



Two low priced SureFire lights: the 6P and 62 Nitrolon

DUANE A. DAIKER - PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERESA DAIKER

If you are carrying a concealed firearm, but not carrying a high performance flashlight, you need to give some serious thought to your equipment. Many people will spend significant sums of money to purchase a high quality handgun, holster and other accessories, but will skimp on a flashlight, or not even carry one at all. This is clearly a tactical mistake. Statistics show that the vast majority of armed confrontations occur at night, in diminished lighting conditions. This is widely recognized, and many people will spend an extra \$100 or so for tritium night sights on their handguns for this reason. Being able to see your sights is important, of course, but what about seeing your target? All the tritium sights in the world won't help illuminate your target to identify it, or identify weapons that might pose a threat to your safety.

Better yet, what about being able to identify potential threats in a dark environment to increase your reaction time, or maybe even avoid the situation altogether? Darkness is the ally of an attacker seeking to surprise you, and a potential attacker who is identified early is likely to abandon the attack since he no longer has an advantage. Flashlights can also help identify escape routes, help retrieve dropped or lost equipment, signal for help, and perform similar tactical functions. Even outside of a pure defensive situation, flashlights can be true lifesaving devices. In the recent 9/11 Commission report, the Commission made recommendations as to how individual citizens could increase their preparedness for a terrorist attack, stating that:

*[All individuals] should have access at all times to flashlights, which were deemed invaluable by some civilians who managed to evacuate the [World Trade Center] on September 11.*

You need a high quality, high performance flashlight. Now the only question is—which one?

### The New Breed of High Performance Flashlights

For many years, large 3 or 4 D-cell aluminum body flashlights, like the Kel-Lite or Mag-Lite, were the high performance flashlights used by professionals and those serious about their illumination needs. These lights were fine in their day, but were large, heavy, and ate through alkaline batteries with diminishing light output as the batteries exhausted their charge. Such lights were difficult to use effectively with a handgun because of their sheer bulk and less than ideal switching technology.

New technology in flashlights has led to greatly decreased size, better ergonomics and switching, better brightness, and better battery performance. The most noticeable change, of course, is in the size of flashlights. There have always been small flashlights, but not with acceptable performance. High performance flashlights, with even better output than the old 3 D-cell flashlights, are now available in sizes small enough to easily fit in a pocket. Many new designs also have momentary switching (where the light can be quickly, easily, and quietly switched on and off with pressure on the switch without locking into an "on" position) and better ergonomic designs to facilitate use with a handgun.

New bulb and reflector technology has also greatly increased the potential output of small lights. The brightness that can now be obtained in a small flashlight has made the personal light a true tactical tool. Flashlights putting out 60+ lumens are generally considered to be bright enough to have a blinding effect on an opponent, and are deemed "tactical" lights. Some models will put out as much as 120 or more lumens of light—more than enough to temporarily blind and disorient an attacker.

Battery technology has vastly improved as well, with the use of lithium battery cells. Lithium cells generate sufficient power to run these powerful new flashlights. An interesting characteristic of lithium batteries is that they tend to generate a constant power output over the entire life of the battery, rather than a gradual decrease in voltage, like a typical alkaline battery. The clear advantage is that lithium powered lights will run at full brightness for their entire battery life, or very nearly so. The downside is that the batteries will then



fail very suddenly, giving little warning of an impending depletion of the cell. The trade-off for consistent performance is well worth this single draw-back, but it must be kept in mind that these batteries will quit completely when discharged, with little advance notice. You must always keep spare batteries on hand, and may occasionally need to replace batteries before a “mission critical” type use. The good news is that lithium cells have a very long shelf life (at least 10 years), and can be stored for long period without a loss of effectiveness.

## The SureFire Line of Personal Flashlights

SureFire has an extensive array of lights for all different applications. SureFire, however, prefers to describe its products as “illumination tools.” Although perhaps a bit dramatic for a flashlight, these SureFire products truly are professional quality tools. SureFire lights have become standard issue for many local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and U.S. Air Marshals.

All SureFire products are backed with a simple guarantee: with the exception of burned out bulbs and dead batteries—if it breaks, SureFire will fix it. It is a simple promise in a world full of warranty disclaimers and exclusions. I have never had reason to use the guarantee, because none of my lights have broken, but the word is that their customer service is fantastic. There is no doubt that these flashlights are a bit pricey compared to other lights on the market, but with high quality and a lifetime guarantee—the right SureFire flashlight may be the last flashlight you ever need. Unfortunately, like handguns, you may find that you *want* more than one.

All SureFire flashlights (except the rechargeable models) run on 3 volt lithium batteries designated “123A.” These batteries are available in all the major brands, and can be purchased in most places that stock a good selection of batteries—but probably not at your local mini-mart. The high cost

of lithium batteries used to be another drawback of these types of lights. However, SureFire has recently slashed the price of these batteries. You can currently purchase a box of 12, 123A batteries for \$15, plus \$5 shipping. When you do the math, this works out to less than \$1.75 each—not too different than a premium AAA battery. I suggest you buy a box at a time and reorder when you get low—so you never have to worry about running out of fresh batteries for your lights.

This review will focus on SureFire’s most popular models, designed to cover a wide variety of tactical and practical uses.



SureFire G2Z Nitrolon with wrist lanyard

## SureFire 6P

The 6P is the original SureFire design that started all the fuss. This is a two-cell all aluminum personal light. The barrel and head are round, but incorporate a bezel with six flat sides to keep the light from rolling if laid down on an angled surface. The 6P has a momentary switch on the tailcap, which facilitates use with a firearm in some of the established methods (see page 24 relating to Armed Flashlight Techniques). When you want constant light, the tail cap is rotated clockwise to screw it down until the light stays on. One interesting feature of this setup is that you can adjust the sensitivity of the momentary switch by rotating the tail cap to the location of your choice. When the tail cap is backed out sufficiently, the light is “locked out,” and will not come on even if the momentary switch is fully depressed. This position is designated with indented dots that line up on the barrel and tail cap. This is particularly important for storing the light or packing it inside something, so it does not come on accidentally.

In addition to running down your batteries unnecessarily, these lights generate a significant amount of heat and could pose a fire danger under the right circumstances.

The 6P is the heaviest of the lights reviewed here, but is still not heavy. This light has a very substantial feel to it, and is one of my favorites for general purpose use. I think you could park your car on this light and not hurt it. Additionally, the 6P is very versatile. Like the G2 models, it can be upgraded from the standard 65 lumen lamp assembly to a painfully bright 120 lumen scorcher! You pay a price in battery life—going from an hour to only

about 20 minutes—but it performs like a searchlight. The 6P can also be converted to a rechargeable unit with the nifty, although somewhat pricey, conversion kit. The light itself, however, is one of the least expensive models in the SureFire line and remains a fantastic choice for a general purpose, expandable light.

## SureFire G2 Nitrolon

The SureFire G2 Nitrolon is essentially an all plastic version of the 6P. You lose a few of the premium features—no lock out on the tail cap and no anti-roll bezel—but keep the majority of the functionality for a lot less money. The G2 Nitrolon is the bargain of the SureFire line, and can be had directly from SureFire for as little as \$34. The G2 uses the same lamp assemblies as the 6P, so it can also be upgraded to the 120 lumen lamp if desired.

The G2 Nitrolon is a great, affordable way to get into the high performance flashlight arena. It is not as compact or full featured as the other flashlights here, but is still a fantastic tool. Although I have many SureFire lights, I use the G2 a lot for general duties around the house and have no qualms about pressing it into tactical

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SureFire 6P in a versatile leather holster by AJK Concealco



service. The G2 is also available in three colors—including standard black, a tactical olive drab, and a not-so-tactical yellow.

### SureFire G2Z Nitrolon

The G2Z may be the ultimate tactical flashlight. The flashlight was actually developed around a particular aimed flashlight technique. The unusual barrel shape is designed to facilitate a Rogers/SureFire type hold, where the flashlight is held in the support hand and the momentary switch activated by the web of the thumb (see page 24 relating to Armed Flashlight Techniques). This flashlight technique is described in detail in the manual that accompanies this flashlight. There are removable rubber rings on the barrel so it can be adjusted to your proper grip. The flashlight also comes with an adjustable lanyard, to retain the flashlight when you need two hands for reloading or other tasks.

The G2Z can accept the 120 lumen lamp assembly, and is a great candidate for one. I keep a 120 lumen lamp in my G2Z, which is kept with my home defense gun. This flashlight doesn't get used for chores around the house—it is reserved for serious defensive duties. The 120 lumen lamp eats through batteries, but that isn't much of a

concern for a true combat light, and the extra-blinding illumination could be a huge tactical advantage. If you hit someone in the eyes with this beam in a dark room, you may never have to shoot them! For pure armed defense use, where a little bit of size is not an issue, this is definitely the best choice of the lights reviewed here. This light is also available in a special logo edition as the Official NRA Combatlight, and in an all aluminum version. This light is standard issue for the F.B.I. and the U.S. Air Marshals.



L to R: SureFire E1E (with LED replacement head), E2E, and E2D

### E1E Executive Elite

The E1E is the smallest SureFire flashlight. All of the flashlights reviewed here run on two lithium 123A cells—except this one. The E1E runs on a single battery and is just over two inches long. This light is small! Of course, the decrease in size and battery capacity means a lot less light output. The E1E comes with a 15 lumen lamp that will run for approximately 1.5 hours. Although the output is considerably less than the other lights reviewed, the 15 lumen output is still quite impressive, and more than adequate for most tasks. The beam is tightly focused and spot free, even in this compact configuration.

The E1E is not a true “tactical” light. Although it has the same type of switching as the 6P and G2, the smaller size does make it more difficult to use with a firearm. And, the light output is far below the standard 60 lumen output for a tactical flashlight. However, this light is still a great general use tool that can certainly play the role of a tactical light if necessary. This light is small enough to slip easily into any pocket or purse. The included carry clip will allow you to clip the light to your pocket, or even to the bill of a hat for an improvised hands free light.

An interesting twist on this light is the availability of the SureFire replacement LED head (KL1). The LED head utilizes a high-tech digital regulator to produce 15 lumens of light—like the standard xenon lamp—but with the impressive extended runtime typical of an LED light. When mated with the E1E light, the KL1 LED head will run at full brightness for 1.5 hours, then at a diminished brightness for another half hour, and still produce minimal light for another three hours. For a general utility-type light, this more gradual type of failure may be preferable to the all-or-



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### The E1E Executive Elite will disappear in the average hand

nothing performance of the brighter xenon lamps. To my eyes, the 15 lumens output by the LED head was just as bright and useable as the xenon bulb, or maybe even a little bit better.

### E2E Executive Elite

The E2E is a two cell version of the E1E. The E2E is a slimmer, shorter, lighter version of the 6P size lights. The E2E is designed to be smaller and lighter for easy carry, not much larger than a two AA battery pen light. Despite its smaller size, the E2E cranks out a full 60 lumens of light and has the preferred switching—twist for constant on, or depress the tailcap button for momentary illumination—and a lock-out feature for safety. This light is one of my favorites for bridging the gap between a tactical light and a general purpose light. This one does the best job of bridging both worlds and being an all purpose flashlight.

One of the tradeoffs of the E2E is that there is no availability of a 120 lumen lamp—the thinner barrel size prohibits the use of the high output assembly used in the 6P and G2 lights, so 60 lumens is the maximum output available. The KL1 LED head can also be used with the E2E, limiting it to 15 lumens, but stretching the standard output to approximately four hours, and the useable light to about 11 hours. Although I did not have an opportunity to test one, SureFire also offers a new KL4 LED head that will produce a full 65 lumens of light for an hour, making it a true tactical output light. The E2E is available in both an anodized satin grey, and a military spec hard anodized finish for a few dollars more.

### E2D Executive Defender

The E2D is the newest offering of this group. The E2D is a dressed up E2E with a mil-spec black finish and a crenellated “Strike Bezel” on each end to serve as a last resort impact weapon. SureFire has been promoting this light quite a bit in its advertising of late, and I was anxious to get my hands on this one, having found the E2E to be such a great product. My thoughts were that this would be a flashlight as useful as the E2E, with the added benefit of an impact weapon. Unfortunately, I was a bit disappointed with it. For me, a guy with little hand to hand combat training, I find the usefulness of the “Strike Bezel” feature to be limited. I think this feature would be most useful to those with training in kubotons or similar pressure point or pain management techniques. The size of this light just does not lend itself to easy use as an impact device.

Now, this limited usefulness as an impact weapon wouldn't be such a drawback to me if the flashlight retained all the other versatility of the E2E—but I don't think it does. First, the flashlight does not utilize the twist-on tailcap activation of all other SureFire lights reviewed here. The E2D has a tail cap mounted click on-off switch that provides momentary switching only by partially depressing the switch. I don't find this to be as easy to use for tactical purpose because the light can be accidentally locked on when trying to use the momentary switch feature. I also find it much harder to hold the flashlight in a proper tactical position because the crenellations around the end cap impede easy and comfortable access to the switch to some degree. In fact, the crenellations on the tail cap actually prevent the light from being used in a true Rogers/SureFire type hold. For these reasons—for someone

like me—the drawbacks of the E2D features outweigh the slight benefits. When combined with a premium price—as much as \$30 more than the standard E2E—it is just not as attractive. However, for a properly trained individual that can truly appreciate the impact weapon capabilities, I can certainly see the appeal of this very low-profile weapon/flashlight combination.

### Conclusions

If you are reading this magazine about concealed carry, you need a high quality flashlight. In fact, you might need two—a super bright tactical light for armed defense, and a more practical “go anywhere” light. You can't go wrong with any of the SureFire products reviewed in this article. SureFire makes high quality lights and stands behind them for life. Every one will meet your expectations and throw a pure beam of focused, spot free light when you need it.



**SureFire 6P and SureFire SC-1 Spares Carrier with spare lamp and six batteries.**

The real question is which one should you get? The hands-down best choice for a tactical light for armed defense is the G2Z Nitrolon or its all aluminum version—preferably with the mind-numbing 120 lumen lamp. The best “always” light for daily carry is the E1E. If you want a compromise light that is easy to carry and still tactically useful, I recommend the E2E. The 6P is the armored tank of the group—and a best buy in a light that will last forever. Finally, if you want to get into this game with the least expense—try the G2 Nitrolon and you will be hooked.

I often hear people chided for carrying a \$600 gun in a \$20 nylon holster. The same is true for the rest of your equipment. Don't trust your safety and your self defense to a \$20 department store pen light using decades old technology. Invest in a high performance illumination tool—I guarantee you will see the light!

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# Armed Flashlight Techniques

All but the briefest discussion of armed flashlight techniques is beyond the scope of this article, not to mention my expertise. I highly recommend that everyone carrying a concealed firearm obtain training in low-light shooting techniques from a qualified instructor. I have included a description of two of the more popular techniques only to demonstrate the ways that flashlights like these are normally used.

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**The Harries Technique - Above**

The flashlight is held in an “ice-pick” grip with the thumb on the momentary switch on the tailcap. The wrists of the weapon hand and flashlight hand come together at the backs of the hands to create a more stable platform for shooting. This type of hold will work for any of the SureFire flashlights reviewed in this article.

SureFire products can be viewed at:

[www.SureFire.com](http://www.SureFire.com)

**The Rogers/SureFire Technique - Below**

The flashlight is held in a “syringe” grip, with the forefinger and middle finger gripping the barrel of the light. The tailcap momentary switch is activated by pressure from the middle or lower part of the thumb. The weapon hand and flashlight hand come together in a normal two handed grip and the lower fingers of the flashlight hand wrap around the weapon hand. Although this technique was originally developed around the Surefire 6P light, the G2Z design has been optimized for this type of hold.



L to R: SureFire 6P, G2 Nitrolon, E2E, E2D and G2Z. Top: E1E

Model	Weight	Length	Standard Lamp	Standard Runtime	MSRP
E1E	2.2 oz.	3.30 in.	15	1.50 hrs.	\$78
E2E	3.1 oz.	4.50 in.	60	1.25 hrs.	\$75-\$95
E2D	3.2 oz.	4.85 in.	60	1.25 hrs.	\$105
G2 Nitrolon	4.0 oz.	4.90 in.	65	1 hr.	\$56
G2Z Nitrolon	4.1 oz.	5.10 in.	65	1 hr.	\$84
6P	5.3 oz.	5.10 in.	65	1 hr.	\$56

