

BOLIVAR COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Law Enforcement
Policies and Procedures

Subject: Chemical Agents – Oleoresin Capsicum (OC)	Policy Number: 5.02
Issue Date:	Revision Date:
Approval Authority Title and Signature:	

POLICY:

Oleoresin Capsicum [OC] and similar chemical spray agents are authorized for use as a non-deadly force option by officers of this department, when officers are trained in its use and decontamination.

PROCEDURES:

The Bolivar County Sheriff's Office officers are authorized to carry and deploy department approved chemical agents, to include OC. However, before such use, officers are required to complete a training course approved by the training officer. OC (Pepper Spray), and similar approved chemical agents are a **Level 3** or higher force option, and requires an officer threat perception equal to higher than **Actively Resistant**. Any use of chemical agents must be in compliance with Bolivar County Sheriff's Office force policy. For more information see: Use of Force: Deadly and Less Lethal Force, and the Use of Force Chart. As used in this policy, the terms OC and *chemical agents* are interchangeable.

Application of OC is authorized to affect lawful arrest, prevent escape from custody, defend one's self, defend others from the imminent use of physical force, and to restore institutional integrity in a detention facility.

OC is a force option for officers and employees of the department; however it is not intended to be an alternative to the use of *deadly force* when deadly force is imminently necessary to save human life, and is clearly authorized.

The following guidelines apply to the carrying and use of OC chemicals.

Training Requirements:

The following training requirements apply to all uniformed officers, civilian-clothed officers, and civilian employees authorized to carry and dispense chemical agents:

1. OC or other agents are only authorized for carrying and use by officers and employees of this department who have successfully completed a basic course

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- of instruction in the specific chemical agent. Each course must be approved by the department and consist of *limits on use and application, decontamination procedures, liability, use of force*, and an individual *demonstration of proficiency*.
2. Officers and employees authorized to carry and use OC agents must demonstrate *proficiency* in its use and decontamination procedures at least every 12 months. Any officer or employee who had not *demonstrated proficiency* within this 12-month period may not carry or use OC or any other chemical agent.

Using OC or Similar Spray:

1. Uniformed officers wear the dispensing canister externally in a holster. The device may not be pocketed or otherwise concealed by uniformed officers, since one purpose of chemical agents is to create a *visible deterrent* to potential offenders. This provision does not apply to employees or officers assigned to *civilian clothes* or *under cover duties*.
2. In most cases, a chemical dispenser will not be drawn and used against an individual holding a deadly weapon.
3. When reasonable efforts have failed to calm a person who is acting violently and presenting a danger to himself or others, a *minimum* stream of OC may be dispensed at the person.
4. Chemical agents are best applied to terminate aggressive or violent behavior, or a threat of violent behavior, which could result in physical injury or death to the officer, other persons, or the offender.
5. Chemical agents may not be discharged in the immediate vicinity of an infant, unless the infant's life is endangered, since their respiratory system is small and especially sensitive to irritating vapors.
6. Chemical agents are normally discharged from a distance recommended by the manufacturer of the dispensing device.
7. Before dispersing any chemical agent, the officer gives a clear command, warning other officers, to clear the subject before the agent is dispersed, leaving those officers unaffected by the agent.
8. Officers should point the dispensing device at the violent or threatening person's body, in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
9. Discharging of the device is limited to one successful hit, not exceeding one (1) full second of target depression, or the termination of the violent or threatening behavior.
10. Suspect persons exposed to chemical agents are handcuffed after exposure, and before decontamination for their and others safety.

Decontamination:

1. Sprayed individuals are assisted in decontamination, as soon after the scene is secured as is reasonably possible.

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2. No officer applies, or permits others to apply, oil or grease medications such as butter, cold cream, lanolin, Vaseline®, lotion, or salves, which could trap the irritant to the skin and cause blistering, unless directed by a physician.
3. Exposed areas should not be bandaged, but exposed to fresh air for evaporation. Flushing with water is also recommended.
4. If a person exposed to OC or other chemical agents requests medical attention, the person must be accorded a medical inspection or examination by competent medical personnel as soon as possible.
5. Any patrol vehicle interior exposed to chemical agents must be thoroughly decontaminated before being returned to normal service.
6. Vehicle exteriors exposed to chemical agents must be washed or hosed off before being returned to normal use.

Reporting Procedures:

Officers utilizing the OC or other chemical devices must prepare a use of force incident report, which describes the use of the chemical irritant, and includes:

1. Justification for use
2. Date and time of exposure
3. Time lapse before wash-up or decontamination
4. Any injuries observed during decontamination procedure
5. Whether the individual sprayed asked for medical treatment, and, if so, resulting actions taken.

Care and Testing of O/C Spray:

O/C spray has an expiration date usually stamped on the bottom of the canister. Officers are required to check the expiration date on a monthly basis. An expiration date that is within 30 days should be reported to your supervisor for replacement.

Officers should test their O/C spray, in an area in which no one will be affected, at least once a week. A check should only consist of a one second disbursement. If the O/C spray fails in any way, report it and replace it. Should an officer empty the O/C spray or observe it's strength or distance has diminished, report it and replace it immediately.

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