



Cambridge Police Department

Effective Date: March 29, 1998

NEW POLICY # 407
Policy and Procedures

Procedure 98-6

CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES OLEORESIN CAPSICUM (O.C. Spray)

I. Purpose

This Procedure will:

- a. provide general information and specifications relative to the use of Departmental aerosol chemical devices containing Oleoresin Capsicum O.C. by sworn members.
- b. clarify when O.C. is not authorized for use against an individual.
- c. explain the O.C. Spray Continuum and the tactical use of O.C. Spray with follow-up procedures.

II. General Information

Oleoresin Capsicum (or O.C.) is cayenne (red) pepper in a mixture of a resin and oil combined with an aerosol propellant. It is classified as an inflammatory agent with low toxicity and minimal acute or chronic health hazards. It is not classified as a hazardous chemical.

Effects of O.C. vary in the way the product has been manufactured and delivered. However, as a general rule a one second burst to the face upon contact will affect three major areas: 1) the eyes, 2) the respiratory system, and 3) the skin and the upper and/or lower body. All effects are temporary and will usually completely disappear within 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

O.C. has no history of long lasting side effects or after effects. In over a decade of field experience, there has never been any substantiated instance of adverse reaction to the spray by any subject with respiratory illnesses, heart problems, or poor reflexes.

III. Use of Aerosol Chemical Devices Containing Oleoresin Capsicum O.C.

- a. Oleoresin Capsicum is designed for use when persuasion, verbal commands and moderate physical control has been ineffective or would be futile.
- b. Spray is used when it is necessary to defend against an unarmed aggressor or when unarmed physical force is required to apprehend or restrain a subject.
- c. The standard to consider is for O.C. Spray to be used before resorting to hands on defense.
- d. An aerosol chemical device is not intended to be a substitute for the use of deadly force when the use of deadly force is justified.

- e. Use will be in accord with Department policy after training by certified instructors.

IV. The Use of Aerosol Chemical Device is Not Authorized for Use Against an Individual Who:

- a. Exhibits no physical force toward another or is under control.
- b. Assaults another only verbally and exhibits no intention of carrying out the assault.
- c. Assumes the posture of a passive resistor in an arrest situation.

Note: For purposes of this procedure, a passive resistor is an individual who is uncooperative but does not exhibit any act of physical aggression toward another.

V. Use of O.C. Spray Continuum

- a. Ready the O.C. canister for use (unholster/display)
- b. Restate lawful order or notice or arrest
- c. Warn subject of intent to use of O.C.
- d. Employ O.C. if necessary
- e. De-escalate to physical control (handcuffing)

VI. Tactical Use of O.C. Spray

- a. The best tactic is to spray from a 4 to 6 foot distance. Spray directly in the face (eyes, nose and mouth) with a one or two second burst.
- b. Immediately create a safe distance between yourself and the subject by employing lateral movement, if possible. Spray and evade.
- c. Avoid Spraying other Officers
 - 1. One officer should be the handcuffing officer, a second officer should act as the covering officer.
 - 2. If resistance is expected, the covering officer should have his O.C. canister in a ready position, and be positioned at an angle from the suspect.
 - 3. Whenever possible, if spray is necessary, either officer yells "Spray!" before spraying.
- d. O.C. must be sprayed with the canister in an upright position
- e. O.C. may not work against every subject.
- f. O.C. is not intended to be a substitute for higher levels of force application. If lethal force is used or threatened, and human life is unlawfully endangered, lethal force must be considered as a countermeasure.

- g.** Officers will submit a Use of Force Report P142 before the end of their tour of duty explaining the reason for the use of O.C. spray. This report will be forwarded to the Deputy Superintendent through the chain of command.

VII. “Follow-up Treatment” or aftercare

- a.** Cleaning the affected skin area with cool water will expedite recovery as the oily OC resin will be easily rinsed out. The sprayed subject, if wet with OC., should not be transported in a cruiser as the operator may be affected. Once the sprayed person is brought to a water source (cell block sink) the treatment is rinse with cool water, air and paper towels to pat dry (no rubbing of the skin).
- b.** A sprayed person should be instructed NOT to rub their eyes as this will only exacerbate the burning like symptoms.
- c.** each sprayed person should be asked if they are wearing contact lenses. If so the lenses **MUST** be removed. If the person is unable or willing to remove the lenses then they should be taken to the hospital. Officers slightly affected by an OC burst should also remove contact lenses.
- d.** all OC induced symptoms should disappear within 15 to 45 minutes with no after effects. If symptoms do persist beyond this 45 minute period then this person should receive medical attention. If a sprayed person’s breathing does not regain a normal rhythm then they should receive immediate medical attention. Lastly if a sprayed person so requests they should also be afforded medical attention.
- e.** if a subject is sprayed in the field and handcuffed before being given the decontamination treatment (water, air, source, paper towels) then they should not be handcuffed and allowed to lie on their stomachs during transport (to prevent difficulty breathing).
- f.** normal airing out (ventilation) or an area such as a room or vehicle where OC was discharged will result in residual spray being removed from the environment within 45 minutes. No special equipment or washing is necessary. If an oily resin from a spray is visible on a surface then simple washing with soap and water will suffice.

POLICE COMMISSIONER