

A Tactical Flashlight

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By Ed Lovette
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When I first became interested in what we now call the tactical flashlight, they looked pretty much like the flashlight you used for everything else. That was exactly what they were, your standard 2-3-4-5 D cell Eveready® light that you could buy just about anywhere. As a young police officer, I quickly learned the importance of a sturdy reliable flashlight. A series of Eveready lights taught me that they didn't hold up well if dropped. This frequently happened when you opened the door of your police cruiser and the light followed you out. Pretty soon, I learned to prevent this by jamming the light into the space between the seats next to the seat belt lockup. I also learned that the light didn't hold up too well when used in its role as an impact weapon against individuals who decided to resist arrest.

But then came along Kel-Lite, Maglite® and Streamlight®. Sometime in the mid-1980's, SureFire introduced their rugged, powerful flashlights which basically offered big flashlight power in a smaller package than anything we'd seen before. And the rest, as they say, is history. Today, it is almost as challenging to pick one of the easily concealed tactical lights that meets your needs as it is to find the handgun and holster that suits you. What follows are some thoughts on the subject that I have developed since being issued my first tactical flashlight, a SureFire® 6P, in 1990. Nearly 20 years later, it is still a work in progress.



For starters, is a tactical flashlight for you? FWIW- if you carry a concealed handgun and/or you have a handgun for home defense, you need a tactical flashlight. If you are interested in personal security but don't or can't own a firearm (or maybe you travel frequently), you need a tactical flashlight. Even in places where you cannot legally, carry OC spray or a knife, you can take your flashlight.

Next, since these lights are not cheap--before you purchase one--it would be helpful if you could get some training on how to use one effectively with and without a handgun. Without proper training you are severely limiting what you can do with one of these lights. This is way more than just a flashlight.

Consider that we have always used a flashlight: 1) so we can see where we are going, 2) to identify a threat, and 3) as an impact weapon. Surefire defined and changed how we looked at the tactical flashlight. With this type of flashlight 1 and 2 above still apply but number 3 (which we now move to number 4) has been replaced by the capability to seriously interfere with our assailant's vision. The fixed beam of the flashlight briefly blinds your attacker and the intensity stuns him both visually and by short-circuiting his thought processes. This is an especially important consideration for the legally armed citizen today because he now has an option that may allow him to deal with a potentially violent situation without resorting to the use of force or having to engage in physical contact with his assailant.

Since about 80% of what we collect and process to make decisions is provided by our eyes, loss of vision seriously impedes your opponent's ability and will to fight. If we can take his vision away from him, we quickly put ourselves in charge of the situation. And we cannot over-emphasize the importance of being in charge because this is what gives us the confidence to prevail.

SureFire suggests that a tactical flashlight be capable of producing 60 lumens. A lumen is the unit of measure now used to determine a flashlight's power. (And yes, I've read several technical definitions of lumen--and no, I didn't understand any of them!) When you shine the light in someone's eyes, at close range, they will reflexively close their eyes, possibly turn their head away from the light source and

maybe throw up their hands to block the light. So just for openers he can't see you, you know where his hands are, and you know what's in his hands. Plus you have just derailed his decision-making ability. You now can do whatever the situation dictates as follow-up. If we are lucky this may be as simple as moving rapidly in the opposite direction.

But it gets better. There is now a strobe option offered on a couple of tactical lights. The strobe pulses at about seven times per second with this powerful light. And the darker it is the more effective the strobe. Most of the time you will use the fixed beam. But when it is really dark and you can see the problem, activate the strobe. The strobe effect takes out both his forward vision as well as his peripheral vision. It allows you to disappear behind a barrage of light. If you add movement (like getting behind cover) it disorients your assailant. He can't track either your movement or your actions. You have to experience it to see what the strobe can do. In short, it really messes up (to use another technical term) an assailant's ability to see what you are up to.



With this in mind I have been using the Lou Chiodo Lightsaver tactical light for about a year now. It offers a powerful 75 lumen fixed beam as well as the strobe feature at a very competitive price. Lou offers training with the Lightsaver as well. I think his philosophy on the tactical flashlight in general and the strobe feature in particular, pretty well sums it up. "What is good for us must become bad for our adversary."

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LIGHTSAVER LS 162

TECHNICAL DATA

- Length: 4.8 inches

- Head width: 1.28 inches
- End cap width: .94 inches
- Weight: 2.1 oz. (without batteries)
- Light Source: 3 watt super bright Luxeon Light Emitting Diode (LED), 75 lumens
- Batteries: Two Lithium CR123A (Included)
- Construction: Black super strong aluminium Alloy
- Durability: Water Resistant / Impact Resistant
- Low battery power feature built into the white light mode

SureFire
www.surefire.com
800-828-8809

Mr. Lovette is a retired CIA paramilitary operations officer. He is a former Captain in the U.S. Army's Special Forces and is also a 10 year law enforcement veteran in which capacity he served as a patrol officer, sheriff's deputy and as the senior firearms and tactics instructor for the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy.

Since retiring Mr. Lovette has taught kidnap avoidance techniques and evasive driving to business executives living and working in Latin America. He has developed a terrorist surveillance detection program for a Federal security agency with a significant terrorist threat. He has been involved with a variety of programs designed to enhance the security of our U.S. Embassies overseas. Most recently he has been involved with antiterrorism training programs for police officers.

In addition to co-authoring Defensive Living with Dave Spaulding he is the author of The Snubby Revolver: The ECO, Backup and Concealed Carry Standard. Mr. Lovette currently writes the Survival Savvy column for "Combat Handguns" magazine.
