OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, event security. Article

Irritant spray in the crowd: the first five minutes

A spray released in a packed dance hall, what the venue did next, what UK guidance says about CS, and a five step response your team can rehearse



A steward with a radio watches a packed crowd at night, the setting where a spray does the most harm. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

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OTAS Live Ltd.

SUMMARY

The spray is the trigger. The crowd is the risk. The fix is a short response your team has rehearsed.

15

people went to first aid in a packed hall in Amsterdam, and none needed hospital, local media reported [1][2]

38

people hurt when a spray was released on a dance floor in Germany in February 2026, police said [14]

40

people treated after a door security worker sprayed pepper spray towards a crowd in Vienna on Halloween night, police said [11][12]

Write a five step irritant response, recognise, control, ventilate, move and treat, give each step a named role, and test it before your next busy night.

By OTAS Insights. Edited by Kris Dailly. Correct as of 9 November 2026.



A packed crowd at night, the setting where a spray does the most harm. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

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01
Read this first

Sources: 23 public sources opened on 9 November 2026. They are a local broadcaster in Amsterdam (in Dutch, OTAS translation), DJ Mag and NL Times, a German police release and NDR on a case in February 2026, ORF, Kurier and the Kronen Zeitung on a case in Vienna on 1 November 2026 (in German, OTAS translation), two UK Health Security Agency guidance pages, HSE crowd and event guidance, the Purple Guide, the Security Industry Authority, GOV.UK and legislation.gov.uk. We do not name the venues, the events or anyone involved. Each fact carries its source number. Everything without a source number is OTAS guidance for event organisers and venue teams.

In late October 2026, during a major dance music week in Amsterdam, an irritant spray was released inside a packed former industrial hall. Reports describe it as tear gas, reportedly linked to an attempted theft of a necklace [1][2][3]. Fifteen people went to first aid and none needed hospital, local media reported [1][2]. The hall emptied fast [1]. The venue said its ventilation gave completely clean air within a quarter of an hour [1]. It was not the only case this year. In February 2026 a spray released on a dance floor in Germany hurt 38 people, and eight went to hospital, police said [14]. On Halloween night in Vienna, police said a door security worker sprayed pepper spray towards a crowd outside a club, and 40 people were treated [11][12]. For UK venues the lesson is not about the spray alone. A sudden release in a dense crowd can start a rush to the exits, and HSE lists crushing and trampling among crowd hazards [7]. The answer is a short response your team has rehearsed: recognise it, control the show, ventilate, move people without a crush, and treat people the right way.

> **In short:** the spray is the trigger, the crowd is the risk. Bring the music down and the lights up, open the biggest doors, staff the exits, and treat people in fresh air without rubbing their eyes. For CS, UK guidance also says not to wash the skin straight away. For any other or unknown spray, follow your medical provider's protocol.

Five things to take away

01	Fifteen people went to first aid and none needed hospital, local media reported [1][2]. NL Times reported that three needed medical examinations [3].
02	The venue lowered the music for about five minutes [1][3]. NL Times reported that organisers opened the large wooden doors [3].
03	UK guidance says CS gas disperses “in a matter of minutes” and people usually recover “within 15 to 30 minutes” after a brief exposure [4].
04	The same guidance says “Do not rub your eyes” and do not wash the skin straight away, as water “may make symptoms worse” [4].
05	A rush to the exits is the bigger danger. HSE lists “Surging and swaying leading to crushing” among crowd hazards [7].
06	A spray can come from your own side of the barrier. In Vienna, police said the spray came from a door security worker, who was reported on suspicion of serious bodily harm (OTAS translation) [11][12].

ACTION

Read the case, then share the actions with your team.



02

What happened in the hall

Three news reports, read again on 9 November 2026, set out the incident. We do not name the venue or the event. Where the reports differ, we say so [1] [2] [3].

Music down, house lights up, and the floor clearing calmly. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

The incident

When	Saturday 24 October 2026, during a major dance music week that ran from 21 to 25 October [2]. NL Times reported the scuffle at about 19:45 [3].
Where	A packed former industrial hall. NL Times reported the scuffle about 10 metres from the stage [3].
What	An irritant spray, reported as tear gas, released during a scuffle. A police spokesperson confirmed the spraying, AT5 reported [1].
Why	Reportedly linked to an attempted theft of a necklace [1][2][3].

The response

The music	Lowered for about five minutes [1][3].
The doors	NL Times reported that organisers opened the large wooden doors [3].
The air	“We have a good ventilation system, so within a quarter of an hour the air in the hall is completely clean,” the venue spokesperson told AT5 (OTAS translation) [1].
The exit	Footage showed people leaving the hall en masse, and all visitors were searched on the way out, AT5 reported [1].

The casualties

First aid	“15 people reported to first aid, none of them needed to go to hospital” (AT5, OTAS translation) [1]. DJ Mag reported the same [2].
Examinations	NL Times reported: “Three required medical examinations” [3].

	What happened
21 to 25 October	A major dance music week in Amsterdam [2]
Saturday 24 October	Spray released during a scuffle in a packed hall, at about 19:45 [2][3]
About 5 minutes	Music lowered, and the large doors opened [1][3]
Within 15 minutes	Clean air in the hall, the venue said [1]
On the way out	All visitors searched, and 15 people seen at first aid [1]

Table 1. The incident in five rows, from AT5 [1], DJ Mag [2] and NL Times [3].

ACTION

Ask your duty manager how long your music, lights and doors would take to change in the same moment.

03
Two more cases from 2026

Both were reported by the police. We give what they said, and do not name the venues or anyone involved. German sources are in OTAS translation.

	Germany, February 2026	Vienna, 1 November 2026
Where	A dance floor in a club in Lower Saxony [14][15]	The entrance of a club in Leopoldstadt, with a large crowd outside [11]
Who sprayed	An unknown man, for reasons not yet known, police said [14]	A 23 year old door security worker, police said [11][12]
People hurt	38 hurt, eight taken to hospital. Police expected most injuries to be minor [14]	40 treated by the city ambulance service, three taken to hospital [11][12]
What happened next	The club had been evacuated before police arrived. People outside complained of breathing problems and eye and airway irritation [14][15]	The worker was reported on suspicion of serious bodily harm (OTAS translation). An officer was also affected and treated [11]
Police	Inquiry into dangerous bodily harm, witnesses sought [14]	Police had been called to the crowd and were trying to reach the club security when the spray was used [11]

Table 3. Two more spray cases in 2026, from police statements as reported. Sources [11][12][14][15].

A video seen by the Kronen Zeitung shows the worker spraying upwards towards a packed crowd at the entrance twice [13]. We have not seen the video. In both cases a spray in a dense crowd hurt dozens of people in minutes.

ACTION

Add both cases to your next security briefing, and ask your team what they would do in the first minute.

04

When the spray comes from your own team

The Vienna case is a warning for every door team. OTAS reading, with the law where shown. Not legal advice.

The position in Great Britain

- CS and pepper sprays are treated as prohibited weapons under section 5(1)(b) of the Firearms Act 1968 [6]. Northern Ireland has a similar ban under the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004. No one on your team should carry one.
- Employers must not expose the public to risks to their health or safety, so far as is reasonably practicable [22].

What to brief

- A crowd at the door is a crowd safety problem first. Slow the queue, open space, and call the duty manager and the police.
- Write into your door policy that no spray, of any kind, is carried by staff or contractors.
- Check contractors know your policy, as well as your own staff. HSE says you keep overall responsibility for the safety of the public, even when stewarding is contracted out [17].

ACTION

Add a no sprays line to your door policy and your contractor brief this week.

05

Where the reports agree, and where they differ

Three reports, written within three days. Read them side by side before you draw a lesson [1][2][3].

Point	What the reports say
The substance	AT5 and DJ Mag say tear gas [1][2]. We say an irritant spray, reported as tear gas
The theft	DJ Mag and NL Times describe an attempted necklace theft [2] [3]. AT5 says nothing was stolen as far as known [1]
Medical	None to hospital [1][2]. Three needed medical examinations [3]. Both can be true
The doors	Only NL Times reports the large doors being opened [3]
Ventilation	The venue spokesperson, as reported by AT5 [1]

Table 2. How the three reports compare, read on 9 November 2026.

ACTION

When you debrief an incident, write down where your own accounts differ before you settle on one story.

06
A pattern that week

The hall incident was not the only one reported that week. The details below are attributed, because they come through single chains of reporting.

What was reported

Other incidents	DJ Mag, citing EDM.com, described this as at least the fourth incident [2]. NL Times reported earlier incidents on the Friday at two other venues [3].
Thefts	DJ Mag reported that police received “dozens of reports” of jewellery robberies at various events, “sometimes involving pepper spray or tear gas”, citing a separate AT5 story [2].
The method	AT5 reported that spray in a full hall is “a popular trick among thieves”, because people affected notice a theft less quickly (OTAS translation) [1].

What it may mean for UK venues (OTAS reading)

- Busy weeks with many events in one city can draw organised theft. Brief your teams on known methods before a high profile week.
- A spray can be a distraction, not the goal. Look for thefts in the minutes after a release.

ACTION

Before your next high profile week, ask your local police about theft methods seen at other events.

07

CS and pepper spray are not the same

This matters for treatment and for what you tell people.

What we can say

The guidance	UK public health guidance on GOV.UK covers CS gas [4][5]. Its general rules are fresh air, no rubbing, and advice if symptoms persist [4].
Pepper spray	Pepper spray is a different agent. We do not extend the CS guidance to it as fact. Your medical provider should advise on it.
In this case	The reports describe tear gas [1][2]. The sources we read do not confirm the agent.

ACTION

Ask your medical provider what their protocol is for an unknown irritant spray.



08

Why the crowd is the bigger risk

The spray is an irritant. The crowd response can cause the serious injuries. The Purple Guide says crowd planning covers how people leave, particularly in an emergency [20]. The causes below come from the sources. The lessons are OTAS guidance.

The technical lead controls the lights, the PA and the extraction. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

The five step irritant response

1	2	3	4	5
Recognise it	**Control the show**	**Ventilate the space**	**Move people calmly**	**Treat in fresh air**

Ventilation is the step most teams have never planned. Fresh air is the first step in UK CS guidance [4]. OTAS professional practice, drawing on UK guidance and the incident reports.

It moves fast

HSE says “Crowd incidents can develop very quickly” [8]. A spray gives no warning, and people react in seconds. HSE asks organisers to plan for incidents and emergencies as part of managing crowds [16][18].

People rush

HSE lists “Surging and swaying leading to crushing” and “Falling and being trampled underfoot” among crowd hazards [7]. A rush away from one spot can do both.

The space is confined

UK guidance says exposure in a confined space for a long time “may result in lung damage” [4]. The fix is to get people and air moving.

Some people react worse

“Exacerbation of asthma has been reported” [5]. Your first aid team needs to find these people first.

It hides the theft

AT5 reported that spray in a packed hall is “a popular trick among thieves”, because people affected notice a theft less quickly (OTAS translation) [1].

ACTION

Walk the room with your technical lead and agree which doors and fans give the fastest change of air.

09
Moving people without a crush

OTAS professional practice, with HSE guidance where shown.

At the exits

Doors	Open every door fully. A half open door is a pinch point.
Stairs	Put staff on the stairs first. HSE lists “Falling and being trampled underfoot” among crowd hazards [7].
Cross flow	Stop people coming in while others are going out. Close the entrance to new arrivals.
Belongings	Do not let people go back for coats or bags until the space is clear.

If the PA fails

- HSE says to have back up loud hailers in case the PA fails [8].
- Agree hand signals for staff at each exit.

ACTION

Check that a loud hailer is charged and kept at your control point.

10
The next 30 minutes

OTAS professional practice unless a source is shown.

Medical

The 30 minute check	Track anyone still with symptoms at 30 minutes and seek medical advice [4].
Clothing	If symptoms persist, remove soiled clothing “(not over the head)” and seal it in plastic bags [4].
Eyes	If symptoms persist, contact lenses out, and irrigate with lukewarm water “for at least 10 to 15 minutes” [4].
Asthma	Escalate at once. “Exacerbation of asthma has been reported” [5].

Reopening the room

- Only when the space is clear and staff confirm the air is clean.
- The duty manager makes the call, with the medical lead.

Police and evidence

- Call the police. Preserve the CCTV. Note the time and location of the scuffle.
- Log every theft report and direct victims to the police.

ACTION

Add a 30 minute check line to your first aid log.

11
Roles in an irritant incident

Four roles, each with one named person on every shift. OTAS professional practice.

Role	What they own
Duty manager	The show stop, and the decision to reopen the room
Security supervisor	The scene, the witnesses and the CCTV
Medical lead	Triage, the 30 minute check and hospital referral
Technical lead	Lights, PA and extraction

Table 4. Roles in an irritant incident. OTAS professional practice.

ACTION

Put a name against each role on tonight's briefing sheet.

12
What to do at each level

Operational

Know the signs

Radio “irritant” and where

Keep exits open

Know the signs and the radio call. If you see it, say “irritant” and where. Keep your exit or stairs clear and the doors fully open. Do not let people go back for belongings. Tell people not to rub their eyes.

Tactical

Own one step

Hold the scene

Run the 30 minute check

Own one step of the response. Security holds the scene, the witnesses and the CCTV. Medical runs triage and the 30 minute check. Technical brings up the lights, takes down the music and runs the extraction.

Strategic

Write it into the plan

Fund the kit

Exercise each season

Make the irritant response part of your emergency plan. Fund eye wash, water and a dry decontamination kit. Name sprays in your search policy. Exercise the response once a season.

ACTION

Pick one action at your level and do it before your next busy night.

13
A prevention checklist

OTAS professional practice unless a source is shown.

Before the night

- A search policy that names sprays as prohibited items [6].
- A briefing on known theft methods during high profile weeks [1][2].
- A ventilation plan, with keys and controls named.
- PA scripts for an irritant incident, recorded and tested.

On the night

- Visible staff patrols in dense areas. HSE says staff in the crowd can “identify signs of distress” [9].
- Eye wash and water at first aid, with a dry decontamination kit [4][5].
- A charged loud hailer at the control point [8].

Each season

- Exercise the response as part of your evacuation and invacuation drills [10].
- A debrief after any incident, with the CCTV and the timeline.

ACTION

Print this checklist for your next operations meeting.

14
What we do not know yet

- Which agent was used in Amsterdam. The reports describe tear gas, and the sources we read do not confirm the agent.
- Whether the incidents in Amsterdam that week are linked. DJ Mag, citing EDM.com, described this as at least the fourth [2].
- Who sprayed in Germany, and why. Police said the man was not yet known [14].
- What happens next in the Vienna case. The worker was reported on suspicion of serious bodily harm (OTAS translation) [11]. No court has ruled.
- How often this happens at UK events. We found no UK source on it.

ACTION

We will update this Insight if more reliable information is published.

15

Coming up: the busy season

The winter party season and New Year bring the busiest nights of the year to many venues. It is a good time to rehearse an irritant response. Martyn's Law is expected to come into force in spring 2027 [10]. The SIA lists four public protection procedures: evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communication [10]. An irritant drill can test three of them. The Act received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025 [23].

ACTION

If you need support with an emergency plan or a crowd response drill for your venue, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

Questions

Is tear gas the same as pepper spray?

No. They are different agents. UK public health guidance covers CS gas [4][5]. We do not extend it to pepper spray as fact. The reports of this incident describe tear gas, and the sources we read do not confirm the agent.

Should we evacuate the whole venue?

Not by reflex. A rush to the exits can cause crushing and trampling [7]. Bring the music down and the lights up, open the biggest doors, and move people calmly to named exits. In this case the venue lowered the music for about five minutes [1][3].

Should we wash people's eyes and skin with water?

UK guidance on CS says “Do not wash the skin” straight away, as water may spread it [4]. If symptoms last beyond 30 minutes, take out contact lenses and irrigate the eyes with lukewarm water “for at least 10 to 15 minutes” and seek medical advice [4].

How long do the effects last?

After a brief CS exposure, people usually recover “within 15 to 30 minutes” [4]. Asthma can be made worse [5]. Escalate anyone with breathing problems at once.

Are sprays legal to carry in the UK?

CS and pepper sprays are treated as prohibited weapons under section 5(1)(b) of the Firearms Act 1968. That section covers “any weapon of whatever description designed or adapted for the discharge of any noxious liquid, gas or other thing” [6]. Call the police.

Can we search everyone on the way out?

The venue in this case searched all visitors on the way out [1]. In the UK, a search needs a lawful basis and staff. Follow your conditions of entry and police direction, and do not detain anyone. That is OTAS professional practice, not legal advice.

If a spray went off in your busiest room tonight, who would bring the lights up?

ACTION

Send us your question and we will add the answer to the next update.

Sources

Web sources opened 9 November 2026 and labelled with their publisher. The source pages themselves may name the event or venue. We do not use those names in the text.

1. **AT5, Amsterdam local broadcaster, tear gas sprayed at a dance music week party, in Dutch, 25 October 2026** at5.nl
2. **DJ Mag, police investigate suspected tear gas attacks at a dance music week, 27 October 2026** djmag.com
3. **NL Times, tear gas sprayed in an alleged attempted jewellery robbery, 25 October 2026** nltimes.nl
4. **UK Health Security Agency, CS gas: general information, 16 November 2022** gov.uk
5. **UK Health Security Agency, CS gas: incident management, 16 November 2022** gov.uk
6. **Firearms Act 1968, prohibited weapons, section 5, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk
7. **HSE, crowd management, assess the risks** hse.gov.uk
8. **HSE, crowd management, control inside the venue** hse.gov.uk
9. **HSE, crowd management, monitoring** hse.gov.uk
10. **Security Industry Authority, understanding Martyn's Law and the SIA's role as regulator, 17 July 2026** gov.uk
11. **wien.ORF.at, pepper spray outside a club, 40 hurt, in German, 1 November 2026** wien.orf.at
12. **Kurier, security used pepper spray and 40 people needed treatment, in German, 1 November 2026** kurier.at
13. **Kronen Zeitung, video shows pepper spray attack outside a Vienna club, in German, 2 November 2026** krone.at
14. **Polizeiinspektion Rotenburg, unknown person sprays irritant in a club, at least 38 hurt, in German, 1 February 2026** presseportal.de
15. **NDR, irritant gas in a club, 38 hurt, 8 in hospital, in German, 1 February 2026** ndr.de
16. **HSE, managing crowds safely** hse.gov.uk
17. **HSE, set clear roles and responsibilities, updated 4 April 2025** hse.gov.uk
18. **HSE, running an event safely** hse.gov.uk
19. **The Purple Guide, medical** thepurpleguide.co.uk
20. **The Purple Guide, crowd management** thepurpleguide.co.uk
21. **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulation 3, risk assessment** legislation.gov.uk
22. **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 3, duties to persons other than employees** legislation.gov.uk
23. **GOV.UK, Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 collection** gov.uk

Related OTAS Insights

These are links to other OTAS Insights pieces, not to any OTAS Live product or service.

When a rumour moves faster than your stewards
When a social post draws a crowd: pop-up events without a plan

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Law: this Insight summarises parts of the law in Great Britain, and UK guidance, as published on legislation.gov.uk and GOV.UK. Northern Ireland law differs in places. It is not legal or medical advice. Ask the police and your medical provider what applies to your venue.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes OTAS Insights, sells event operations services, handbooks and training related to this topic.

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Images are OTAS style images, generated from real photography. None is a record of a specific event.

ACTION

Check the sources before you quote them, and tell us if any link has changed.

OVER TO YOU

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