

Wayne County Sheriff's Office

Training Brief 1-8

Traffic Stops

General Order 61.1.7 Vehicle Stops

General Order 41.3.8 Audio/Video Recording

General Order 1.2.9 Bias Based Policing

General Order 61.1.8 Officer/Violator Relations

Purpose: The Probationary Officer shall be able to describe the steps for conducting a Traffic Stop.

1. Traffic Stops

- a. Officers conduct vehicle stops for a variety of reasons. Regardless of the purpose of stopping a vehicle, officers should be aware that any vehicle stop might pose a certain amount of risk, whether it may be from the driver, occupants or other traffic in the area.
- b. In all traffic stops, when practical, the officer should pick a location for stopping the vehicle that is most advantageous to the officer, avoiding intersections, hills and curves. Depending on the situation and the circumstances of each stop, the officer may approach the vehicle from either the driver's or passenger's side.
- c. When an officer decides to stop a vehicle, they shall notify dispatch of:
 - Location
 - Plate information - State, Tag #, Year, Type (repeat this information)
 - Vehicle information ó Make, Model, Color
- d. Should the vehicle stop be initiated for anything other than a moving/equipment violation, the officer should notify the dispatcher of the number of occupants.
- e. Generally, officers will initiate one of three (3) types of vehicle stops: traffic law violators, unknown risk, or high risk. Regardless of the type of stop, the following procedures are suggested as a guide for officers making vehicle stops. Dispatch is to be notified of **all vehicle stops** before the activation of emergency lights when possible.

2. Traffic Law Violators

- a. Choose the location for the stopping of the violator, avoiding hills, curves and intersections.
- b. Notify the dispatcher of all pertinent information concerning the vehicle stop.
- c. Activate the emergency lights to notify the driver you want him or her to stop. If necessary, honk the horn or activate the siren to get the driver's attention.
- d. Position the patrol car approximately 10-15 feet behind the violator's vehicle and offset to the left approximately three (3) feet for protection of the officer from oncoming traffic.
- e. Observe the occupant(s) of the vehicle for about 10 seconds for suspicious movement before approaching.
- f. At night, use spotlight and/or take down lights to conceal the movement of the officer.
- g. Should the violator get out of the vehicle, observe for any sudden movement from within the vehicle.
- h. Stand as close to the vehicle as possible and to the rear of the driver's door to avoid the driver opening the door and striking the officer.
- i. Keep a constant eye on the violator's hands and have them reach outside of the vehicle. Officers should take documents from the violator with their non-gun hand.

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- j. When returning to the police vehicle to prepare a citation or to contact the dispatcher, the officer should continue to observe the vehicle and occupants.
- k. When returning to the stopped vehicle, approach in the same manner as the initial contact.
- l. Assist the stopped vehicle in re-entering traffic

3. Unknown Risk

- a. Unknown risk stops include flagrant traffic violations, suspicious vehicles and situations when an officer requests a back-up unit.
- b. Advise dispatcher of the vehicle stop and number of occupants.
- c. Use procedure similar to low risk stops reference to vehicle position, stop location, observation of vehicle and occupants as outlined previously.
- d. Maintain position and control of the occupant(s) using verbal commands. (Consider the use of the P.A. if deemed necessary).
- e. Depending on the reason for the stop and the number of occupants, the officer may have the driver alight from the vehicle and approach the patrol car.
- f. Maintain a protected position and keep the driver's hands in sight.

4. High Risk

- a. High-risk stops include stops made on known or suspected criminal suspects, when weapons are known or suspected to be in the vehicle, or any other reason that would dictate a high risk vehicle stop to be executed.
- b. Choose the location carefully for stopping the vehicle, taking into consideration possible hazards to pedestrians, other motorists or officer(s).
- c. Notify the dispatcher of the reason for the stop, vehicle information, number of occupants and request additional unit(s) as necessary.
- d. Whenever possible wait until a back-up unit is in position before initiating the stop.
- e. Position the patrol car behind the suspect vehicle 20-30 feet.
- f. Do not initially approach an occupied vehicle under these conditions.
- g. Order the suspect(s) out of the vehicle, using the P.A., if occupant(s) ignore verbal commands. 8. Give clear and concise commands to the occupant(s) of the stopped vehicle to direct their removal, one at a time, starting with the driver if possible.
- h. Direct back-up officers as necessary to assist in controlling and maintaining safety during the stop.
- i. Direct the search of the vehicle when all occupants have been removed and secured and after it is determined that there are no hidden occupants.

5. The Approach

- a. Move Forward, checking the license plate, trunk lock, and trunk lid. When passing the trunk area place your hand on the trunk lid and check that the trunk is secure.
- b. Check the rear seat for occupant and suspicious articles.
- c. Use caution on your approach. Be alert for anything out of the ordinary. Watch driver's facial expression by looking into the side or rearview mirror. If they display fear, panic, or over-interest in what you are doing take extra precautions.
- d. Blade yourself to the violator's car. Have your gun hand free. Never go beyond the B-pillar so that the violator is forced to turn around in his seat to see you.
- e. Be aware of driver's hands.
- f. Ask for Drivers License and Registration.

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- g. After you have the violator's license and registration then advise them of the reason for the stop. When you have all of the information you will need to write the citation then back away from the vehicle and return to your patrol car. Be sure to check over your shoulder on status of the violator as you return to your patrol car.

6. The Citation

- a. Advise dispatch of current status
 - i. No Assistance Needed
 - ii. Request Additional Unit
 - iii. Officer Needs Assistance
- b. While issuing the citation, make sure you continue to monitor the violator.
- c. Wait for license check, registration check, and warrant check prior to returning to the violator's car.
- d. Return to the violator's car with their license, registration, citation. Keep gun hand free. When you re-approach the vehicle do so in the same manner as the initial approach.
- e. Explain the citation, court time, and how to make payment to the violator.
- f. Return to squad car in the same safe manner as before and continue to check on the vehicle and occupants as you walk back to your car.

7. Notes

- a. Call for back-up units as soon as you feel it is necessary. **Do not forget back up.**
- b. If the violator appears suspicious then instruct him/her to shut off the ignition of the car.
- c. If at any time the violator exits the vehicle order him/her back into the car firmly and professionally.
- d. Be aware of your cover and/or concealment at the location of the stop.
- e. If traffic is heavy, or the violator appears suspicious utilize a passenger side approach
- f. If the situation appears suspicious then you may issue the citation from the rear trunk of the squad car or other area that provides cover.
- g. Cover officer should move to the opposite side of the vehicle from the contact officer and stand at the rear quarter panel of the violator's car. This gives the best view of the interior of the vehicle.

The above listed procedures are provided as a guideline only. Each stop presents unique circumstances that must be address at that time. Officers should consider their experience and training when selecting the proper course of action to take in each circumstance.

Probationary Officer's Signature and Unit Number

Date

FTO's Signature and Unit Number

Date