



## **NIAGARA FALLS: High tech simulator will go Cataract City cops new training**

**By Rick Pfeiffer**  
Niagara Gazette

October 22, 2008 10:26 pm

— For Falls police Superintendent John Chella, Christmas came early this year. With the help of a \$50,000 grant, Falls cops are about to get a high tech, state of the art training simulator that police say will help make them and the public safer. The PRISim simulator from Advanced Interactive Systems will replace a similar, but older firearms training system that broke down and hasn't been used by police here in years. "What we used to have was an Atari," said Chella. "This is a PlayStation with plenty of upgrades." Despite the video game analogy, Chella said the PRISim system, which the department demonstrated for reporters on Wednesday, is not just a new "toy." It's designed to give Falls officers the best possible real life training they can get. "It's as close as we can put the (officers) to trouble on the street without drawing blood," trainer Joe Evans, a former Oklahoma lawman, said. Previous simulators were limited to teaching police when to use deadly physical force — so-called shoot-don't shoot exercises. "(PRISim) is the most advanced simulator ever developed," Evans said. "It allows officers to (run through) full use of force decision making. We're going to have them solve problems by moving through (all their options), voice commands, OC spray, Taser and deadly force." Using virtual reality technology, trainers are able to place officers in different real-life situations to test their training, decision-making skills and abilities under pressure to follow departmental policies and procedures. Evans says the system is so advanced that the officer's decisions can control how an incident unwinds. "The outcome (of each simulated situation) can be changed by the officer's response, it can be escalated or de-escalated depending on how well the officer reacts." All of the simulator tools are adapted from real weapons. The handguns recoil and can be armed with shells that spit out when the weapon is fired, just like a real semi-automatic gun. Trainers can even rig the shells so the officer's gun malfunctions while he's trying to fire. That creates the added stress of having to fix a weapon while under fire. "The whole idea of this is to get the guys in here, in a safe environment and teach them how to make good decisions," Evans said. "Ultimately that makes the public safer, the officer safer and the agency safer." The simulator has the ability to track how an officer handles his handgun, even when he isn't firing it. It can also determine how effective an officer is in his use of a Taser and OC spray. It's also not just about the good guys. Unlike early simulators, the PRISim allows the bad guys to really shoot back. The "shoot back cannon function" fires small rubber balls at high speed when a bad guy in the simulation shoots his gun. "The idea is to get the officer's heart racing and his palms sweating, the way they would in a real life confrontation," Evans said. "Michael Lowe, the regional sales manager for Advanced Interactive Systems, said the simulator has

thousands of scenarios that can be used on officers. Police departments can even film and create their own scenarios.

“We have domestic violence situations, traffic stops, a gunman shooting in a school,” Lowe said. “We even have a casino scenario.”

Officer Tom Licata, the Falls police firearms instructor, said the system exceeds his expectations.

“It’s unbelievable,” he said. “It’s light years better than anything we had before.”

The closest local police agency with a similar system is the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Police Department. However, the company says it has sold hundreds to federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, as well as to the Canadian military.

“It will help us meet our training requirements,” Chella said. “It will also save us considerable money in not having to use live ammunition and Taser cartridges for training.”

It’s expected the system will be installed and up and running when the city’s new Public Safety Building opens in the spring.

“It’s something our police department deserves and needs,” said Assemblywoman Francine DelMonte, who secured the grant. “I want our police officers as well trained as any.”

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.

## Photos



081022 NFPD training/nfg DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Niagara Falls - Niagara Falls Police Department Crime Scene officer Shawn Arndt prepares to take aim at a video simulation of a high school shooting in progress at the Public Safety Building? shooting range. The instructional program will be used use to sharpen officer skills as well as save the department money in ammunition costs.



081022 NFPD training2/nfg DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Niagara Falls - Niagara Falls Police Chief John Chella and Francine DelMonte of the 138th Assembly District speak with Joe Evans, of PRISM, at the Public Safety Building? shooting range. Evans is demonstrating an instructional videoprogram will be used use to sharpen officer skills as well as save the department money in ammunition costs.