

Review: Streamlight's PROTAC HL4 Tactical Light

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I tested the Streamlight PROTAC HL4 high lumen tactical light, a dual power hand torch that can throw a beam out to 345 meters.

The PROTAC HL is 8.63 inches long and weighs 1.1 lbs. It is made of machined aircraft aluminum covered with a rubber sleeve. The head, complete with cooling fins and decisive protection around business end, is slightly heavier than the body.

The PROTAC HL4 does not have a "reflector" in the style of traditional flashlights. Rather, the C4 LED emitter is surrounded by a solid piece that shapes the beam. Because of the way the beam is focused, the bezel portion can most accurately be described as a lens.

The best advantage of the PROTAC HL4's lens design is the fact that it's solid, making it structurally stronger and resistant to severe abuse. There appears to be a filter in front of the reflector lens. It is similar to the antireflective coating placed on optics. When I looked at the optical quality of the whole set up, I found that the light emanating from this torch is very clear white, with a little on the blue end.

I tested the light for water resistance, drop resistance, run time and usability.

Many readers have heard me say this before, but one of the best form factors for a patrol light is the Stinger series of lights from Streamlight. Although this one is a little heavier in the head, it's similar.

This form factor is great for users who stuff the light under the weapon side arm pit for magazine changes. The same goes for opening doors and cuffing suspects. The fact that the PROTAC



HL4 has a textured rubber grip really enhances this ability. However, I'd like a side switch like a Stinger, in addition to the tail switch.

The PROTAC HL4 uses the TEN-TAP programmable switch, which allows the officer to set up which comes on first when it is first activated. The switch itself is slightly recessed and easily controlled with gloved hands.

This torch has a blinding beam. It can quickly light up an alley or a vehicle interior. It has a significant amount of

flood area in the center of the beam. To put this in perspective, the brightest area of the beam can light up a standard alley at about 10 meters without even incorporating the spill beam. If we compare that to many competitive models, including some of Streamlight's own products, most flashlights don't even come close.

The bright flood like beam has a downside. I tested it in fog and, while it pierces quite well, the backscatter is blinding. In a residential search, it's fine, but I would avoid shining it against light colored walls, lest that brightness be reflected

into the user.

The PROTAC HL4 beam renders a slightly higher contrast. I'm sure that the purpose is to "see better", but contrast equates to safety.

Vision and visual processing occur in different parts of the brain. Higher contrast and better color rendition allows for quicker processing. To put this in perspective, an officer can see an object that is a threat to him, but the brain places that object in space and context in different processes. Quicker

recognition means quicker response.

When it comes to flashlights, brightness is usually better. However, brightness can be a compromise. Light output takes lots of energy, and bright lights tend to generate a lot of heat and use more power. The best products keep the balance of thermal management, run time, and light output. This one puts out 2,200 lumens, 30,000 candela, and 346 meter beam for 1.5 hours. The medium output is 600 lumens and will run 4 to 4.25 hours. The "medium" output on this light is brighter than any light that I have ever used on patrol.

Streamlight has mastered the art of energy and heat management. This light is really a pocket searchlight and, although it can get warm to the touch, it's definitely up for a full shift. It can be used with disposable 3V CR123A lithium batteries, but it takes four of them to keep it going. Streamlight has also engineered superior 18650 button-top lithium rechargeable cells and I strongly recommend only using that brand of rechargeable cells in this light.

This is truly a different flashlight. It is a little heavier than a Stinger, but much brighter. If your duty requires a beam that reaches a little further and still needs a flood light quality, there is no better tool. ■

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