

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

Phencyclidine (PCP)

Purpose

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide our personnel with information on the Phencyclidine, the objective symptoms of its use, and the laws applicable to it.

Introduction

Phencyclidine (PCP) was first manufactured in 1950 as an intravenous anesthetic. Initially, it was administered on both human and animal subjects. However, because it caused human patients to exhibit violent and unpredictable behavior, it was discontinued for medical use. In the mid-1960s PCP had a resurgence as part of the "drug culture". It was available in liquid or powder form. In 1968, it was legitimately produced as a veterinary anesthetic under the trade name Sernylan.

PCP can be absorbed directly through the eyes, injected, smoked, snorted, or taken orally. Officers should always use protective gloves when they are handling it.

PCP smoke is hot and can irritate the mouth and tongue. To reduce its temperature, it is usually mixed with vegetable or leafy substances, such as mint leaves, parsley, oregano, tobacco or marijuana. PCP is also put into mentholated brand commercial cigarettes, such as "Kools" to cool the smoke.

I. Objective Symptoms

A person who is under the influence of PCP will exhibit various characteristics, called objective symptoms. The following are the most common of these symptoms:

A. Horizontal and Lateral Nystagmus

Nystagmus is the involuntary movement of the entire eye. These symptoms may also manifest in a person who takes barbiturates and/or consumes a significant amount of alcohol. Do not make your determination that a person is under the influence of PCP solely on the presence of nystagmus.

B. Constricted or Dilated Pupils

These two symptoms are not apparent in- all PCP cases. If a subject has constricted pupils and is also exhibiting symptoms consistent with the use of PCP, look for injection marks on his or her person. It is not uncommon for this drug to be combined with opiates.

C. Odor

Ether is an ingredient used in manufacturing PCP. It has a distinctive chemical smell and is generally present on the person who uses PCP that is in liquid form. If you document this symptom in your crime report, you should word it such as "I could smell a chemical odor that I know to be associated with the use of PCP".

D. Memory Problems

A person under the influence of PCP may demonstrate the following peculiarities that are similar to amnesia.

1. May project a blank stare.
2. May not know his or her location, name, the time and/or the date.
3. May repeat the questions that are directed to him or her.
4. May not be able to answer the questions correctly.
5. May respond slowly to the questions.
6. May not comprehend the questions.

If you make contact with a person, that you suspect is under the influence of PCP, you should ask him or her simple questions such as the time of day, his or her name, address and the alphabet.

E. Muscle Rigidity

The subject's muscles may be stiffened. He or she may have a difficulty walking because the leg muscles do not flex.

F. Unusual Behavior

A person under the influence of PCP may believe that he or she can perform supernatural feats. This includes flying, stopping vehicles with his or her hands, walking through fire, etc. The subject's tolerance to pain is well documented. He or she may experience an increase in body heat and may remove all of his or her clothes. Although the climate may be cold, the person may be running naked in public and sweating profusely. These are some of the classic symptoms associated with Excited Delirium, please refer to Training Bulletin 95-10 'Sudden Death Syndrome-Positional Asphyxia/Excited Delirium'.

Your opinion as to whether a person is under the influence of PCP should be based on the observation more than one of these symptoms.

II. Field Contacts

Officer safety should always be a primary concern. Whenever contacting a person, you believe to be under the influence of PCP, have sufficient back up. That person may not feel pain nor be able to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Talk to him or her in a calm relaxed voice. Your sentences should be short, concise and you should wait approximately 10-15 seconds between questions. Bright lights such as a flashlight or headlights may upset the person.

III. Legal Statues

PCP is covered under Health & Safety Codes 11377 Possession, 11378-5 Possession for sale of Phencyclidine (PCP), 11379-5 Transportation, sale, or distribution of Phencyclidine (PCP)

Summary

If you contact a person who is exhibiting unusual behavior, look for the objective symptoms associated with the use of PCP. If you observe those symptoms, talk to that person in a calm, relaxed voice. Your sentences should be short, concise and you should wait for the subject to respond to your questions. Have sufficient back up and use a strategy that will avoid a prolonged struggle. It may be difficult to control someone who is oblivious to pain. *Officer safety is always paramount, especially when handling someone who is under the influence of P.C.P.*

Acknowledgment: This Training Bulletin was revised by Officer I. Garcia and shall replace Training Bulletin 90-04.

Reviewed By: Investigator Jay Miller

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