

---

# Katy company hopes to shield cops from danger

By Andrea Rumbaugh | December 8, 2016 | Updated: December 9, 2016 7:53am

---

0



Photo: Yi-Chin Lee, Staff

---

## IMAGE 1 OF 3

Mike Hlozek, left, co-owner of Katy-based Veterans MFG, demonstrates how to use the newly purchased bulletproof shields to Sgt. John McClure, center, and Officer Jeremy King of the Katy Police Department.

---

A 4-month-old Katy company is finding opportunity in rising police concerns over attacks on officers nationwide.

Veterans MFG on Thursday delivered 10 bulletproof shields that are designed to protect officers sitting in their patrol vehicles to the Katy Police Department. Founders Mike Hlozek and Billy Gibbons say they were inspired to develop the shields, which fit the vehicles' window space, by officers who said they felt vulnerable while sitting behind the wheel, tending to paperwork or other duties.

"I think it will help a lot of officers perform their job with a little more ease and comfort," Katy police Officer Steve Kelleher said this week.

The department cited a reported uptick in attacks on police for moving quickly to purchase new gear, including the shields and 60 bulletproof vests strong enough to stop even a powerful rifle shot.

Veterans MFG - Mobile / Vehicle Ballistic Shield - Pistol Rated - Test Shoot...



"Before when officers got in shootings, it was because a subject had committed a crime and was trying to get away," Capt. Bryon Woytek said. "Now, law enforcement are being targeted for no

reason at all."

Veterans MFG offers the rifle-rated shields online for \$799 and pistol-rated shields for \$399. Law enforcement and military members, active or retired, can receive discounts. Veterans MFG and Katy police officials would not say how much the department paid for Thursday's delivery.

This purchase comes at a time when police interaction with civilians is under increased scrutiny. Both police shootings of unarmed black men and ambush-style attacks on police have garnered headlines. Last month, law enforcement personnel in Texas, Iowa, Missouri and Florida were attacked while sitting in their vehicles.

Twenty officers across the country have been fatally shot this year in some sort of ambush, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund reports. That is the highest number since 1995.

"The time is certainly right for all options to be considered when it comes to protecting law enforcement officers from these targeted acts of violence," said Craig W. Floyd, the memorial fund's founding president and CEO.

### ***Better ways?***

Yet John Fullinwider, co-founder of Dallas-based Mothers Against Police Brutality, believes there are better ways to protect officers. He advocates for enhanced mental health care and stricter gun control, especially for high-powered rifles, that would reduce the number of conflicts officers have to face.

Both Fullinwider and James Douglas, president of the NAACP Houston branch, want to eliminate violence on both sides.

"We ought to curb the incidents of overreaction on the part of police, but we also ought to do everything that's necessary to protect their lives," Douglas said.

Floyd said several products like Veterans MFG's shield are being explored to protect

---

## **BUSINESS**

---



**People in Business**

### **Business calendar**



**BBVA Compass settles in for the long haul in Houston**

officers in their vehicles.

Another idea is a sensor that sounds an alert when someone approaches.

Ultimately, he said, police department budgets and the usability of new products will determine what is adopted.

"I like the idea that companies are looking for ways, looking for technologies, looking for products and services that can better protect our officers," he said.

### ***Easy to pick up***

Hlozek said his company's shields are shaped like car windows with a small slit so officers can see outside. They can be placed against the window when the vehicle is parked or can be kept in the passenger seat where a handle makes it easy to grab.

The shields have an arm strap and can be carried outside the vehicle, too. The edges are reinforced with metal for officers to protect themselves from threats or, if needed, attackers.

The shields purchased by the Katy Police Department weigh 11 pounds and protect against pistols and rifles, including the .257 Weatherby Magnum, .300 Winchester Magnum, AK-47 and AR-15. Lighter rifle-rated shields can be ordered, and the company makes a shield that weighs 3½ pounds but protects only against pistols.

### ***Peace of mind***

Kelleher, the Katy officer, hopes the shield will provide his family some peace of mind.

"They hate to see me walking out the door because of everything that's going on," he said.

Being able to protect people like Kelleher is what drives Hlozek and Gibbons.



**Trump moves vex nation's labor leaders**



**Wells Fargo ex-managers' suit puts scandal blame higher up chain**



**Rollback of truck safety rules may be just the beginning**

---

They previously worked in energy, and the idea for Veterans MFG blossomed after they were laid off. Hlozek, an Army veteran, said their new career is more rewarding.

"I'm doing my part to help protect our country and to help protect the people who are keeping our country safe," he said.



**Andrea Rumbaugh**

Business Reporter,  
Houston Chronicle

---

HEARST *newspapers*

© 2013 Hearst Newspapers, LLC.