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Pasco sheriff's motorcycle unit puts 6 new bikes on road

Photos



ANDY JONES/STAFF

Six new Victory motorcycles officially hit the road Thursday for the Pasco County Sheriff's Office. The shift from Harley-Davidson to Victory cost the department \$146,602, which includes the trade-in value of five of the department's seven Harleys.

◀ 1 of 3 ▶

By Eddie Daniels | Tribune Staff

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NEW PORT RICHEY — On Thursday morning, Pasco County speeders had their introduction to the sheriff's office's new bike: the Victory motorcycle.

The Pasco County Sheriff's Office replaced its fleet of seven Harley-Davidson motorcycles with six Victory Commander 1 motorcycles.

"As we bid through our process to go to the next generation of motorcycles, our first concern was the safety of our deputies," Sheriff Chris Nocco said at a news conference. "The second is that we realize that we have to be efficient out there and effective in protecting our citizens, and the other

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1/11 12 pm **Super Shaper-Upper Dinner**
BergHOFF Culinary Center - Odessa, Odessa

1/11 6 pm **Up roar Pro Wrestling: Collision.**
Verizon Event Center, New Port Richey

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thing we can never forget is that we're using taxpayer dollars. This comes out of Penny for Pasco. ... This is one of those things where our citizens can be very proud of the Pasco sheriff's office along with the county commissioners.

"We went out there and found the best product for us."

The base cost for one Victory Commander 1 is \$29,933, which includes the agency-specific paint job, lights, radio, radar and other equipment, which the sheriff's office shipped to the Arizona-based company to be installed.

The price for all six motorcycles, which includes the Harley-Davidson trade-ins, was \$146,602. The county commission approved the purchase in April.

The sheriff's office is the first in the state to go with the Victory brand for its fleet, and the Plant City Police Department is the only other Florida law enforcement agency to add Victory cycles to its fleet.

While researching new motorcycles, the sheriff's office also looked at Kawasaki, Honda and BMW.

Chris Holland said he and his band of motorcycle deputies snagged lawbreakers before wheeling over to the sheriff's office administration building Thursday morning. In just a couple hours, Holland said, they nabbed at least six speeders.

As for a learning curve when it comes to switching motorcycles, Holland said it was practically nonexistent.

"It's actually not very much," Holland said. "I'll put it this way. We've ridden Harleys our whole career; that's all we've ever ridden. The Harley, you ride it one particular way. We thought this was going to take a little bit — maybe a week, maybe a month. We don't know. Within two hours (of training), we had already adapted to this bike. We were actually doing the same maneuvers and exercises we would normally do on the Harley ... within two hours of transitioning over. We were amazed."

The Victory, which weighs about 880 pounds, has a number of features that make it stand out in the law enforcement motorcycle industry.

On many bikes, chrome leg guards bear a sticker that warns they are for cosmetic use only and provide no protection to the rider. The Victory front cage is made of forged steel, which protect the legs of a deputy if the bike goes down. The floorboards do not fold up, and there is steel tubing on the rear of the bike, further protecting the rider.

"When an officer gets hit on any other motorcycle, the first

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thing that happens is he loses his leg. It's over," Mike Schultz of Victory Motorcycles said at Thursday's news conference. With the Victory "he keeps in the steel cocoon; you see the protection already."

Schultz said that as Victory Motorcycles explored crafting law enforcement bikes, about 4,100 law enforcement members were surveyed, and 83 percent reported having suffered ankle, leg or foot injuries.

"That is ridiculous," Schultz said. "And here's the problem with that: It's us taxpayers that are paying for that."

Additional protection can be found at the bottom of the Victory. The skid plate has been designed to be bullet-resistant, defeating bullets up to .45-caliber.

"A patrol deputy in a vehicle has the ability to seek cover behind their vehicle. The police motorcycle from Victory has the same option," Deputy Tait Sanborn said. "You pull the bike over; it's got a protected undercarriage. The deputies can then take cover and, should the need arise, they can take the fight to the bad guy from a position of cover behind the machine."

Victory motorcycles are designed never to go beyond a 45-degree tilt and for the rear tire to always maintain contact with the road. If a bike does go to its side, a deputy can stay on and motor it to an upright position.

The base price of the Victory cycle is higher, but the price includes paint and equipment. In base form, Victories can be placed on the street immediately. Other bikes, though initially less expensive, need an additional \$5,000 in options to get it road ready, Tait said.

Schultz said a bike purchased from other companies can take nearly a full year before it can be placed in service because of the additional work — painting, adding lights and other equipment — that must be done.

The price of regular maintenance for the new motorcycles will be \$60 every 5,000 miles. For the Harley, maintenance every 5,000 miles ranges from \$200 to \$600. Additionally, Victory Motorcycles offers a five-year unlimited miles warranty.

"This is another option of where our Pasco County Sheriff's Office is taking the lead in many, many different things," Commissioner Henry Wilson said. "This is another great way that the board of county commissioners is able to work together with the sheriff's office and put public safety first and the safety of our citizens first."

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Tom Jackson

Columnist Tom Jackson strives to provide insight into the evolving human condition, usually as it pertains to Pasco County, but occasionally to the universe at large — one often being indistinguishable from the other.

