

MEMORANDUM



TO: ERICK W. ZINSER
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY/CHIEF OF POLICE

FROM: DANIEL JENKINSON, SERGEANT

SUBJECT: RIFLE PLATE PURCHASE

DATE: JANUARY 8, 2025

BACKGROUND:

In 2023 the Novi Police Department began to transition to a loadbearing vest system. Prior to this transition the majority of an officer's equipment (Pistol, Radio, Taser, Magazines, baton, pepper spray, handcuffs etc.) was located on their belts. The hips are an unnatural location to carry such a heavy weight which resulted in adverse health conditions for our officers. The loadbearing vests allowed officers to move their equipment off their belts and distribute the weight more naturally across their torso and onto their shoulders. This was a positive and necessary change to improve the health and longevity of our officers.

The Novi Police Department also has an expectation that its officers will promptly respond to and address high risk events such as active shooter incident. According to the National Institute of Justice 25.1% of mass casualty incidents involved an assault rifle. Additionally, Department of Justice statistics on officers feloniously killed from 2010-2019 shows that nearly 20% of the 511 fatalities occurred using a rifle. Unfortunately, the soft body armor that our officers currently wear does not offer protection from rifle rounds.

The Novi Police Department currently supplies its officers with critical response vests that have a ballistic rating for rifle rounds. These critical response vests are only worn when an officer expects an increase likelihood that they will be shot and not during routine operations. Directive 740 mandates that officers "shall" wear these vests during certain high-risk situations. This has created a situation where officers are forced to wear a critical response vest over their external vest during certain incidents creating multiple safety and operational problems. This was not an issue when officer carried their equipment on their belts because the critical response vests did not prevent access to equipment. These problems are explained in greater detail in this memorandum.

LOSS OF LESS LETHAL FORCE OPTIONS:

Novi Police Officer are provided with multiple less lethal options to end a potentially deadly situation without loss of life. Equipment such as Tasers, Batons and Sabre Pepper Spray are all less lethal options afforded to Novi Police Officers. Most officers are carrying these items on their external vest which are covered up when utilizing our critical response vests. Losing access to these less lethal options will force officers to use

their handgun or rifle to end a situation that might have been resolved without loss of life.

LOSS OF EVIDENCE:

Novi Police Officers wear body cameras on their external vests which capture vital evidence. It is the public's expectation that video footage of critical events be available and can be used to quickly soothe public unrest over a controversial incident. Our current critical response vests cover up our body worn cameras making the footage useless. Covering our cameras during events that have a higher likelihood of deadly force being used will degrade public trust and increase liability.

LOSS OF COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT:

Maintaining communication is one of the most important elements of any critical event. The proper flow of information is vital to managing resources and maintaining operational integrity at any major incident. The majority of Novi Police Officers currently wear their radios on their external vests. When our current critical response vests are placed over our radios it renders them inoperable during a critical event such as an active shooter. This will make relaying lifesaving information such as the location of victims and the shooter impractical. Also, officers will not be able to broadcast their location which will increase the possibility of blue on blue fatality and decreased operational efficiency.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS:

The majority of the equipment on an Officer's external vests is located toward the waistline. When our critical response vests are placed over our external vests they do not sit flat but on an angle towards the officer's neck. This angle will push projectiles or fragmentation toward an officer's unprotected neck. This angle also makes taking a precision shot from the prone position impractical if not impossible.

During a critical incident such as a school shooter every second counts. Officers in recent events have come under public scrutiny for taking time to put on additional equipment while kids are actively dying. The time it takes for officers to put on their critical response vests will slow their response and potentially cost lives.

It should also be noted that officers may not have access to additional equipment such as additional pistol magazines, handcuffs and tourniquets since they would be covered by the critical response vests.

RECOMMENDATION:

I would highly recommend making the purchase of rifle plates for our external vests a priority. This purchase will provide protection from rifle rounds when they are on routine patrol as well as for critical incidents. We fully expect that our officers will run into certain priority calls such as active shooter incidents in schools. Failing to provide our officers with the lifesaving protection they need to survive an incident that we expect them to enter is problematic. Three officers in Michigan have already been fatally shot this year and the state of Michigan has experienced two school shootings in addition to a mass shooting at a children's splash pad.

PURCHASE:

(14)- 7 X 9 Plates	\$3,710.00
(76)- 8 X 10 Plates	\$26,600.00
(44)-10 X 12 Plates	<u>\$17,380.00</u>
Total:	\$47,690.00



Picture of Officer without critical response vest.



Picture of critical response vests when worn over external vest.



Picture of critical response vests when worn over external vest.