

Knife Resistant Clothing - An End to Injury at Work?

Many senior figures working within occupational health & safety and actual frontline operations will agree when I say that dealing directly with the public is becoming a more and more dangerous and risky thing to do.

Assaults on emergency services personnel, nurses, social and health care workers, teachers and taxi and truck drivers are increasingly common. When it comes to knife crime, it is surprisingly difficult to quantify that danger. In terms of fatal stabbings, the Conservative Party in England issued figures at the end of 2008 claiming that there were more than five fatal stabbings each week, yet the government disputed this, asserting that knives were not the only weapons used. Either way, there are 270 people in the UK only who have died unnecessarily.

As security expert I have long advised key decision makers within the public sector and health care departments that the risk of violent incidents can be reduced through a combination of body language, effective training, calming behaviour and reducing the **visual** signifiers of aggression, such as body armour. Nonetheless, it remains clear that staff must be protected.

For this simple reason we at ASEO have launched a range of discreet protective clothing to tackle this problem. Our range features knife, slash and bite resistant clothing including both short and long sleeved T-shirts, high visibility vests, sleeves, gloves and other garments. All garments are manufactured using a material called Spectra®, one of the strongest man-made fibres that is pound for pound 15 times stronger than steel and 40% stronger than DuPont's Kevlar. Spectra® is manufactured by Honeywell Speciality Materials and is an ultra high molecular weight polyethylene fibre with an outstanding level of tensile strength. This means that our Spectra® lined garments offer an impressive level of protection without the bulkiness normally associated with slash resistant clothing. All garments have been tested to BS EN ISO 13997:1999 by SATRA, the world's leading research and technology centre. They found the fabric to require a cutting load for a 20mm cut of 11.1 N - almost equivalent to EN 388 6.2 Level 4, a protection level considered far superior to that provided by any similar product.

Spectra® garments also have the great advantage of being concealable. This gives the advantage that frontline staff do not appear overly confrontational, aggressive or

authoritative. I cannot emphasise enough how important this is. Especially when dealing with intoxicated individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

I have personally noted a growing need for knife and cut resistant clothing because many frontline operatives have recently indicated that they feel unsafe during their work. Teachers, social and health care workers, taxi drivers, fraud investigators, BT and British Gas employees and many others have expressed the fear they feel when dealing with intoxicated, disrespectful or hostile individuals. For these frontline staff stab vests are too confrontational, heavy or inappropriate. Our Knife & Slash Resistant Clothing will offer them excellent protection from slashing - and that is better than no protection at all.

Our latest products are our Spectra® lined high visibility vests, as well as Spectra® lined gloves which are ideal for use by stewards involved in crowd control, the emergency services and those who handle sharp objects like broken glass, such as refuse collectors, glass collectors, janitors and medical staff. Understandably, protective clothing made from Spectra® is considerably more expensive than standard cotton T-shirts, but pricing is reasonable given the additional life-saving benefits.

Robert Kaiser, CEO
ASEO

1st August 2009