

Wear Protective Vests

BACKGROUND

A police officer who was shot while responding to a report of two men in an altercation outside of a hotel survived. Police investigators credit the officer's bulletproof vest with saving his life.

SCENARIO

Police received a 911 call from a person who was witnessing two men physically assault each other at a local gasoline station. After several minutes of fighting, one of the individuals ran to his vehicle and sped off. The second individual got into his vehicle and began following the first individual. The 911 caller got into his car and followed them, while remaining on the phone with the 911 dispatcher the entire time. The 911 caller followed the two men to an area hotel parking lot, where the individuals exited their vehicles and began to engage in a verbal altercation.

Questioned by the dispatcher, the 911 caller was unable to either confirm or deny whether the individuals possessed any weaponry. As a result, the 911 operator dispatched two police offers to the hotel to investigate the situation.

When the first police officer arrived on scene, he exited his vehicle and immediately ordered the two men on the ground. A second police officer then arrived on the scene. At this point, one of the two men pulled out a .38 caliber firearm and fired two rounds at one of the officers, one of which struck the officer in the upper chest area. The second officer immediately returned fire, fatally shooting the suspect. The other suspect was taken into custody.

The police officer who sustained the gunshot to his chest was airlifted to a local trauma center. A short time later, the wounded police officer was alert and conscious.

The Chief of Police issued the statement that the officer was struck once in the chest, over the heart, and because he was wearing his protective vest, he was conscious and alert and was expected to make a full recovery.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The protective vest saved the officer's life.
- Because every situation an officer enters can lead be threatening, protective vests or body armor should be worn on a regular basis. Since 1987, protective vests have saved over 3,100 Police Officers throughout the United States.
- OSHA has also issued an opinion that based on the dangers associated with being a police officer, they will now consider protective vests as required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

OFFICER SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT

Wear your protective vest / body armor as you would any other tool on your duty belt.

Questions? Ask your Supervisor or contact your CIRMA Risk Management Consultant at (203) 946-3700.