WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #22: Personal Shields

MUTANT FUTURE COMPATIBLE PRODUCT

By Chris "Outlander" Van Deelen and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Force screens were developed for individuals from all walks of life, to guard them from all manner of threats. There were simple fields that warded users from the insults of weather and city life, those that protected police against small caliber firearms, and those used in military powered armor systems and combat vehicles. All shields operate on the same basic mechanic: they project a protective energy field around the user. Like a second skin, each shield will conform to fit the user, be it a normal human, a robot, an exotic, or even a misshapen mutant who managed to find a functioning unit. The energy screen will not interfere with riding in a vehicle or using a weapon.

Some screens are very specific and only proof against certain types of matter or energy. Others protect against all forms of attack, with one exception — no shield can protect against hard radiation. This energy will pass straight through a screen without being impeded or reduced. Although they do protect against the harmful effects of intense light or sound (lasers and sonic attacks), shields do not stop normal light, sound, or air from getting through, unless specifically modified.

Also, the shields in this article are not powerful enough to protect a user while swimming, or dealing with extreme hazards such as moving through lava. Yes, a shield would provide some protection — maybe a few seconds worth — before the molten rock's heat overpowered the shield and caused it to collapse.

The various shields are listed below, grouped into tables according to who used particular types: Civilians, Security/Law Enforcement, and Military/Government. Within each table the individual models are detailed with the amount and types of damage each can withstand, any regenerative capability, and their battery life.

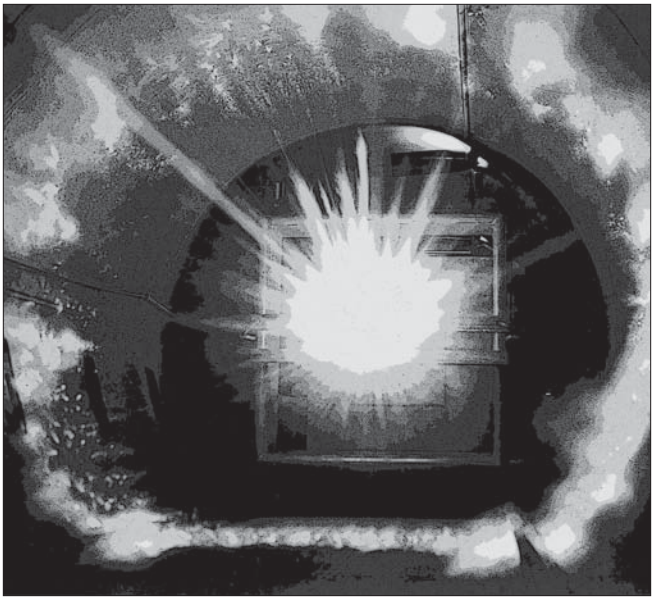
SHIELD TABLE DEFINITIONS

Hit Points/Regeneration

The amount listed under Hit Points is the maximum available protection a full-strength shield can withstand before breaking down or become inert. With enough time, most of the more powerful shields are able to regain their protective strength at a rate per round listed under Regeneration.

If reduced to 0 hit points in a single round, a shield overloads and automatically shuts down. The device suffers one condition level of damage and the power source must be replaced, even if it still had enough energy to regenerate.

For every condition level of damage, the shield will lose



20% of its effectiveness (round down). As an example, take a shield normally rated for 20 hp of damage protection with 3 hp/round of regeneration. At condition level 3, the shield will only protect for a maximum of 12 hp of damage, and

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This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the "Basic" system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).

will only regenerate 1 hp/round. All aspects including Battery Life are reduced in this way.

Types of Damage Protection

There are four basic types of attack a shield can protect against. If a character protected by force field is hit by a attack not listed under the particular shield's Protection rating, the damage will go straight through the screen. Each is followed by the abbreviation for it on the associated tables.

Physical (P): This type of shield protects against everyday contact with things like street grime and rain. Although not intended for combat, it will provide some minimal protection in a fight. Also, assaults with spit or thrown toxins (things that must touch skin) will not affect the user.

Kinetic (K): The shield protects against the transfer of kinetic energy, such as melee or missile attacks.

Energy (E): The shield is specifically attuned to protect against the high-intensity energy associated with lasers, plasma, electricity, etc.

Thermal (T): By negating the transfer of thermal energy, the shield protects from extreme temperatures. Consequently, the shield will also work against heat- or cold-based attacks.

Battery Life

The length of time a shield can remain active depends both on the power source and how much damage the shield sustains. For example, a Basic Mark 1 shield can withstand a total of 5 hit points of damage before the power cell needs

Civilian Shield Table

Type	Hit Points	Protection	Regeneration	Power Source	Battery Life	Weight
Basic Mark 1	5	P	None	Power cell	1 hour	1 lb.
Basic Mark 2	10	P	1 hp/round	Power cell	1 hour or 20 hp	1 lb.
Sports Mark 1	10	P, T	1 hp/round	Power cell	2 hours or 20 hp	2 lbs
Sports Mark 2	15	P, K, T	2 hp/round	Power pack	4 hours or 50 hp	4 lbs.
Ballistic Mark 1	15	P, K	3 hp/round	Power pack	1 hour or 50 hp	3 lbs.
Ballistic Mark 2	15	P, K, E, T	3 hp/round	Power pack	1 hour or 50 hp	4 lbs.
Hunter Special	20	P, K, E, T	3 hp/round	Power clip	2 hours or 70 hp	5 lbs.
Protection Plus Mark 1	25	P, K, E, T	5 hp/round	Beltpack	4 hours or 120 hp	7 lbs.
Protection Plus Mark 2	35	P, K, E, T	5 hp/round	Beltpack	6 hours or 120 hp	7 lbs
Protection Ultimate	50	P, K, E, T	10 hp/round	Beltpack	8 hours or 200 hp	10 lbs.

Security/Law Enforcement Shield Table

Type	Hit Points	Protection	Regeneration	Power Source	Battery Life	Weight
Vehicle Officer	7	P, K, E	1 hp/round	Power pack	4 hours or 20 hp	1 lb.
Foot Patrol	15	P, K, E, T	3 hp/round	Power pack	4 hours or 30 hp	1 lb.
Foot Patrol, High Risk	30	P, K, E, T	5 hp/round	Power pack	4 hours or 60 hp	3 lbs.
Low Security	10	P, K, E	1 hp/round	Power cell	4 hours or 20 hp	2 lbs
Medium Security	30	P, K, E	3 hp/round	Power pack	4 hours or 60 hp	3 lbs.
High Security	50	P, K, E, T	5 hp/round	Power clip	4 hours or 100 hp	6 lbs.
SWAT	50	P, K, E, T	7 hp/round	Power clip	4 hours or 100 hp	8 lbs.

Military/Government Shield Table

Type	Hit Points	Protection	Regeneration	Power Source	Battery Life	Weight
Foot Soldier	25	P, K, E, T	5 hp/round	Power clip	6 hours or 75 hp	5 lbs.
NCO	35	P, K, E, T	5 hp/round	Power clip	6 hours or 100 hp	5 lbs.
Officer	50	P, K, E, T	10 hp/round	Beltpack	6 hours or 150 hp	8 lbs.
Senior Officer	75	P, K, E, T	10 hp/round	Beltpack	8 hours or 250 hp	8 lbs.
CEO	100	P, K, E, T	15 hp/round	Beltpack	8 hours or 300 hp	10 lbs.
Senator/Ambassador	150	P, K, E, T	20 hp/round	Beltpack	8 hours or 450 hp	13 lbs.
President	250	P, K, E, T	50 hp/round	Minifusion cell	20 hours or 1,000 hp	25 lbs.

to be replaced. On the other hand, the power source for a Ballistic Mark I shield will last for one hour at full strength, or until it has regenerated a total of 50 hit points.

CIVILIAN SHIELDS

These small devices are usually the size and shape of a cigarette pack. Some versions use power cells while others can be hooked up to packs or clips with a cable. Most models were intended to shield against the weather, but several were designed for personal protection (for those who lived or worked in high crime areas), or even for hunters. Although nowhere near as powerful as police, security, military, or government-issue shields, these high-end civilian models could still provide adequate protection against many types of attacks.

SECURITY/LAW ENFORCEMENT SHIELDS

Quite literally middle of the ground, these models are stronger, more resilient to damage, and have longer battery life than the far more common civilian shields. They are rugged enough to provide private security personnel and law enforcement agents with excellent protection, but are not quite as powerful as the military and government models.

MILITARY/GOVERNMENT SHIELDS

These models represent the pinnacle of shield technology, giving the user the best defense and longest battery life of all types.

SHIELD MODIFICATIONS

For different missions or users, a shield can be altered to vary protective power, or even make the shield into an offensive weapon. A modification will generally reduce the shield's hit points by 20% (round to nearest), but there are exceptions (see the **Shield Modification Table**). A shield generator can also be programmed to provide multiple modifications at the same time. For example, a generator could be simultaneously both Repelling and Damaging, but this will reduce the overall hit point protection by 40%.

As alternative, modifications could be used with a shield on the One-sided or Multi-sided settings, but the power losses/gains might cancel out one another. For example, consider a character who wants a One-sided shield that is Damaging. One-sided provides +50% hit points, while Damaging reduces this protection by 20%, for a net 30% hit point bonus.

Note that Repelling, Switch Protection Mode, Activation, and Electrical modifications are not available for Civilian models.

Activation Trigger: Normally, a user must activate her shield by hand, an action requiring one round. But with this this modification, a shield automatically activates when triggered by a certain event (such as being hit by a specific type of attack, like energy or kinetic). The attack will activate the shield, which then protects the user on the following round. This option gives no hit point modification, and the user must choose the trigger ahead of time.

Electrical: Anyone touching this shield must save versus energy or be stunned for 1d8 rounds, as the electrical discharge freezes muscles and nerves. A victim must also save versus death or lose 1d3 Dexterity points, which will return at the victim's natural healing rate per day. This option reduces a shield's hit point total by 25%.

Multi-Sided: The shield protects a user on up to three sides, chosen at the time of activation. This modification provides a bonus of 25% more hit points (round to nearest).*

One-Sided: The shield only protects a user from one direction, picked at the time of activation. This modification provides a bonus of 50% more hit points (round to nearest).*

Repelling: Anyone touching the shield must make a Dexterity ability check or be forced back ten feet.

Self-Contained: This option is only available to shields that protect from all types of damage. It completely isolates the wearer — even below her feet, protecting from mines. This also prevents gas exchange, so the user must have an oxygen supply (robots do not need this). If no supply is available, the shield envelope typically contains enough oxygen to allow the user 2d4+6 rounds before she has to worry about suffocation.

Switch Protection Mode: The shield can be set to only one type of protection at a time (if multiple types are used). The user must choose the type when activating the shield, but may adjust as needed. While changing, there is a single round where the shield is deactivated while it switches protection modes. There is no shield hit point modification when using this option.

** For One-Sided and Multi-Sided modifications, the*

degrees of arc covered are to ML: some games use a mechanic for characters having four facing sides (front, back, left, right), while other may have six (front-left, front, front-right, etc.) or even eight (cardinal/intermediate directions).

Shield Offensive Damage

Another modification, available only on Government/Military models, allows the shield to damage anyone it touches. The damage varies by model.

Shield Offensive Damage Table

Model	Damage	Power Drainage
Foot Soldier	1d6 points/round	5 hp/round
NCO	3d6 points/round	15 hp/round
Officer	5d6 points/round	25 hp/round
Senior Officer	8d6 points/round	30 hp/round
CEO	10d6 points/round	50 hp/round
Senator/ Ambassador	Disintegration*	75 hp/round
President	Disintegration**	100 hp/round

** Save versus energy or die, otherwise suffer 10d6 points of damage/round.*

*** Save versus energy or die, otherwise suffer 20d6 points of damage/round.*

ANTI-SHIELD DEVICES

Shield Leech

This small, grenade-like device is designed to harmonize with a shield's frequency and drain its energy. The resonance process allows the leech to "stick" to a shield, and it requires no battery of its own because it runs off the power it drains. A leech weighs two pounds and fits comfortably in the hand. It can be thrown, or placed against any type of shield, even those with the Damaging or Repelling modifications.

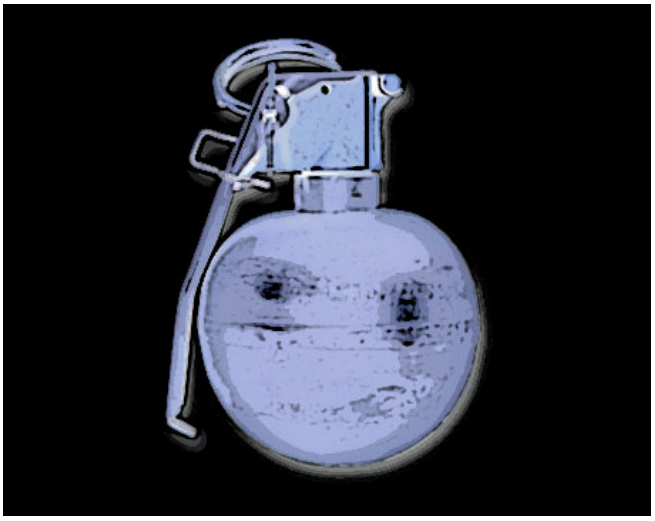
Every round the leech is attached to a shield, it will drain the regeneration capacity, and thus the power source. For example, when used against a SWAT shield, a Mark I model negates the 7 hp/round regeneration, and draws 7 hit points from the power clip's battery life (which is 100 when fully charged). If left unchecked, the leech would completely drain the clip in 15 rounds. A Mark 5 model would drain 21 hp/round, emptying the shield's power clip in five turns. To speed the energy drain, several leeches can be used on a single shield.

A shield leech can be removed by anyone other than the user of the shield by simply grabbing the item and pulling it off. However, this can be somewhat dangerous because of the energy transfer taking place. To successfully remove a shield leech, the character attempting must save versus energy, or take 2d6 points of energy damage and be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

Some shield leech models have small panels, resembling solar cells, that harmlessly dissipate the energy into the environment around the shield. Others models can be used to recharge clip-sized or smaller power sources. These models will have a capacitor for storing energy leeched from a shield and a small fitting to hold a drained power source.

Shield Leech Table

Model	Drainage Multiplier
Mark 1	1 x (Shield Regenerative Capability/round)
Mark 2	1.5 x (Shield Regenerative Capability/round)
Mark 3	2 x (Shield Regenerative Capability/round)
Mark 4	2.5 x (Shield Regenerative Capability/round)
Mark 5	3 x (Shield Regenerative Capability/round)



Anti-Shield Pulsar

Similar in shape to the shield leech, this small device can either be carried by a user, or thrown like a grenade. It works by emitting a wave of pulsing energy harmonics, switching through dozens of frequencies every round. When the pulsar matches a shield's frequency, the shield will turn off temporarily. In game terms, every round a shield is within range, there is a chance the pulsar will shut it down for 1d3 rounds (while the shield generator changes frequencies and reboots). The pulsar's range and chance for disrupting a shield depend on the model (see table below). All models are powered by a single power pack, and will operate continuously for 6 turns.

Anti-Shield Pulsar Table

Model	Range	Disruption Chance
Mark 1	10'	10%
Mark 2	25'	20%
Mark 3	50'	30%
Mark 4	100'	40%
Mark 5	200'	50%

Harmonic Equalizer

The bane of shield users, this one-pound device can be adapted to mount on any energy weapon. It is a powerful microprocessor designed to analyze the energy frequencies of any shield the weapon targets. Every time the weapon hits a particular shield, the harmonic equalizer has a cumulative 20% chance of learning the screen's frequency. When this happens, the weapon bypasses the shield to directly damage the target. Unfortunately, an equalizer puts a slight drain on a weapon's power, reducing damage by 1 point per die. So, with a laser pistol that normally inflicts 5d6 points of damage, attaching a harmonic equalizer will cut this to 5d6-5 points of damage. The damage reduction is usually considered a worthwhile tradeoff by those forced to fight against shielded opponents.

NEW WEAPON

Phased Energy Blasters

Although the five variants in this family are not quite as powerful as comparable lasers or other energy weapons, they are particularly useful when fighting an enemy using personal shields. The blasters fire bright yellow beams of phased energy that appear coherent, but the energy is actually oscillating through frequencies. This ensures some of each shot will always punch through a force screen.

The technology works on the same mechanic as the Harmonic Equalizer. So on the first hit, 20% of the energy gets through a shield. For each round after, the energy (and damage) penetrating increases by 20% until the shield is rendered effectively useless.

Phased energy beams cause deep burns and bruising while slightly disintegrating the target, because the heat disrupts molecular bonds and bursts capillaries. This is particularly hard on muscle tissue: any character hit by a blaster must save versus energy or lose 1d3 Strength. Multiple hits can easily reduce a target's Strength to zero. If this happens, the character does not die, but is left so weak he cannot move. The lost Strength will return at the character's healing rate per day.

Phased Energy Blaster (PEB) Table

Weapon	Damage	Trigger Type	Range	Weight	Battery Type	Shots/Battery
PEB Pistol	3d6	Normal	200'/400'	2 lbs.	Power clip	8
PEB Carbine	4d6	Normal	300'/600'	5 lbs.	Beltpack or Backpack	15
PEB Assault Rifle	5d6	Automatic	500'/1,000'	7 lbs.	Backpack	30
PEB Submachinegun	3d6	Automatic	250'/500'	4 lbs.	Beltpack or Backpack	30
PEB Sniper Rifle	7d6	Normal	1,250'/3,000'	10 lbs.	Power clip	5

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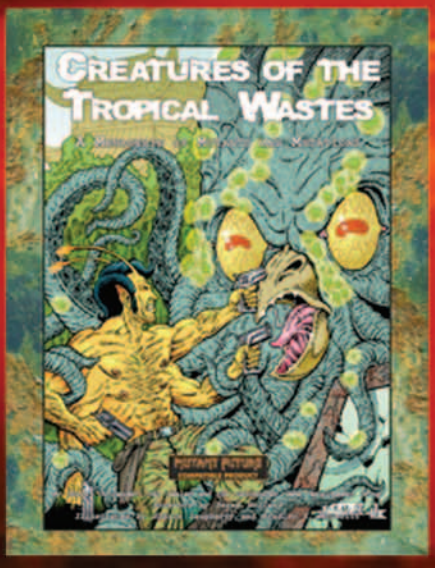

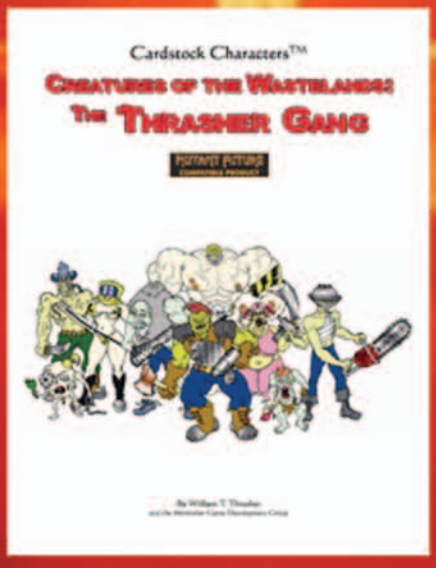

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