



Chemical Irritants, Screech Alarms, Stun Guns, and Handguns

Chemical irritant sprays

The decision to purchase and use a chemical irritant for self-defense is a personal one. The Minneapolis Police Department would like you to consider the following before buying chemical irritants:

- ◆ You must carry it in your hand. It does you no good in the bottom of your purse or pocket.
- ◆ Some people are not affected by chemical irritants. This is especially true for mentally deranged individuals or people under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- ◆ Using chemical irritants on a suspect may increase the severity of the attack if it irritates but does not stop the suspect.
- ◆ Chemical irritants may be taken away and used against you.
- ◆ In order to be effective you must be close to the suspect when using it. Wind conditions may cause the irritant to blow back, resulting in personal discomfort.
- ◆ Having a substance such as a chemical irritant may create a false sense of security. You must continue to practice good personal safety habits even if carrying chemical irritant.



If you have decided to purchase a chemical irritant, please follow these recommendations:

- ◆ The Minneapolis Police Department has researched numerous eye-irritant products. Those containing CS/OC (pepper) mixture as an irritant are most effective.
- ◆ Store chemical irritant as you would any other weapon. Keep out of the reach of children.
- ◆ Carry it in hand and be prepared to use it.
- ◆ If attacked, spray directly into both eyes or the face of the assailant.
- ◆ Test it in a safe area at least once every month. At temperatures of 10 degrees or lower, it may freeze. If left in a hot car or direct sunlight, the canister may burst or leak. Seamless canisters are less susceptible to this problem.
- ◆ Although quite rare, certain individuals may experience an allergic reaction to these products. Check with your doctor if you are concerned about an allergic reaction.
- ◆ Learn proper first aid techniques in case the product is accidentally discharged. Read manufacturer's recommendations.
- ◆ Commonly used chemical irritants have a shelf life of about 2 years. Some brands have an expiration date stamped on the canister.

Screech alarms

Screech alarms are devices that are capable of producing high-pitched, extremely loud and piercing noises. They may be battery or aerosol powered and is activated in several different ways (push buttons, switches, pull pins, etc.).

Basically, screech alarms are designed to attract attention to yourself and the problem you may be encountering. Normally, an assailant does not want to attract attention or witnesses and will usually flee if too much attention is encountered.

Please consider the following points:

- ◆ If you are routinely in situations where it is not likely someone is close enough to hear, you may wish to consider alternative safety measures.
- ◆ The screech alarm must be readily available for use, not buried in the bottom of a purse or pocket, or somewhere else you cannot use it at a moment's notice.

In appropriate situations, the Minneapolis Police Department recommends screech alarms from the standpoint that they are safe to have in your home, have very little liability attached, basically cannot be taken away and used against you, and provide a reasonable amount of personal safety.

Stun guns

Stun guns are small electrical devices (battery operated) that are capable of emitting high-voltage shocks. The result is hopefully to distract or stun an attacker while you escape. The Minneapolis Police would like you to consider the following before you buy a stun gun:

- ◆ To be effective, the stun gun must make contact with the skin or body. Leather or heavy clothing can prevent this contact with the body, making the overall usefulness of this device questionable.
- ◆ Additionally, one needs to be within arm's reach of an attacker to use the stun gun. The Minneapolis Police feels this closeness is not conducive to your personal safety.
- ◆ The stun gun could be taken away and used against you.

These factors lead the Minneapolis Police to the conclusion that stun guns do not provide the average person with a desirable level of personal safety.

Handguns

The Minneapolis Police does not recommend the use of handguns for self-defense on the street or home.

There are several reasons why we discourage the use of handguns for self-protection at home:

- ◆ Handguns can present very serious safety considerations around the home.
- ◆ Almost all break-ins occur when no one is home. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of handguns are stolen in burglaries and then used by criminals in committing other crimes.
- ◆ You may be liable for any injuries or damage caused by the misuse of a handgun.
- ◆ Marksmanship is a skill and a responsibility that takes considerable time to develop and maintain.
- ◆ A handgun can be used against you in an attack if it is taken away from you.
- ◆ Having a handgun can create a false sense of security. It is still important to practice good security habits.

Most importantly, if you decide to purchase a handgun, we strongly recommend that you attend a certified firearms safety class to learn the proper use, maintenance and storage of your weapon. Contact your local police department for information concerning firearms safety classes.

As an alternative to handguns, we encourage people to develop good personal safety and home security habits as outlined in our Personal Safety Workshops and Home Security Checks.

For more information, contact your crime prevention specialist. Call 311 (or 612-673-3000) or see www.minneapolis.gov/police/crimeprevention/police_outreach_safe-teams to locate your neighborhood crime prevention specialist.

For further crime prevention resources, please visit www.minneapolis.gov/police/crimeprevention/index.htm.



English: Attention. If you want help translating this information, call 612-673-3737
Spanish: Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame 612-673-2700
Somali: Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la' aan wac 612-673-3500
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