

Officers will aim to disable

Two Minneapolis police sergeants demonstrated the department's new nonlethal Taser guns, which fire two probes attached to wires that deliver a disabling shock.

The guns will be carried by each of the 25 officers who completed training Friday for a crisis intervention team. They will intervene with mentally ill people to deal with them safely.

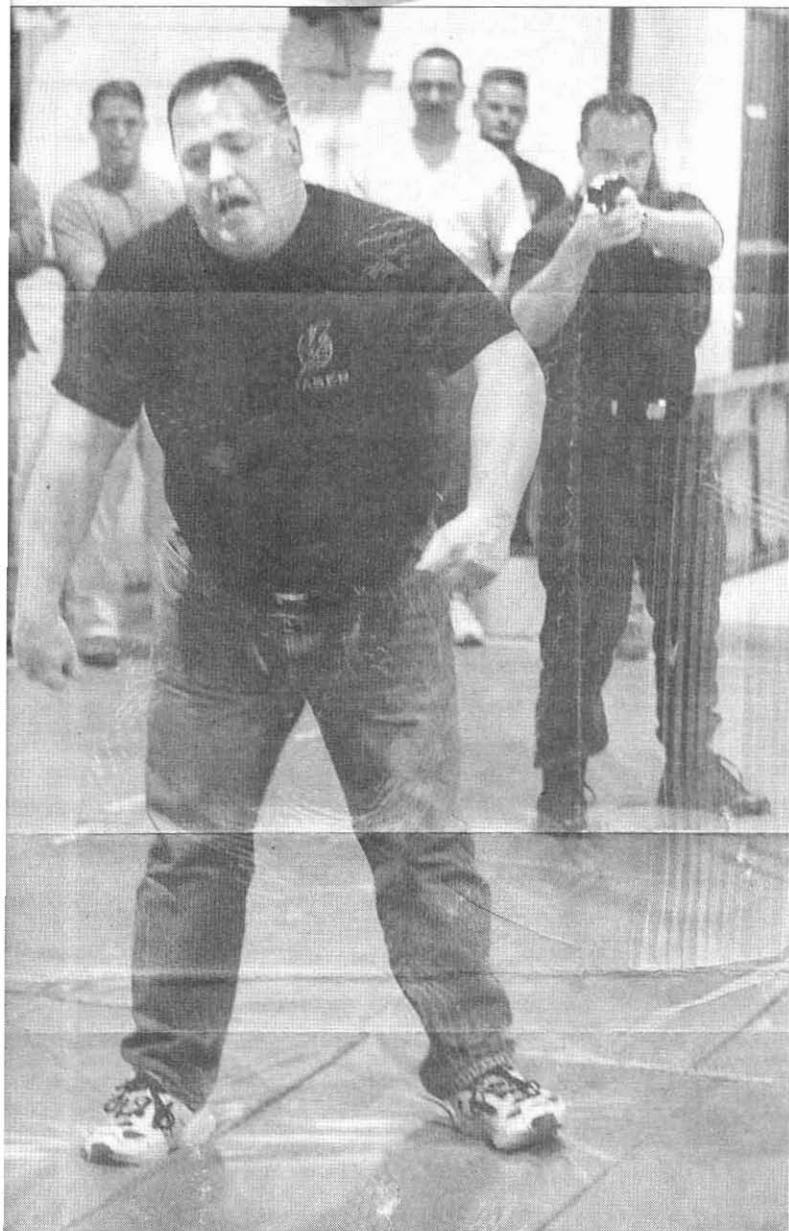
Sgt. Steve Wickelgren, who is 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighs 250 pounds, immediately fell to the ground after being shot by Sgt. Ron Bellendier.

Wickelgren was stunned for about five seconds, but was not hurt.

The 40-hour training program focused on recognizing mental disorders and techniques to resolve crises.

The team was developed in response to the fatal shooting by police of three people with mental illness since December 1999.

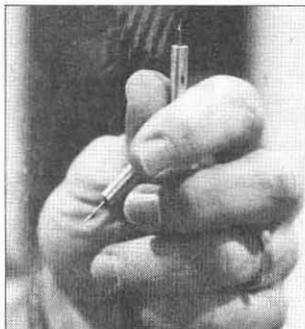
Another 25 officers will begin training in June.



Star Tribune photos by Mike Zerby



The Taser stun guns are made to look and handle like a regular firearm. Officers can fire up to 21 feet away from the target, and the darts can penetrate up to two inches of clothing.



The electrified darts fired by the Taser are attached to wires and deliver a disabling shock.