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## Locally made body armor saves Illinois officer

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Published: Tuesday, March 31, 2015 at 7:01 p.m.

Phalanx Defense Systems, a Gainesville-based body armor manufacturer, recently tallied its first save when its gear prevented an Illinois police officer from receiving more serious injuries from a shotgun slug.

The blast struck David Hakim of the DuPage County Sheriff's Office where the armor meets the lower back during a Dec. 11, 2014 training accident, said Al Angus, the Sheriff's Office's chief.

"Our officer is still wounded, and it will be a long road for him to be rehabbed," Angus said. "However ... by hitting the protective part of the vest, it deflected enough to where it wasn't a paralyzing injury."

The hit makes Hakim, an Army veteran, the inaugural member of the company's Phalanx Armor Fellowship, reserved for police saved by the company's armor. The title comes with a replacement piece of armor at no charge.

Phalanx's 20 employees "come to work every day knowing that the products that we produce are going into harm's way," said Justin Mowitz, Phalanx's chief operating officer. "To be able to know that a guy got to go home to his kids — that's pretty special."

Originally developed by DKX Advanced Manufacturing from Bismarck, North Dakota, the armor became a division of Phalanx with its December 2014 purchase of DKX. Phalanx opened in 2012 and also makes shields, holsters and armored vehicles.

The DKX body armor was made to withstand six to 12 rounds from the high-powered .308 Winchester cartridge, Mowitz said. The shotgun slug that struck Hakim was probably traveling at 1,300 feet per second, he said.

"It would be like you standing with your back to me and me swinging a sledgehammer as hard as I can," Mowitz said.

The DKX armor protecting Hakim resulted in Gainesville Mayor Ed Braddy declaring March 19 as Phalanx Defense Systems Day. The Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce held a reception that day in honor of the declaration.

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