STATEMENT OF NEED

Security officers could be exposed to OC spray and its extremely painful effects sometime during their careers. Officers need to learn techniques that will make the spray most effective against assailants. They also need to know about their responsibilities concerning the use of OC spray and how to reduce the pain and speed up the recovery of an exposed person. Officers may even experience being sprayed as a part of their training.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this activity, the participant should be able to:

1. explain the differences between CS, CN, and OC sprays.
2. describe the symptoms of a spray recipient.
3. list and explain the steps in OC spray application.
4. demonstrate the proper care of a spray recipient.
5. list the steps needed to decontaminate himself or herself if sprayed.
6. discuss the reasons for a security officer to be voluntarily sprayed.

INTRODUCTION

OC spray is currently considered one of the best tools to reduce injuries to officers and subjects alike. It is being used by an increasing number of security officers and is on practically every duty belt of police officers today. OC spray is so concentrated, it does not take much to shut down a person. It is designed to stick to skin, hair, and clothes. It is important to understand what OC spray can and cannot do and to learn the most effective spraying techniques. It is also important to learn responsible use of OC spray. This course will discuss whether officers should experience being sprayed as a part of training and how officers can reduce the pain and recover faster when they are sprayed or exposed.
LEARNING OBJECTIVE: CS, CN, AND OC CHEMICAL SPRAYS

CS Spray
CS Spray, or tear gas:
- is a chemical agent that causes the eyes to sting and water.
- is an eye irritant to the lachrymal glands (tear glands).
- has been around since the 1920s.
- is primarily used in canister grenades to disperse riots and make arrests.

CS tear gas can, in concentrated doses or extended exposure, be toxic and cause choking and vomiting.

CN Mace
CN mace:
- is an eye irritant to the lachrymal glands (tear glands).
- was developed during the turbulent 1960s.
- became the first chemical spray to be worn on police belts.
- is not very effective against psychotics, drunks, and drug abusers.
- is barely effective against dogs because dogs do not have tear glands.

Police stopped using CN chemical mace in the early 1980s because it had major drawbacks. Mace could take up to 30 seconds to take effect on the subject, and its secondary contamination was legendary. The joke was the only way to drive a subject sprayed with CN mace to headquarters was with your head hanging out of the window.

OC Pepper Spray
OC pepper spray:
- is not a tear gland irritant like CS and CN sprays.
- inflames mucous membranes for up to 45 minutes.
- causes localized swelling of any moist surface, such as skin, eyes, nose, mouth, throat and lungs.
- causes involuntary closure of the eyes, which is of significant tactical benefit to the officer.
- is available for deployment as a stream, fog, mist, foam, or gel.
- is very concentrated.
- is designed to stick to skin, hair, and clothes.
- is the safest of all chemical sprays because it is organic, bio-degradable, and non-carcinogenic.
- has been used by postal carriers against dogs since the 1960s.
OC, oleoresin capsicum, refers to chili peppers, including the very hot cayenne and jalapeno peppers. All contain a very powerful substance called capsaicin. OC spray contains a small amount of the super hot pepper extract capsaicin suspended in an oily vegetable resin. Alcohol or another gas is used as a propellant.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE: SYMPTOMS OF A SPRAY RECIPIENT**

When effectively sprayed with OC pepper spray, MOST victims:
- immediately succumb to its effects and are incapacitated.
- involuntarily closes their eyes.
- feel a burning sensation in their eyes, nose, mouth, and skin.
- have difficulty breathing if the spray was inhaled because the throat and lungs constrict.
- experience immediate and involuntary coughing, retching, gagging, and the perception of shortness of breath.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE: OC SPRAY APPLICATION**

OC pepper spray has a high percentage of effectiveness in subduing a non-compliant person, but it is important to understand what OC spray can and cannot do. Security officers can learn techniques that make the spray the most effective.

**How to hold the canister:**
The canister must be held upright in order to propel the OC chemical and not just the propellant. Ensure that your thumb (or index finger, depending on your choice) is actually on the actuator button and not on the protective safety lid in a moment of stress.

**Distance considerations:**
Shoot at a minimum of 3 feet and a maximum of 10-12 feet.

**How long to spray:**
Spray in quick, small bursts, lasting a second or two are best.

**If the subject keeps coming at you:**
Spray, then back up a few steps if the subject keeps coming at you. Repeat this procedure until the subject is incapacitated. If you reach your other hand out to push him or her off, make sure you do not hit your outstretched arm with the spray.

**Target placement:**
Aim for the eyes. Avoid, if possible, direct contact with the mouth. Use a vertical spray arc for one subject and a horizontal spray arc for two or more subjects.
If the OC spray does not work:
OC spray is not infallible; it does not stop all people. Also, some subjects take longer to feel the effects. An attacker can still grab, strike, or cause other physical damage to you after being sprayed.

The initial contingency plan is to retreat to create space between you and the person you sprayed. There are many times when giving up ground makes good sense, and as you back up from the subject, you have a few moments to gather your thoughts and consider the next move. Retreating also allows officers to radio for backup, get a barrier between them and the subject, and, if authorized, use an elevated type of force.

Department policy considerations:
It is important to use OC spray responsibly. As in all other use-of-force instruments, the liability factor can never be eliminated, only minimized. Training policies and documentation are critical to keep that to a minimum.

Law enforcement departments vary as to when to deploy OC spray.
• Many departments use code words to alert other officers they are about to spray and to get back.
• Some departments will loudly warn subjects they are about to be sprayed unless they comply.
• 50 percent of subjects comply when use of the spray is threatened.

All security personnel should thoroughly understand the local policies and procedures for any application of this instrument.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE: PROPER CARE OF A SPRAY RECIPIENT**

The most common response observed after a person is sprayed with OC is the subject placing his or her hands over the eyes, bending over, and commenting on the discomfort. Those who have been exposed should be, if permitted by policy, handcuffed behind the back, reassured repeatedly that they are safe and told that if they stop resisting, they will get help in a short period of time. Many are so shocked by the painful experience, they begin to panic. This is why verbalization that they will be fine and will get treatment is so important.

After the subject has been secured, some security and police departments read information about OC spray aloud from an administrative warning card. The information on this card tells subjects:
• they have been sprayed with OC pepper spray.
• what kind of pain they are likely experiencing.
that the pain is common after being sprayed.
that they will get treatment only if they cooperate.
that the de-contamination process cannot and will not begin until they stop being combative.

This card also asks subjects if they have any medical conditions or are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Officers should ensure that the subject is effectively secured, then watch the subject closely and move him or her to a secure facility for treatment as soon as possible.

The primary focus after deployment of the spray is to handcuff the person and prevent any escalation of violence. Once that occurs, the immediate focus must be to establish that the subject is breathing effectively. If there is any doubt that the subject is reacting adversely, or if the subject asks for help, the officer should call an ambulance right away to take the subject to an emergency room.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: DECONTAMINATION

Following are tips on how to reduce the pain and effectively treat or decontaminate yourself if you have been sprayed:

- Open your eyes as soon as possible and blink a lot. Try to keep your eyes open so they can start tearing and begin flushing themselves.
- If you wear contact lenses and your hands are clean, take them out. Hard, clear lenses can be cleaned and used again. Soft disposables must be discarded.
- Use cool water to repeatedly flush your eyes.
- Do not scrub your eyes. Use a stream of water like a spray bottle, garden hose, or kitchen faucet, or immerse your head into a bucket of water to flush your eyes and face.
- Specialty eye washes are available, but baby shampoo is easy to find and will not irritate your eyes or skin.
- Remove all clothing that came in contact with the spray.
- Scrub your hands with soap at least three times.
- Wash the resin off the skin with water and a non-oily soap like baby shampoo.
- Pat the skin with a wet paper towel, and then pat with dry paper towels. You usually have to do this 6-8 times before the resin actually starts to come off onto the paper towels.

The effects last about 45 minutes and should be completely gone within a few hours.
LEARNING OBJECTIVE: OFFICERS VOLUNTARILY SPRAYED DURING TRAINING

There are differing opinions as to whether officers should experience being sprayed as a part of training. Officers may feel the need to know what subjects feel, how much they can do after being sprayed, and what it will take to decontaminate them. There is also the distinct possibility that an officer could be exposed in the line of duty. Knowing what the spray can do to you physically would help you to better understand your options.

Security officers could easily be cross-contaminated. They could be exposed to the halo or cloud effect by being too close to the spray. They could also get secondary contamination by touching someone who has been sprayed.

There are also many self-protection units people carry that could take you by surprise. OC canisters are readily available to everyone on the market. OC pepper spray can be found on key chains and also disguised as a pen, a lipstick container, and a pager. It can even be concealed inside a ring. OC spray is so concentrated that it does not take much to shut you down. It is designed to stick to skin, hair, and clothes.

Many law enforcement agencies require some veterans and recruiting classes to be sprayed. Some security officers who deploy OC spray are not required, but encouraged to be sprayed. Then, when they do feel effects, they will know how long they have before it starts affecting them and what they can and cannot do.

Whether officers are required or volunteer to be sprayed, it is important that it is done under proper supervision. If officers are carrying OC, they are going to be exposed to its effects some time in their career. If they first experience it in a nurturing environment with people to help, they will learn to manage the effects before they are contaminated on the job in a dangerous situation.

CONCLUSION

When properly used, OC spray is very effective in taking the fight out of a fighter with minimal potential for any permanent or long-lasting effects on the subject or on the security officer.

It is important for officers to be thoroughly trained and to understand polices and procedures for any application of this instrument. As in all other use-of-force instruments, the liability factor can never be eliminated, only minimized. Humane treatment of the subject and proper documentation are critical to keeping liability at a minimum.

It is beneficial for officers to be voluntarily sprayed, under controlled conditions, in order to understand the reactions of a victim, his capabilities when under the influence of the chemical, and also his need for rapid decontamination.