

**Section 2: Reception and Release**  
**Subject: Pepper Mace Contamination**  
**Minimum Standard:**  
**Revised: 7/2009, 12/2011, 09/2015**

**Authorized:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Effective date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sheriff Paul A. Sigsworth**

**POLICY**

At times arresting officers find it necessary to deploy a pepper mace product in order to subdue a subject prior to incarceration. It is the policy of the Erie County Jail to immediately treat all inmates who have been contaminated with pepper mace in the proper way so that decontamination will occur as soon as possible.

**PROCEDURE**

Oleoresin Capsicum (Pepper Mace or OC) is derived from a naturally occurring plant, cayenne pepper, which is used in foodstuffs and pharmaceutical products. Its usage falls outside many governmental regulatory guidelines that are applicable to synthetic man-made chemical agents, such as CN and CS (tear gasses). There are no long-term health risks related to using OC as a chemical agent.

- A. The physical effects of OC use range from:
  - 1. Severe twitching or spasmodic contraction of the eyes to involuntary closing of the eyes
  - 2. Respiratory inflammation ranges from coughing and shortness of breath to gasping for breath with a gagging sensation in the lungs, nose and throat.
  - 3. Exposed skin inflammation, from a burning sensation to an acute burning sensation and redness of the skin.
  - 4. Some individuals experience a period of nausea and loss of upper body motor skills.
  
- B. To decontaminate the individual, the following steps should be followed:
  - 1. Have the inmate bend over, standing. Cold-water should be run over the back of prisoner's head. If long hair is involved, the prisoner should allow his/her hair hang in front of them. Caution should be taken that contaminated water does not run down the prisoner's torso.
  - 2. The prisoner should be discouraged from rubbing skin or eyes. This only aggravates the effects of the spray. Washcloths, paper towels, etc. should not be used.
  - 3. The inmate should not shower or use soaps. Warm or hot water will increase the burning sensation. The film left on the skin by soap will tend to "Lock" the oleoresin capsicum on to the surface of the skin. Plain cold water should be used for decontamination.
  - 4. Any clothes which have been contaminated should be properly recorded and sent directly to the laundry to be washed prior to placing them in the property room.
  - 5. The shift supervisor will see that a jail incident report is submitted to proper document the decontamination in writing.
  
- C. If severe symptoms continue without relief for more than 15 minutes the inmate should be treated by medical personnel.
  
- D. After decontamination, the inmate may be placed in a holding cell for further observation.