



World staff photo by John David Heckel

*Officer Rick Phillips displays the three sizes of collapsible batons available.*

# Police Trying Out Collapsible Baton

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New collapsible police batons fit nicely on a belt and make Tulsa officers look less aggressive.

But when needed, the baton can expand and suddenly become a "very mean" weapon, Maj. Mark Andrus said.

The long, hardwood baton, also known as a nightstick, may soon be replaced by ones that collapse into small, compact sticks.

Twenty Tulsa police officers were trained last week and are now authorized to carry the batons for a 60-day trial period, Andrus said.

"There aren't many times that you want the baton to look mean, but when you want it to look mean, you want it to look very mean," Andrus said.

With the flick of the wrist, Officer Rick Phillips shows how the weapon extends to form a longer baton quickly.

The baton tapers from the butt to tip, which has a knob on the end. That taper makes it harder for an aggressor to take the baton away from an officer, Phillips said.

Current batons used by police are 26 inches long and 1-1/2 inches in diameter and are heavier, Phillips said.

Andrus said the wood batons look like a "black stick, club, or miniature ball bat, dangling from the belt." He said they often look offensive to the public.

The newer baton, about one inch in diameter

at its thickest point, also can be carried more easily by officers, Phillips and Andrus say.

The wood batons are bulky and flap against an officer's leg when he walks.

Officers are required to keep batons in their cars.

"Most officers don't carry the baton unless they're expecting conflict," Phillips said. "There's times I've not had a baton, and I'd get myself into a situation I hadn't expected."

Andrus said the test officers had to either purchase their own batons, with their clothing allowance, or borrow one.

Phillips said the collapsible baton costs \$50, slightly more than the current wooden baton used by police.

He said if collapsible batons are approved, most field officers will use a 21-inch baton that shortens to nine inches, or the 16-inch one that shortens to seven inches. There is also a 26-inch baton that shortens to 12 inches.

Phillips, who owns Phillips Police Equipment at 6120 E Admiral Place, said several area law enforcement agencies, including FBI agents, already use collapsible batons.

Andrus said Tulsa officers are highly trained. "Force is used so rarely, but I want to equip our officers with different levels of force, because I trust them to use the appropriate level. This is just one more tool they can use."

Phillips said a baton gives an officer one step between a fist fight and the use of a deadly weapon. He said the baton is used to temporarily impair an aggressor, but not to break bones.