



Pen Flare Safety OIF SB-024



Recently an incident occurred where a MK 31 Signal Projector (Pen Flare) was discharged as a SM was removing his ballistic vest from a vehicle. This act caused the damage indicated in the picture below. It is suspected that the SM had the pen flare charged and ready to fire. This is just one of many accidents reported using this device. Pen Flares are currently being used as part of Escalation of Force (EOF) kits and are extremely dangerous if not handled properly. The Pen Flare was primarily designed to be used as a signal device for downed aircrew personnel. The MK 79 signal kit (as shown below) is supplied with one pencil-type launcher (MK 31), seven MK 80 screw in cartridges, and a bandolier for storing the flares until use. Each signal contains a single red star. Upon activation, this star is propelled upward to a height of between 250 and 650 feet and burns for a minimum of 4.5 seconds.

To operate the device, you cock the projector firing pin by moving the trigger screw to the bottom of the vertical slot, and slip it to the right so that it catches at the top of the angular slot. After cocking the firing pin, remove a signal from the bandoleer and mate the projector with the signal. Now, rotate the projector clockwise until the signal is seated.

There are several safety considerations that must be taken into account when using one of these devices. Failure to do so can result in severe burns and damaged property.

1. The signals will not be taken out of the bandoleer or loaded until just before firing. The signals are ignited by percussion primers STEP 2 must be followed. The bandoleer protects the flares and provides protruding tabs that extend over the signal to protect the primer.
2. You must “cock” the trigger before screwing the signal in. Failure to do so can cause the flare to activate causing severe injuries.
3. The flares are considered ammunition and thus require inspection for damage. If the flare is damaged, do not use it and dispose of them properly. DO NOT throw them into the trash or burn pits.
4. The projector and trigger must also be inspected to ensure that the tube has not been dented, the threads are not stripped, and that the trigger is tight but moves freely. Any one of these issues can cause a negligent discharge or a poor ignition of the device.

It is important to note that signals burn with extreme intensity; it can cause severe injury and even death. Therefore it is crucial that proper training and safety steps are taken to prevent such accidents from reoccurring.

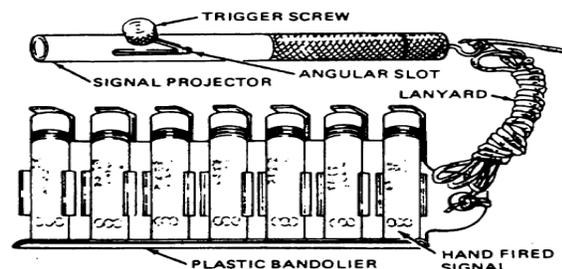


Figure 5-3.—Mk 79 Mod 0 illumination signal kit. 239.400