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## Spitfire Pepper Spray Rev. David Beeson

Pepper spray is possibly the best tool on the market for a less than lethal conflict resolution (excluding tasers and stun guns, normally wielded only by law enforcement officers). It is light, easy to use and requires little training to master. Perhaps most importantly, its effects are temporary; using pepper spray does not result in broken bones or bullet holes. While often marketed to women or those who do not wish to carry a gun (the reason I bought it for my wife, Shanna), it is also an excellent option for men and those who do carry.

In order to ensure everyone is on the same page, I want to first mention a few general things about pepper spray. Its main ingredient is Oleoresin Capsicum, or OC. Most sprays have a concentration of around ten percent OC. However, one should note that this percentage does not reflect the spray's "hotness." This factor is measured in Scoville Heat Units, or SHUs. Most personal protection sprays are approximately ten percent at two million SHUs. Therefore, the question becomes, "if most sprays are chemically similar, why choose one over another?" The answer is the dispenser.

Spitfire's dispenser has been awarded five patents and is the genius behind the product line. It is designed to spray at all angles, something the competitors' sprays cannot do. Its construction lends itself to an intuitive grip, not the "aerosol can" grip that others require. Another great feature is the passive safety. Most dispensers require the button to be moved to the side and then depressed. While this sounds easy, this action could be quite complex and counterintuitive under stress, resulting in lost time and possibly lost lives. Spitfire's safety can be overcome with the single motion of simultaneously pushing forward and down. I liken this to the brilliance behind Glock's Safe Action System.



*A perfect face shot from the car. This would have been far more difficult with traditional spray due to the position the wrist would have to assume.*



*A behind the back shot to the eyes. Again, very difficult with regular sprays.*



*Shooting from the hip. The attacker does not have time to adjust his course to avoid the spray.*

Some may be initially concerned, as I was, about accidental discharges with this system. After carrying the pepper spray for over three months, I am glad to announce that Spitfire's claims are accurate. It will not go off unless you want it to. I even decided to test Spitfire's claims that the dispenser is child resistant for pre-schoolers. I explained to my four-year-old child the dangers of pepper spray and showed him how I had removed the pepper canister, rendering the dispenser safe. Next, I handed it to him and told him to push the button. I was pleasantly surprised to see he could either push it down or out -- but not both. I even told him how to do it, but he still was unable. The ability to prevent accidental discharges while providing quick and easy access to the pepper spray is what gives Spitfire the upper hand.

Since my tests focused on the dispenser and not the spray, I utilized inert practice canisters. The practice canister is a great option that all pepper spray companies should offer. It allows you to practice spraying without emitting the OC pepper. The only downside to using the inert formula, if this is a downside at all, is that it is difficult to gauge the accuracy of a shot since there is no burning sensation. There were

several times I could feel a large dose on my face, but other times I would simply get mist on my goggles. How effective would such a shot have been with pepper spray? Regardless, a light mist is better than none at all. I established three tests using the practice canisters. For the first test, I would run at Shanna and she would spray me while holding the pepper spray at hip level. This would determine how easy it would be to aim the dispenser without holding it at eye level. Just as perfect Weaver stances and sight pictures do not occur in real-life shootings, I doubt the proverbial "arm extended at eye level" pepper spray stance occurs. Second, I would grab Shanna from behind and she would spray me over her back. This would verify or nullify Spitfire's claims that the spray can be intuitively sprayed behind the back. Third, Shanna would sit in the car with the door open and the keys in the ignition. From about twenty feet away, I would say, "Go" and then run at the car. This test was designed to see how long it would take her to detach the spray from her keychain and spray me. Although expecting my attacks and therefore on guard and moving quickly, Shanna could have performed similarly in a real life encounter with a little practice.

The first test resulted in good shots to my neck and face. While Shanna did not necessarily hit my eyes every time, the overspray could have been enough to affect my eyes, and the shot to my face would certainly have been enough to affect my breathing. These results may not seem impressive, but it should be noted that such a shot would have been impossible with traditional pepper sprays. Those canisters require one to raise his or her hand to almost eye level to shoot. The second experiment yielded the same results. While I may not have been blinded, I can't help but think that an earful or mouthful of pepper spray would be painful as well. Shanna found that pointing the spray behind and down, as though she were scratching her back, resulted in a good hit. Simply pointing it behind her sometimes resulted in grazed shot.



*Another good face shot. One very important note: just as you should not laser yourself with a gun, it is dangerous for you to do the same with pepper spray. Traditional pepper spray dispensers would force you to cross your face. Since Spitfire's nozzle is on the end, it does not.*

The third test was the most impressive. She found there are several things one can do to better his or her chances of survival. First, Shanna let the keys hang to where the dispenser's button was always facing her in the car. This allowed her to use the same grabbing motion every time to quickly remove the spray from the keychain and point it at me. (Another great feature of the quick disconnect is that it is loose enough to allow you to rotate it, but tight enough to allow the above experiment. It will not roll over while you are driving). My wife was able to grab the spray, detach it, turn and spray me in two and a half seconds or less, which was about the time I arrived at the car. This took a little longer than the standard twenty-one feet drill because I had to slow down and reach inside the car.

These tests displayed the value of practicing with pepper spray. Should you decide to purchase, I would suggest you also buy several practice spray two-packs and occasionally run these types of drills. I invite you to contact Spitfire if you have any questions about pepper spray. I called them when a juvenile in my church purposefully used my wife's spray on another boy. I



*The float test. The spent canister on the left floats, telling me (without test spraying) that it is empty.*

wanted to make sure the float test applied to partially spent canisters and not simply aged canisters (the float test is a test you can perform to see if your canister is still good. I tried it with spent and full canisters and it works). Walter Cardwell, Spitfire's president, fielded the call personally. I had a pleasant conversation with him in which he not only answered my question, but gave me some interesting company history as well. It is indeed a rare thing to have a good product and good customer service under one roof. These experiences have convinced me there is one pepper spray worth purchasing for civilian use: Spitfire. In his book

Essential Guide to Handguns, Dr. Bruce Eimer names Spitfire as "the best portable OC pepper spray manufacturer in the world" and declares it to be "the best non-lethal pepper spray product out there for assuring your survival.(1)

(1) Rementer, Stephen and Eimer, Bruce. Essential Guide to Handguns. Copyright 2005 by Looseleaf Law Publications. p. V, 50.

[www.spitfire.us](http://www.spitfire.us)

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