

## Shield credited with saving officer's life

**'Bunkers' are gaining popularity with smaller police departments.**

By BRENT BURKEY  
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Sgt. Craig Losty pretended to hold a police riot shield, or "bunker," before him, pointing to where a York City Police officer involved in a shooting Sunday night.

"It thankfully spared the officer serious injury or loss of his life," Capt. Bruce Veseth said at a news conference. Instead of entering the officer's abdomen, the .25-caliber slug fatally wounded the piece of equipment. Police officers, from SWAT teams to small township departments, are increasingly using.

The bullet's impact caused a weak spot. The \$2,000 shield can no longer be trusted to withstand another shot. The price tag is worth it, police say.

"I would like to see (the shields) more available to patrol — not just to quick response officers, but for all officers," said.

York City Police Lt. Wes Kahley, team commander for the York County Quick Response Team, said he has seen the shields.

The team pools resources from area departments to field a tactical group of police to deal with high-risk situations. The shooting late Sunday in the 600 block of Salem Avenue that turned into a standoff early Monday morning. The officer whose shield was shot is a member of the response team but was working as a patrolman. The incident occurred. His bunker was purchased through the team, which will replace it when funding allows. Kahley said bunkers are made of a Kevlar composite material that can withstand various bullet weights depending on the size of the shield.

The shield used in Sunday's incident was a lighter version built to withstand handgun rounds, Kahley said. Heavier versions can withstand rifle rounds.

Area departments are purchasing one of the many versions to give them an edge over suspects, Losty said. Newberry Township Police Chief David Duffy said his department recently bought a larger shield that provides more coverage in outdoor situations. For the rural department, Duffy said it is a good fit.

He said the added protection is needed in high-risk situations such as drug busts and serving warrants. "I'd love to get one more, but we have to get the money for it," Duffy said.

Losty said the equipment is great for local departments, but he hopes officers will not try to handle high-risk situations themselves because of it.

He said bunkers and other equipment used in high-risk situations require training. Losty said it is not always easy to deal with those situations.