

The greatest benefit of the ADVANCED TASER is actually to the bad guy, the perp. Many dangerous felons, particularly those wielding knives, can be safely and effectively neutralized with a TASER where under other circumstances they would have to be shot. The current evolution of the TASER weapons system is more advanced and user-friendly than the old Taser guns we grew up on. Engineered with end user in mind, the ADVANCED TASER should be a welcome addition to your overall defensive program.

For more information contact Taser International, Inc., 7860 E. McCloin Dr., Ste. #2, Dept CH, Scottsdale, AZ 85260; 800-978-2737; www.taser.com ●