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CPRC survey of Canadian Police Services on OC Spray Experience

Date: 2004

The Canadian Police Research Centre was approached by Correctional Services Canada to see what the experience of the Canadian police community is in regards to the usage of pepper spray. The survey was e-mailed out to the CPRC Technology Partner Associate Network in October 2004. This memorandum is the result of those responses.



CPRC Technical Memorandum TM-03-04

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The survey was responded to by 21 Canadian police services where there were:

- 4 - Small departments (those with < 50 uniformed police officers)
- 7 - M - > 50 < 1000(those with > 50 but less than 1000 uniformed police officers)
- 10 - L - > 1000(those with > 1000 uniformed police officers)

The results and comments for each question are:

1. Do all your police officers carry pepper spray all the time? **Yes 20, No 1**

Comments -

“Our uniform members do carry it all the time however in respect of our plain clothes members that would vary widely.”

“Note: all members are supposed to carry spray while on duty, however, some undercover agents do not and members working in controlled office settings are also exempt.”

“Yes to all uniform officers. Plainclothes officers may or may not. Undercover officers do not typically carry it.”

2. What types or brands of spray are used by your police?

Sabre Red / Defense Tech MK - 3 / Bodyguard - 10% solution / MK3 (Defense Technology Federal Laboratories) / two different manufactures, "Sabre Red" and Def Tec" in MK-3 and MK-9 configurations/ MK-3 Defense Technologies OC spray / Defense Technology / First Defense MK3 (1.47oz) / First Defense MR3 / Defense Technology MK / We are currently using SABRE Defense Stream for all uniform and investigative units. Emergency Response Officers and Public Order Unit are using SABRE Defense and also have large canisters (Foggers) for use in control situations. Special Constables and Police officers designated to Court or Cell Block functions use foam versus stream./ Mark 3 Inert / Defense Technology, Stearm Pepper 10 - MK3 / First Defence stream and foam / First Defence / Deftec Mark III (stream) / MACE MK III / Bodyguard LE-10 MK 3 44 gram / Def Tec Mark III (we are currently testing SABRE Red and may transition)/ Defense Technology - MK3 / Sabre Red

NOTE - 24 different brands identified with some organizations using or anticipating using 2 brands.

- Sabre Red - 6
- Defense Technologies - 10
- First Defense - 4
- Body Guard - 2
- Mark 3 Inert - 1
- MACE MK III - 1



3. Are there officer safety protocols in it's use? **Yes 21 , No 0**

4. Does your service have training standards specific to OC spray? **Yes 21, No 0**

5. Have there been any officer(s) injured in the use of OC spray? **Yes 3, No 18**

Comments -

"Members are fairly often cross contaminated with their own spray or from another officers. This level of contamination can vary greatly depending on exposure, environmental factors, etc., and can range from a mild discomfort to profound short term incapacitation. In all cases members are simply cleaned up afterwards. It is debatable whether this could be considered an "injury" as no hospitalization is required, and our members have shown no long term impact. (FYI - In the past three years, only one member has filed and "injured on duty report" related to OC Spray. This report also details that there was no lost time or outside medical treatment required.) FYI: New recruits and existing members are screened in various ways for any allergic reactions to OC Spray."

"over spray has caused some sensitivity but no injuries were reported"

"Statistics not available but would be a low percentage ie: Spray ineffective and forced to engage in physical confrontation, cross contamination reducing Officers ability to protect self. As far as training injuries I can report none in the 2.5 years I have been in charge of this branch."

"Cross contamination exposure...Burning sensation in eyes...irritation of mucous membranes___coughing, tearing etc. Unfortunately we don't have a percentage of deployments and related injuries..however it is minimal...members are trained to consider environmental conditions (wind, mechanical turbulence) etc. before using the spray..There has been a noted failure rate similar to the stats average for : Drug induced persons, Mental Health Act types and goal-oriented subjects."

"No officers have been injured as a direct result of OC spray, BUT officers have been sprayed several times by offenders. The oficers were able to fight through the effects of the OC and win the confrontation."