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Hollywood tests non-lethal weapons

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In an effort to use less force in violent confrontations, Hollywood police launched a pilot program last month using non-lethal electronic weapons instead of guns to subdue suspects.

Already the department has used it in six different situations, including one incident in which an officer's life was threatened, police said.

The weapon, an M-26 Taser, uses non-lethal electrical jolts fired from a cartridge with two

cables. The jolt immobilizes the subject and can last anywhere from one second to five seconds. Nationwide, 395 police agencies use the weapon, but Hollywood police say they are the first in South Florida to use the M-26 Taser.

The department's 60-day evaluation program began Jan. 17 with 15 pistols.

The weapon "has demonstrated its efficiency and we believe that 150 uniformed officers, out of our 350-officer staff, will use it," said police spokesman Carlos Negrón.

On Jan. 31, officer Larry Bur-

gess knocked down a fugitive who attempted to attack him with a knife, said Negrón.

Burgess and two other officers went to a home on the 2200 block of North 40th Avenue to serve felony warrants. When the officers tried to take the suspect into custody, the man, who police did not identify, pulled a kitchen knife. Burgess warned his partners by yelling "knife" and fired his M-26 Taser. The suspect dropped his knife and was arrested, Negrón said.

Herald staff writer Julie Gallego contributed to this report.