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By **BILL DUFFIELD**

Times staff writer

Kettering Oakwood Times

bduffield@tcnewsnet.com

Kettering, OH -- March 19, 2003. A nonlethal weapon designed to save lives and protect police officers, the M-26 TASER performed its duty again for the Kettering Police Department early in the morning of Tuesday, Mar. 11.

The TASER, which fires two electric probes that are attached by wires to batteries, delivers a 50,000-volt shock for five seconds. The jolt usually leaves the most non-complying individual incapacitated without injury long enough for the officer to gain control by handcuffing the subject or by other means.

On Tuesday, the TASER helped save the life of a Kettering woman. Officer Gary Schomburg was sent to a Kettering residence on a report of a distraught, suicidal woman. On arrival, he was confronted with a very difficult situation -- the woman was sitting in a chair and had several cut marks to her wrists. Armed with a knife, the bleeding woman told Officer Schomburg she was going to kill herself.

The officer warned the woman that if she did not put the knife down, he would use the M-26 TASER. She then brought the knife down onto her left wrist, forcing Schomburg to discharge the TASER. The weapon delivered its electro-muscular disruption which causes an override of the central nervous system. The woman was unable to continue cutting herself and she dropped the knife.

After securing the knife, Schomburg performed first aid on the woman's wrists until paramedics arrived.

Kettering's police department was one of the first in Ohio to use the M-26 TASER. The TASER units have been in use for about two years.

In 2002, Kettering officers used force 30 times, each incident deemed reasonable. Of those 30 incidents, 17 involved the use of the TASER (56%). There were no reported injuries by the officers or the suspects and the incidents ended in a peaceful resolution. So far in 2003, the officers have had nine reports of force used, five resulting in the use of the TASER (55%). As in 2002, no injuries have been reported so far this year.

The department has trained officers in the proper use of the TASER, allowing the gun-like devices to be carried on duty. The department ordered enough of the TASERs to allow every trained officer on a given shift to carry one.

According to sources, the M-26 TASER costs approximately \$500. The cartridges used in the weapon cost \$18 for three.

Larger departments around the country are now being trained in using the TASER unit. Denver (Colo.) Police Chief Gerry Whitman announced his department will initially give 80 M-26 TASERs to officers with 100 more to follow, citing numbers from the Seattle Police Department that showed an 80-percent reduction of officer injuries since that department started using TASERs.