



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-00179

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Use of CS Spray

Request and Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

Question 1

I am seeking to find out how many PSNI officers have injured (i) themselves or (ii) another officer when using CS spray in the past three years

I would like a breakdown of the district and of each incident.

Answer

There have been 12 incidents reported involving injury from CS Spray from 1.1.07 - 31.12.09.

D District reported 6 incidents - 4 At private residences while effecting arrests.
2 Accidental discharge.

B District reported 3 incidents - 1 Effecting an arrest on a public street.
1 Accidental discharge.
1 Contamination from 3rd party.

H District reported 2 incidents - 2 While performing public order duty.

A District reported 1 incident - 1 Contamination from 3rd party.

2 of the above incidents are recorded as 'Contamination from 3rd party'. However, records do not confirm that this was caused by the actions of another officer. All other injuries were sustained by officers causing injury to themselves. Please note these figures are based upon those incidents which the Health and Safety Branch have been informed about.

Question 2

How many times have officers used CS spray in the past 3 years.

I would like a breakdown of the district and area where CS spray has been used.

Answer

Please see table below detailing the use of CS Spray by District and Area in 2006/07 to 2008/09.

Question 3

I would also like a breakdown of the ages of people on whom CS spray has been used.

Answer

Searches were conducted however these searches failed to locate any records or documents relating to ages of people on whom CS Spray was used in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. An age breakdown on the member of public is not available for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 as this was not captured in the CS1 forms completed by officers. Accordingly, I have determined that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does not hold an age breakdown for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008.

Please see table below detailing the use of CS Spray by age in 2008/09.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

FOI-2010-00179

How many times have officers used CS spray in the past 3 years. I would like a breakdown of the district and area where CS spray has been used. I would also like a breakdown of the ages of people on whom CS spray has been used.

Use of CS Spray by District and Area: 2006/07 to 2008/09

District	Area	2006/07			2007/08			2008/09		
		CS Sprayed	CS Drawn*	Total	CS Sprayed	CS Drawn*	Total	CS Sprayed	CS Drawn*	Total
A District	North Belfast	36	4	40	65	4	69	45	14	59
	West Belfast	31	0	31	21	0	21	16	2	18
	A District Total	67	4	71	86	4	90	61	16	77
B District	East Belfast	13	0	13	8	0	8	3	5	8
	South Belfast	25	1	26	20	3	23	23	5	28
	B District Total	38	1	39	28	3	31	26	10	36
C District	Ards	16	0	16	16	1	17	7	1	8
	Castlereagh	0	0	0	4	1	5	5	2	7
	Down	9	1	10	15	3	18	11	9	20
	North Down	15	5	20	9	1	10	6	11	17
	C District Total	40	6	46	44	6	50	29	23	52
D District	Antrim	5	1	6	7	3	10	6	3	9
	Carrickfergus	4	0	4	4	2	6	7	1	8
	Lisburn	8	1	9	12	0	12	16	8	24
	Newtownabbey	13	2	15	22	2	24	15	1	16
	D District Total	30	4	34	45	7	52	44	13	57
Urban Region Total		175	15	190	203	20	223	160	62	222
E District	Armagh	6	1	7	9	2	11	7	1	8
	Banbridge	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	1	4
	Craigavon	18	8	26	16	14	30	19	13	32
	Newry and Mourne	7	1	8	7	6	13	13	6	19
	E District Total	31	10	41	33	22	55	42	21	63
F District	Cookstown	11	6	17	24	4	28	24	9	33
	Dungannon	12	5	17	9	2	11	13	3	16
	Omagh	16	3	19	13	2	15	13	4	17
	Fermanagh	12	2	14	13	6	19	7	0	7
	F District Total	51	16	67	59	14	73	57	16	73
G District	Foyle	15	6	21	33	6	39	50	14	64
	Limavady	8	2	10	16	8	24	12	6	18
	Strabane	15	1	16	14	1	15	10	18	28
	Magherafelt	6	9	15	12	7	19	8	6	14
	G District Total	44	18	62	75	22	97	80	44	124
H District	Ballymena	6	10	16	10	2	12	18	12	30
	Ballymoney	2	5	7	9	8	17	5	2	7
	Coleraine	34	7	41	29	6	35	17	15	32
	Larne	5	0	5	6	0	6	3	3	6
	Moyle	22	10	32	6	1	7	0	1	1
	H District Total	69	32	101	60	17	77	43	33	76
Rural Region Total		195	76	271	227	75	302	222	114	
Northern Ireland Total		370	91	461	430	95	525	382	176	

* Not Sprayed

Note: Prior to the creation of the new electronic use of force reporting system in 2008, CS spray reporting was based on a paper form (CS1) completed by officers. Figures for 2006/07 and 2007/08 are therefore based on the number of CS1 forms returned.

The 2008/09 figures are taken from the electronic Use of Force database and represent the number of occasions that an officer either drew or sprayed CS i.e. there were 558 occasions where CS spray was either drawn or sprayed during 2008/09. On 176 occasions it was drawn & not sprayed and on a further 382 occasions it was drawn and sprayed.

Use of CS Spray by Age: 2008/09

Approximate Age	CS Sprayed
17 and under	28
18 - 29	279
30 - 39	87
40 - 49	71
50 - 59	12
60+	2
Total	479**

** During 2008/09, of the 382 occasions in which an officer sprayed CS, it was used against 479 members of the public. Please be aware that an officer may spray CS against more than one member of public on one occasion. Also more than one officer can spray CS on the same member of the Public. Therefore this may not be a unique count of the number of persons on whom force was used.

Note: An age breakdown on the member of public is not available for 2006/07 and 2007/08 as this was not captured in the CS1 form.

Source: Central Statistics Unit, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Lisnasharragh