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Technical Memorandum

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CPRC Survey of Canadian Police Services on the Use of OC Spray During Training

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Prepared for the Canadian Police Research Centre
by
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Abstract

This report provides a summary of Oleoresin Capsicum spray training procedures in Canadian law enforcement agencies and organizations in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, PEI and Saskatchewan. It looks specifically at the use of spray on members during training and lists some possible side effects.

Introduction

This report was initiated by a request from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. The RNC is currently reviewing some Use of Force Training Policies and seeking information from other agencies regarding the use of pepper spray on members during Pepper Spray training. The survey was sent to the CPRC Technology Partner Associate Network in February 2007.

The CPRC Technology Partner Associate Program provides a virtual cross-country network that supports the CPRC in the development and diffusion of law enforcement technologies. The TPA program also helps to disseminate technical information, to provide updates on new products, procedures, and research developments and to facilitate information sharing among member agencies. http://www.cprc.org/annualreport/cprc_annual_report_2005_e.pdf

The CPRC gratefully acknowledges the support of the following eighteen agencies for responding to the survey:

Brandon Police Department, Delta Police Department, Edmonton Police Service, Greater Sudbury Police Service, Guelph Police Service, Halton Regional Police Service, Kingston Police Force, Medicine Hat Police Service, Peel Regional Police, Police Learning Centre, Regina Police Service, Summerside Police Department, Taber Police Service, Thunder Bay Police Service, Toronto Police Service, Victoria Police Department, Waterloo Regional Police Service, Windsor Police Service.

The TPA responses have been summarized and tabulated in the report for reference purposes.

The Canadian Police Research Centre has published several technical memoranda and related studies that are available online.

The Bibliography of Selected Resources on OC Spray and Other Chemical Irritants (TM-03-2007) references this supplemental research by the CPRC and some of its international partners.

Results

All of the individual responses to the survey questions are included in Table 1. The questions and selected comments follow:

1. Do you spray members with Pepper Spray during training for using Pepper Spray?

There were twelve positive responses and six negative responses to the first question. These yes/no responses generally require the clarification provided by the comments.

“During the recruit training for Constable, Cadet and Auxiliary, those who volunteer get sprayed with OC.”

-Ontario

“We do not spray our members during training. All new recruits who go through the Ontario [Police College] are provided with the opportunity to be sprayed voluntarily.”

-Ontario

“Members are exposed to pepper spray at the Saskatchewan Police College as a recruit. Special Constables hired at the Police Service are also exposed to pepper spray.”

-Saskatchewan

2. If you do, is it voluntary?

In most cases where members are sprayed, the procedure is voluntary.

“We have not had anyone decline to take the Spray.”

-Manitoba

“We do spray our members with pepper spray so that they know they can defeat it if they are either cross-contaminated by accident or if purposefully sprayed by a “bad guy”. This is voluntary for the first certification, however, I have yet to have a member volunteer to be sprayed again for recertification.”

-Alberta

3. If you don't, why not?

“In British Columbia all police agencies that fall under Work-Safe B.C. guidelines must follow their policy that members are not to be sprayed in training. This issue is being challenged by the JIBC Police Academy.”

-British Columbia

“We do spray Special Constables once when they first receive their pepper spray training. It is voluntary for the Special Constables, but strongly recommended. We

recommend it for court purposes (testimony) and also they then will know how to work through the discomfort should they be cross-contaminated during an incident where another Special Constable uses pepper spray on a prisoner. All of them so far have agreed to be sprayed. It is done at the end of the training day so they can decontaminate immediately and then go home for the day. ”

-Ontario

“For the initial training on this force option, we offer the ability to experience cross contamination with pepper spray. Cross contamination is voluntary. We do not direct spray anymore in training. Again it is voluntary for cross contamination, we used to direct spray on the initial training but this was discontinued, due to complaints.”

-Ontario

“WCB in the Province of BC currently prohibits exposing members to OC Spray in training, so I do not believe it is done anywhere in this province. [...] in the process of seeking a WCB variance to allow training exposures for peace officers. Personally I feel members getting exposed in a training environment is invaluable for instilling the ability and will to fight through the affects. The exposure must be done in a scenario-based application. An example may be a street check where the officer is spontaneously sprayed by the subject who attempts to disarm the officer. The officer must fight off the subject and do weapon retention techniques and once successful is thoroughly decontaminated. The scenario should be conducted outside and be closely monitored by several instructors.”

-British Columbia

4. Any other pertinent information on the possible side effects of the use of this tool during training.

Lastly, other relevant information on the possible side effects of the spray during training was provided.

“[Here] we have a 25-30 % failure rate on OC spray and the members are well aware of this fact. Knowing this then gets Police Service members ready to transition rapidly to a different use of force option if this does take place. Being that they watch other members being sprayed they can see the effects, or lack there of on the subjects. Being able to recognize OC failure will assist them to transition faster with better results.”

-Alberta

“Some of the after effects complained about at the time were: headaches, difficulty catching breath and hyperventilating.”

-Ontario

“When our Service introduced Pepper Spray in the early 90's it was voluntary exposure and we emphasized to those that wore contact lenses, had recent eye surgery, had asthma or other breathing conditions not to be exposed.”

-Ontario

"Time is a big issue as it eats up a significant part of your time decontaminating people and also providing the necessary number of trainers to be on hand during these periods. Time is a valuable thing during training. We only get so much to do so much. But I think it is very worthwhile to be sprayed to understand first hand the true effects."

-Ontario

"There is always the slight possibility of allergic reaction but we have not experienced any problems as such with our officers."

-Ontario

"We have had no issues with regard to injuries suffered utilizing OC (live or inert) during training. We do utilize inert spray during requalification training (generally one application of live OC is enough to make most officers aware of its effect on their person) and have found it beneficial to build muscle memory - a small percentage of our officers have forgotten to place their thumb under the tab and onto the actual plunger during scenario based training."

-Ontario

"I have personally witnessed about 300 exposures and been "officially" exposed twice by the MkIII and had numerous exposures to OC specialty munitions such as the Def Tech T-16 expulsion grenade. I have witnessed one anxiety attack but have never had an injury or illness reported to me because of OC. A good method for exposure is to have the officer close their eyes and spray the eyelids, then tell them to open and blink 3 times. This eliminates the possibility of damage to the eye from the pressure of the spray and eliminates the officer's instinct to turn away from the spray. We have found it a safe and effective method for exposure. We then have the officer make an arrest of a combative subject."

-Alberta

Table 1: Survey Responses

Prov.	Do you spray members?	Voluntary?	Why or why not? Comments	Side Effects
AB	Yes	Yes	It is clear we do spray members of the Police Service with OC and then make them work through the problem of being disoriented by the effects of the OC. It is a very voluntary portion of the training and this same concept is applied to the Taser training. All members after this training are issued Saber Red OC and it is carried on the duty belt.	The side effects of the training are, I believe a great benefit to the members. First and foremost they know what it feels like to be sprayed and that it is not pleasant at all, as a result they would not use it in a cavalier manor on a subject. The members now know and understand they can fight through an exposure and still be effective, however it also demonstrates that other people can do the same thing and that the OC may in fact not stop or just be plain ineffective on some subjects. The Police Service classes are in the average of 55 recruits and out of this number we have 2-3 per class on average that shows no or little effects relating to an OC exposure. [Here] we have a 25-30 % failure rate on OC spray and the members are well aware of this fact. Knowing this then gets EPS members ready to transition rapidly to a different use of force option if this does take place. Being that they watch other members being sprayed they can see the effects, or lack there of on the subjects. Being able to recognize OC failure will assist them to transition faster with better results.
AB	Yes	Yes	We do spray our members with pepper spray so that they know they can defeat it if they are either cross-contaminated by accident or if purposefully sprayed by a "bad guy". This is voluntary for the first certification, however, I have yet to have a member volunteer to be sprayed again for recertification.	I have yet to experience any adverse effects on the volunteers I have sprayed.

Prov.	Do you spray members?	Voluntary?	Why or why not? Comments	Side Effects
AB	Yes	Yes	Yes however it is voluntary, usually only those with a medical condition abstain.	I have personally witnessed about 300 exposures and been "officially" exposed twice by the MkIII and had numerous exposures to OC specialty munitions such as the Def Tech T-16 expulsion grenade. I have witnessed one anxiety attack but have never had an injury or illness reported to me because of OC. A good method for exposure is to have the officer close their eyes and spray the eyelids, then tell them to open and blink 3 times. This eliminates the possibility of damage to the eye from the pressure of the spray and eliminates the officer's instinct to turn away from the spray. We have found it a safe and effective method for exposure. We then have the officer make an arrest of a combative subject.
BC	No	N/A	In British Columbia all police agencies that fall under Work-Safe B.C. guidelines must follow their policy that members are not to be sprayed in training. This issue is being challenged by the JIBC Police Academy.	No side effects
BC	No	N/A	WCB in the Province of BC currently prohibits exposing members to OC Spray in training, so I do not believe it is done anywhere in this province. [...] in the process of seeking a WCB variance to allow training exposures for peace officers. Personally I feel members getting exposed in a training environment is invaluable for instilling the ability and will to fight through the affects. The exposure must be done in a scenario-based application. An example may be a street check where the officer is spontaneously sprayed by the subject who attempts to disarm the officer. The officer must fight off the subject and do weapon retention techniques and once successful is thoroughly decontaminated. The scenario should be conducted outside and be closely monitored by several instructors.	

Prov.	Do you spray members?	Voluntary?	Why or why not? Comments	Side Effects
MB	Yes	Yes	We have not had anyone decline to take the Spray.	There is no other information to offer. There are no other special side effects from the training exercise.
ON	Yes	Yes	<p>Since we are in the Province of Ontario generally all of our members attend the Ontario Police College for recruit training which includes use of force/officer safety. During their recruit training at OPC they will either be exposed to or watch a subject be exposed to OC. We conduct pre and post OPC training in use of force/officer safety and will typically expose the recruit to an application of OC. We don't "voluntold" but we do highly recommend an application to allow the recruit to experience OC so he/she will realize the effects that OC will have on them themselves and will hopefully be able to react accordingly to protect themselves and carry out their duties. It is explained that there is a high degree of likelihood that they will be cross contaminated at some point in their career. Typically our recruits will be exposed to at least one application of OC whether it be here or at OPC, some receive applications here and at OPC.</p>	<p>We have had no issues with regard to injuries suffered utilizing OC (live or inert) during training. We do utilize inert spray during requalification training (generally one application of live OC is enough to make most officers aware of its effect on their person) and have found it beneficial to build muscle memory - a small percentage of our officers have forgotten to place their thumb under the tab and onto the actual plunger during scenario based training.</p>
ON	Yes	Yes	This is done at the Ontario Police College during their basic training	There is always the slight possibility of allergic reaction but we have not experienced any problems as such with our officers.

Prov.	Do you spray members?	Voluntary?	Why or why not? Comments	Side Effects
ON	No	N/A	<p>The Police Service currently has an authorized strength of 187 sworn Police Officers. We also employ 12 Special Constables for court security and Summons & Warrant delivery. We do not spray Police Officers with pepper spray during annual requalification training. They are sprayed at the Ontario Police College, I believe on a voluntary basis, during their recruit training. We do spray Special Constables once when they first receive their pepper spray training. It is voluntary for the Special Constables, but strongly recommended. We recommend it for court purposes (testimony) and also they then will know how to work through the discomfort should they be cross-contaminated during an incident where another Special Constable uses pepper spray on a prisoner. All of them so far have agreed to be sprayed. It is done at the end of the training day so they can decontaminate immediately and then go home for the day.</p>	<p>We have only experienced the normal side affects when using the spray.</p>
ON	Yes	Yes	<p>Most of our officers have been exposed to pepper spray by being directly sprayed. This occurred either at the Ontario Police College as part of their Basic Constable Training Course, or for those of us who were already on the job when OC was approved, we were sprayed during in-service training. If somebody does not want to be, we don't. Or for medical reasons.</p>	<p>Time is a big issue as it eats up a significant part of your time decontaminating people and also providing the necessary number of trainers to be on hand during these periods. Time is a valuable thing during training. We only get so much to do so much. But I think it is very worthwhile to be sprayed to understand first hand the true effects.</p>
ON	No	N/A	<p>We do not spray our members during training. All new recruits who go through the Ontario [Police College] are provided with the opportunity to be sprayed voluntarily.</p>	

Prov.	Do you spray members?	Voluntary?	Why or why not? Comments	Side Effects
ON	No		<p>Recruits receive their training on Use of Force -Pepper Spray - at the Ontario Police College. This is where these officers would be exposed/pepper sprayed. All officers in our service receive annual refresher training (every 12 months) involving Use of Force - Pepper Spray - officers are not exposed/peppered sprayed during this refresher. The refresher will capture technical data on the product, effects of being sprayed, decontamination procedures, use of force legislation (including local policy) & case studies of recent use of pepper spray. If you do, is it voluntary? As mentioned in the answering of question #1 [above], officers are not exposed/pepper sprayed on annual re-qualification training. If policy dictated that members were to be exposed/pepper sprayed it would be my firm belief the decision would be totally voluntary. If you don't, why not? Recruits are exposed/pepper sprayed while being trained at the Ontario Police College. Experienced officers were provided with a voluntary option to be exposed/pepper sprayed when our Service first decided to carry pepper spray as a use of force option. This occurred in the very early 1990's and we have never required our officers to be exposed/pepper sprayed again.</p>	<p>When our Service introduced Pepper Spray in the early 90's it was voluntary exposure and we emphasized to those that wore contact lenses, had recent eye surgery, had asthma or other breathing conditions not to be exposed. I believe that if exposure was an issue with our Service today these would all still be considerations. Our Service recently changed from the Defense Technology MK-3 stream pepper spray to Security Equipment Corporation's Sabre Red.</p>
ON	Yes	Yes	<p>For the initial training on this force option, we offer the ability to experience cross contamination with pepper spray. Cross contamination is voluntary. We do not direct spray anymore in training. Again it is voluntary for cross contamination, we used to direct spray on the initial training but this was discontinued, due to complaints.</p>	<p>You receive many and varying degrees of effects to individual officers but we think it is important to at least offer the experience of feeling the effects of cross contamination as this is the most likely scenario the officers will feel on the frontlines and properly react to it.</p>

Prov.	Do you spray members?	Voluntary?	Why or why not? Comments	Side Effects
ON	Yes	Yes	During the recruit training for Constable, Cadet and Auxiliary, those who volunteer get sprayed with OC.	I only arrived in training last May of 2006. The only issue we have had to my knowledge was last fall when a Cadet had an adverse reaction to the OC. A Doctor advised there was injury, scratched cornea. We believe this was likely cause during the decontamination process where he used baby shampoo and vigorously cleaned the area.
ON	Yes	Yes	N/A	None
ON	No	Yes	We conducted the original training of our officers in the 90's and at that time it was voluntary exposure. We do not train our officers anymore as that function has now been taken over by the Ontario Police College which trains all new police officers in Ontario. I believe it is voluntary exposure with them also.	Some of the after effects complained about at the time were: headaches, difficulty catching breath and hyperventilating.
PE	Yes	Yes		
SK	Yes	No	Members are exposed to pepper spray at the Saskatchewan Police College as a recruit. Special Constables hired at the Regina Police Service are also exposed to pepper spray.	The exposure is direct exposure to the brow line with the eyes closed. We have not had any side effects that would be of concern. I have been involved in training recruits for the past 7 years and have not witnessed any thing that would concern me.