VEHICLE STOP PROCEDURES

B. Procedure

1. The following procedures shall be used for stopping traffic violators, known or suspected misdemeanants, and for conducting field interviews of suspicious persons.

   a. Prestop procedure

      (1) Agents shall have reasonable suspicion for the stop.

      (2) The agent shall have considered the patrol roll call bulletins, recent MDT notices, and NCIC/CCIC to make sure the vehicle is not stolen.

      (3) The agent shall write the license number down and leave it in the police vehicle.

      (4) The number of occupants in the vehicle shall also be noted.

      (5) All radio transmissions shall be completed before turning on emergency equipment. A description of the vehicle, its license number, the number of occupants, the reason for the stop, and the location shall be transmitted to the dispatcher.

      (6) Close the distance on the violator's car and turn on the red lights.

   b. Pull-over procedure

      (1) Before you attempt the stop of the suspect's vehicle, make sure you know the street you are on in case you have to request assistance.

      (2) Turn on your red lights when you are close enough to see what the occupants do with their hands. At night, put your high beams/take down lights on at the same time you put on the red lights.

      (3) Short, loud signals with the horn can be used to signal the driver of the suspect vehicle. The siren shall be used only as a last resort.

      (4) Remember -- the most dangerous time for the agent is before the police car is stopped and parked and the agent is in a covered position.

      (5) Be alert for the occupants of the suspect vehicle to attempt to discard or conceal evidence.

      (6) The occupants may also attempt to gain access to a weapon. In many situations they may reach into the glove compartment for registration certificates or in the back seat for a purse or coat.

   c. Location of stop
(1) It shall be your choice - - make sure that your vehicle is parked legally, if possible, and out of the flow of traffic.

(2) Make a quick assessment of the hazards:

(a) Intersections

(b) Alleys

(c) Hostile environment

(d) Terrain

(e) Lighting

d. Positioning of vehicles

(1) Offset the police vehicle about half its width to the left and at least 10 feet behind the violator's vehicle.

e. Opening contact

(1) The agent's attention shall be focused on the occupants of the suspect vehicle.

(2) The volume of the police radio shall be turned up before leaving the vehicle.

(3) Be alert -- No vehicle stops are routine!

f. Approach to violator's vehicle

(1) The agent shall exit the police car as soon as possible. Upon approaching the vehicle, the trunk can be checked and movements of the occupants in the vehicle can be observed.

(2) The agent shall use caution in his approach and observe occupants in the back seat before walking past it.

g. Interview position

(1) Your safety shall be the primary consideration during traffic contacts.

(2) The agent shall minimize his exposure by standing just to the rear of the driver's window and in a position where, if the door were suddenly opened, he would not be pushed into the street or struck a disabling blow. This position forces the driver to turn slightly to look back at you. The suspect is at a physical and psychological disadvantage.
(3) The agent should not cross in front of his own headlights so as to silhouette himself.

(4) Keep the dispatcher advised of your location and your situation.

   (a) Request assistance if necessary, but do not ask for a "back-up." Tell the dispatcher the kind of assistance you need and the purpose.

   (b) Transmissions made under stress are not always clear to the dispatcher.

   (c) Give your assistance time to arrive before becoming further involved.

(5) If the assisting unit is unable to respond immediately, notify Communications of your delay and give the estimated time of arrival.

(6) When the assisting agent arrives, he shall park behind the first vehicle and be the cover agent.

(7) If it is necessary to arrest one or more of the occupants, all prisoners shall be handcuffed while in transit and the seat belts used. Prisoners shall be placed in the back seat.

(8) Most of the precautions taken during traffic stops are also necessary when contacting known or suspected felons. When the circumstances are known to the agents as felonious, every reasonable precaution shall be taken to control the suspects and prevent violence.

9125 HIGH RISK VEHICLE CONTACT

B. Procedure

1. Flexibility and coordination are the keys for conducting a safe high-risk vehicle contact. Coordination requires excellent communication among all participants in the contact. The primary agent directing the contact is responsible for making assignments to the assisting units and advising them of any changes necessary in the basic high-risk vehicle contact procedures.

2. The agent setting up and directing the high-risk vehicle stop must strive to avoid complex and involved deployment and prisoner control plans.
3. The primary agent is responsible for collecting and disseminating to his or her "team" as much relevant information (number of suspects, weapons, crime involved, etc.) as time and circumstances permit before the stop or contact begins.

4. A minimum of two police agents should be used to make a high-risk vehicle contact. It is up to the primary or directing agent to determine how much assistance he or she will require to affect the stop. A high-risk vehicle stop should not be attempted without sufficient backup on-scene.

5. Only one agent sets up the stop and gives initial instructions to participating police personnel. Normally, this same agent also issues verbal orders to the suspects (unless he designates another agent to handle this role).

6. Anytime suspects in a stationary vehicle ignore orders to exit, agents should remain behind cover and treat the situation as a barricade.

7. Clear and continuous communication among the police participants in the contact is mandatory throughout the operation. Continuing reassessment is also required so that all personnel are aware of changes in the threat level. Additional resources may be requested, as necessary.

8. As the contact begins, Code 1 is placed in effect on the police radio. When the plan has been communicated and the backups are ready, the primary agent gives the order to begin the stop and advises dispatch. He activates all emergency lights, takedown lights and spotlights, and sounds the siren.

9. The primary agent stops with his front bumper about 12 to 2 car-lengths behind the suspect's vehicle. The patrol car is directly behind the suspect vehicle, but the patrol car is angled slightly to the left to provide some protection from its engine block.

10. Whenever conditions permit, the first backup parks parallel with, and to the right of, the primary agent's car. If a second backup is available, that agent parks to the right of, and parallel to, the first backup (conditions permitting).

11. If space permits, additional backups park to either side of the initial three police cars. If not, they are parked behind the other patrol cars. If available, one agent should park his patrol car with emergency lights activated approximately a half-block behind the operation, stopping all traffic from entering the area.

12. Anytime more than a couple of backup agents are available, the primary agent should direct a flanker to the side of the suspect vehicle from which the suspects will be exiting. Ideally, the flanker should be either a patrol agent armed with a shotgun, or a SWAT agent armed with a rifle. The flanker will act as a forward observer and will provide cover. The flanker will not participate in the arrest itself.

13. Anytime a suspect flees on foot and there are additional suspects still in the vehicle, agents should not pursue until the parties have been removed from the car and secured.
14. Once the police cars are positioned, the primary agent will announce to the suspects, “This is the Lakewood Police Department. You are under arrest. Do exactly as you are told.”

   a. All suspects are told to interlock their fingers behind their heads. The driver is instructed to turn off the engine and toss the keys out the driver’s window.

15. One by one, the suspects are ordered out of their vehicle, preferably on the right side. (The left side should be used if the traffic conditions, terrain, or the lack of police coverage on the right side so dictates.) As each suspect exits, he is told to bring his hands up high and face the agents. This allows the agents to see the palm of the hands, as well as the suspect’s front waistband.

16. The suspects are proned out, one by one, in a line by the back bumper of their vehicle. The first suspect is proned closest to the suspect car, then others further out. The last suspect to exit is instructed to close the door(s).

17. If an agent spots a weapon on a suspect at any time during the contact, he/she alerts other agents and announces to the suspect, “We see the weapon! If you touch it, you will be shot.” The weapon remains in place until removed by the handcuffing/searching agent.

18. When all visible occupants have been removed, the primary agent issues a “bluff” verbal challenge: “You -- hiding in the vehicle -- sit up with your hands on your head. Do it now!” If there is no response, one agent (designated by the primary agent) approaches the suspect vehicle on the side opposite from the proned suspects.

   a. The agent checks to make sure that the trunk lid is closed and locked, then uses the body of the suspect vehicle as cover to check the interior for hidden suspects. Once the suspect vehicle is cleared, the agent relays this information to the primary agent.

19. The primary agent designates one agent as the contact/handcuffing person. All other agents are considered to be cover. The agents move forward to the suspect vehicle, and the contact/handcuff agent begins moving methodically down the line of proned arrestees, checking for obvious weapons before quickly handcuffing each prisoner using a prone control cuffing technique.

20. Once all suspects have been handcuffed, the contact agent assigns assisting agents to individual prisoners for a more detailed search. Suspects should be kept in the prone position until this second search is completed.

21. If adverse weather conditions make proning impractical or if the suspects refuse to be proned, then Koga kneeling method is the preferred position. In such a case, the suspect should face away from the agents after he has been instructed to turn all the way around so he can be visually checked for a weapon in his waistband.
22. If the suspect vehicle is a van, the driver should be ordered out first to open up the rear/cargo door. This allows agents to see suspects and movement inside. If side doors are present, they should be opened by the driver also. A flanker should be deployed to view inside.

23. If a vehicle has heavily tinted windows, at night the driver should be ordered to turn on the dome light. Again, side doors should be opened and a flanker deployed to view inside.

24. These tactics and procedures for high-risk vehicle contacts represent a starting point for the agent facing a potentially hazardous vehicle stop. The agent on-scene retains the flexibility to alter tactics for handling the "exceptional" situation, based upon his or her training, experience, and analysis of the specific problem at hand. This flexibility remains coupled with the requirement that all personnel are briefed as to the "game plan" and each person's role in it before the contact is made.