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# **Traffic Stops: High Risk Vehicle Contacts**

**Series II Video 5**

**Training Guide  
Program Overview  
Test Questions and Answers**

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## "Traffic Stops: High Risk Vehicle Contacts"

Series II Video 5  
Training Guide

### *The Newhall Incident*

Shortly before midnight, on April 5, 1970,  
California Highway Patrol Officers Walt Frago, 23, and Roger Gore, 23,  
called in that they had spotted the red Pontiac accused of brandishing a weapon at a motorist.  
After calling for backup, the officers followed the vehicle travelling southbound  
on then-U.S. Highway 99, now what is now Interstate 5,  
toward Los Angeles.

The vehicle pulled off the highway and turned into Jay's Coffee/Standard Station parking lot.

As Frago and Gore called them out and approached the car,  
the suspects shot the two young CHiP's officers dead.

Officers James Pence, 25, and George Alleyn, 24,  
pulled up and a terrible gunfight followed.  
Pistol and shotgun shots exploded in the night, and terrified on-lookers  
in the coffee shop ran for cover.  
Citizen Gary Kness drove up on the scene and tried to help the fallen officers.  
Just after midnight, on April 6, 1970,  
Pence and Alleyn lay dead too.

The suspects, Jack Twinning, 35, and Bobbie Augusta Davis, 28,  
escaped under the cover of darkness.

Twinning broke into a home approximately three miles from the shooting,  
not far from the Newhall CHiP's office,  
and held a man hostage.  
As Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputies cornered and closed in on Twinning,  
he stuck a shotgun, one he had stolen from one of the slain officers,  
under his chin and committed suicide.

Sheriff's deputies later captured and arrested Davis, who had stolen a camper at gunpoint.

Found guilty of murder and sentenced to die in the gas chamber,  
Davis' sentence was later commuted to life  
when California's capital punishment law was ruled as unconstitutional in 1972.

## HIGH-RISK VEHICLE CONTACTS

1. Higher potential for bodily harm to officers.
2. Present a greater threat to public safety.
3. Arrest situations that emphasize heavy subject control measures.

## Threat Assessment Factors

Be aware of common threat assessment factors that might determine a vehicle contact to escalate to high-risk stop:

### Officer(s)-subject(s) factors

#### **1. Nature of offense or call:**

- \* violent or potentially-violent offense that presents a greater potential risk. If an officer suspects that subject is involved in personal injury or death to another, robbery.

#### **2. Warrants for violent offenses/drugs:**

- \* if there is a warrant for the subject which involves a violent offense or certain drug offenses--particularly trafficking/
- \* if the warrant is for a non-violent offense, but the particular subject involved tells you that he or she is a higher risk.: a subject that reacts violently if stopped and questioned about the warrant, even though the warrant involves a non-violent offense.

#### **3. Pursuits:**

- \* if the subject does not heed your signals to pull over so that a pursuit is necessary. You do not know why that person does not pull over, but until you have further information, assume the subject has something to hide and is, then, a high risk.

*The following factors increase the risk, but they are not themselves causes to escalate to a high risk stop. A motor home with tinted windows does not by itself pose a hazard to officers. On the other hand, an officer should not approach a cop killer on a ten-speed bicycle.*

*Vehicle and Environmental factors may increase the risk to the officer and may dictate a non-approach stop tactic although not high risk tactics in and of themselves.*

#### Vehicle Factors

1. **Stolen Vehicle** or **suspected stolen vehicle** constitutes the most common high risk factor. Occupants are likely to react violently.
2. **Tinted Windows on vehicles** tend to hinder your ability to see inside.
3. **Large Vehicles**, such as **vans, trucks, motor homes, and buses**. Difficult to see inside for additional suspects and weapons.
4. **Number of vehicles** involved. **Multiple vehicles** add to the risk factor.

#### Environmental Factors

1. **Darkness** adds a risk factor in a stop.
2. **Rain, ice, fog, and snow** can hinder clear sight of occupants and vehicles.
3. Areas with **high presence of pedestrians: schools, residential areas, known gang areas, traffic parking lots**.
4. **Animals**, particularly **dogs**, pose problems to all concerned.

#### Special Concerns

1. Potential for **violent resistance** by a subject or subjects.
2. **Known or suspected presence of weapons** in the subject vehicle.

## Three Important Objectives of High Risk Vehicle Contact

**Communication**

**Coordination**

**Control**

### 1. Communication

Call in all vehicle contacts to dispatcher and give information you have learned: use **CYMBLE**

- C - color
- Y - year
- M - make
- B - body style
- L - license number
- E - equipment or accessories

#### Also, provide the following information:

- the reason for the contact
- verify wants and/or warrants
- update any relevant information and/or descriptions of subject vehicle and/or subjects in the vehicle
- any changes in direction of travel or speed
- what the subject vehicle is doing
- indication of amount of assistance needed

## **REMEMBER**

- \* Provide as much information as possible so that the Dispatcher or other officers who act as backup will have enough information to make proper decisions.
- \* You might have to contact another jurisdiction if you follow a subject vehicle out of your jurisdiction.

## **2. Coordination**

Coordination of activities in a higher risk contact is critical.

**DO NOT APPROACH THE SUBJECT VEHICLE ALONE.**

**WAIT FOR ADEQUATE BACKUP  
BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE TASKS OF STOP.**

Use the "Contact/Cover" Concept in a high risk stop to avoid confusion.

- A. **CONTACT OFFICER** - is initially in charge of the situation and has the responsibility for directing the subject (s), as well as other officers at the scene.
- B. **COVER OFFICER(S)** - assumes a proper tactical position to be able to observe subject behavior in response to Contact Officer, provides "cover" to Contact Officer, and is prepared to intervene as necessary.
- C. **ARREST CONTROL OFFICER** - takes care of handcuffing, searching, and intelligence gathering (debriefing subjects).
- D. **TRAFFIC CONTROL OFFICER(S)** - maintain perimeters of scene to help control traffic and prevent interference with the situation.
- E. **FORWARD OBSERVER** - provides information about the subject vehicle and assumes a proper tactical position to avoid a crossfire.

**IMPORTANT**

All officers should be in constant communication throughout the high risk vehicle contact. If there is communication about specific roles in advance, then the actual contact will likely move along more smoothly.

Be aware of location. Base the location of a stop on

*backup availability,  
considerations of public safety,  
and other tactical considerations.*

Clearly direct units safely into the area and into position.

Selection of weapons will depend on the specific roles.

**EXAMPLE**

- \* **Cover Officer** might deploy a shotgun or carbine.
- \* **Contact Officer/Arrest Control Officer** might carry only his or her own sidearm while in contact with the subject(s) because their duties may require them to use their free hand for other duties such as the P.A. system or because they may have to secure their weapon while handcuffing and searching a prisoner.

Be aware that buckshot does not penetrate most motor vehicle bodies and may ricochet off sloped auto glass. If limited to this load, a handgun may be a better option.

**Weapon selection should depend upon  
*tactical evaluation and threat assessment.***



### 3. Control

**DO NOT BEGIN A HIGH RISK STOP** until you have communicated between or among responding units to coordinate activities.

*A dynamic (volatile, changing) situation may develop very quickly, and you must make a contact to apprehend the violator and/or ensure public safety.*

- Maintain proper distance from the subject vehicle--a distance of four car lengths, or approximately fifty (50) feet.
- Maintain proper tactical alignment of contact and cover vehicles. The Contact Officer's objective is to be able to observe both sides of the vehicle.
- Illuminate the subject vehicle with squad spotlights to the maximum possible extent. Do this during day or night.
  - ◆ *This way you will be able to see what subjects are doing, but often makes it more difficult for the subject to see you.*
  - ◆ *If possible, control backlighting that might illuminate you from the back.*
- Consider all available cover and concealment so that if shooting starts, you will be able to take cover.
  - ◆ *Besides your squad car, look around for large objects, trees, ditches or culverts, trash bins, whatever.*

## **DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

Once you have begun a high risk vehicle contact, deploy the officers on the scene.

- \* Open your squad door and have you weapon (s) ready. This way if a subject exits his/her vehicle and rushes toward you, you will be prepared to defend yourself.
- \* Do not approach the subject. Instead use the P.A. to direct subject(s).
- \* Be sure to continue necessary radio communications with other officers. Use good radio discipline.
- \* Use your lights to enhance concealment, both during day and night.
- \* Note positions of other officers, avoid crossfire situations.

## **COMMUNICATE WITH SUBJECT(S)**

Only one officer--the Contact Officer--should give all commands.  
*Be consistent in your commands. Be clear, concise, and unemotional.*

1. Identify yourself as a police officer.
2. Tell the subject(s) that they are under arrest and you considered them armed and dangerous.
3. Tell how and what you expect from subject(s) and what commands you will give.
4. Clearly direct and identify the subject(s) by seating position (driver, passenger in the front seat, passenger in the backseat).
5. Once they are outside the vehicle, identify them by clothing description.

## EXAMPLES OF VERBALIZATION

"Occupants of the (**Color and make of car**), this is the (**Your specific department**). You are all under arrest. You are all considered armed and dangerous. We will be giving you a series of commands. When you are given a command, you will nothing until you hear the words...'*do it now*.' If you hear the word '*stop*,' you will immediately stop any and all movement. Any action take by you in violation of these commands will be considered an act of aggression against the officers and we will respond with appropriate force."

"Driver, place your hands outside the window. Do it now."

"All occupants in the Black Nissan, place your hands on your heads. Do it now."

"Front seat passenger, open the outside door using the outside latch. Do it now."

6. Direct subject(s) to show their hands or place their hands on a certain location (*on the dash, on the steering wheel, behind their heads, or outside the vehicle*).
7. Direct the driver to turn the engine off and keep the driver's window open.
8. Direct the driver (or a passenger, if appropriate) to turn the dome light on and keep the radio off.
9. Direct the subject(s) to release seat belts. This command may require that they use two hands to do so.

10. Direct the driver to remove the keys from the ignition and to display them, with hands extended, through the open driver's side window.
11. Once you have gained control of the subject(s), advise the driver as to the nature of the stop. If you are placing them under arrest, then tell them now.

### **REASSESS DEVELOPMENT/NEED FOR BACKUP**

You might need more backup at this time once you have reevaluated the situation and threat.

Be aware of the overall situation and new information (subject(s) not responding to commands, pedestrians or drivers coming into the area, the observation of weapons).

Consider alternatives sources of cover, if necessary.

Look for possible crossfires, and correct these problems in deployment of officers.

## **ARREST PROCEDURE**

In a high risk vehicle contact, arrest of a subject or subjects is often necessary. Because of the inherent danger of such a situation, it is critically important to follow basic arrest principles and procedures.

### **Basic Tactical Principles**

1. Only one officer--the Contact Officer--gives ALL directions to subject(s).
2. Other officers communicate information to the Contact Officer, such as movement or other behavior of a subject or subject(s).
3. Subjects will be exited from the subject vehicle one at a time, preferably from the driver's side or the side with the best view to the officers.
4. The driver exits first with the keys. That way the vehicle cannot then cannot be driven away. And often, the driver is the leader and so you must control that person first.
5. The Arrest Control Officer obtains enough handcuffs for all suspects.

### **THE DRIVER**

The Contact Officer should

1. Communicate the plan and intent of other officers.
2. Order the driver to open the driver's side door--preferably with the outside door handle--keeping hands outside and pushing open the door with his/her foot.
3. Order the driver to slowly step out of the vehicle, facing away from squads.

4. Order the driver to raise his/her hands as high as he/she can.
5. Order the driver to step away from the subject vehicle (one to three steps away).
6. Optionally, order the driver to kick the driver's door shut.
7. Order the driver to slowly turn around in a full circle with his/her hands raised high to expose the waistband.

*If the driver is wearing gloves or a hat (or other headgear), consider ordering him/her to remove such items.*

*If you see a weapon during the step, announce **GUN** loudly so that other officer are aware of it, and warn the subject not to reach for it.*

8. Order the driver to slowly step backwards toward the sound of the Contact Officer's voice.
9. Order the driver to continue walking backwards.

*Consider doing another visual inspection for weapons by ordering the driver to slowly turn around in a full circle with his/her hands raised high to expose the waistband.*

10. Direct the driver to the designated arrest control area, where the Arrest Control Officer(s) take over commands and arrest the driver.

*Ideally, the designated control area should be between the squads, in the area between the front wheel and the front bumper of the squads.*

11. Use the arrest control procedures taught in the jurisdiction or area.

*Do not attempt to remove weapons until the subject has been handcuffed.*

*The Arrest Control Officer should not leave cover until the subject is in an arrest control position and that the Arrest Control Officer is certain another officer is covering him, usually Contact Officer.*

12. Direct the driver into a control position:

***Subject prone** (lying face down) with his/her head pointed toward the subject vehicle and feet pointed toward the squad. The advantage is decrease subject mobility, but covering the Arrest Officer is difficult. Another option is suspect prone facing the squads which makes it easier for the Arrest Control Officer. It is still hard to cover Arrest Control Officer, and the suspect gets to look at the officers. In general, prone arrest control techniques are difficult because of the limited space around suspect.*

***Subject kneeling** - the preferred position because of easier disengagement for the officer than is subject is standing and offers less subject mobility.*

***Subject standing** - use only for speed and officer mobility.*

13. Be aware of law enforcement firearms behind you.
  14. If the situation quickly or suddenly escalates, push subject downrange.
  15. Handcuff driver.
  16. Conduct a cursory search of the driver's waistband.
  17. Direct subject to rear of squads for a more thorough search to be conducted according to procedures learned in Defensive and Arrest Tactics training.
-

*Consider asking the Contact Officer to engage the automatic trunk release, then put any weapons in trunk and close it.*

18. Question driver to try to gather intelligence on other subject(s), weapons, intentions, and so on.
19. Secure the prisoner in a squad. If possible, it should be a squad that is not involved in the stop.

### **OTHER OCCUPANTS**

1. Direct the other occupants in the same manner as the driver.
  2. You might have to alternate door exiting. On vans (not just for conversion, but especially so for these), it may be easier to exit the suspects on the passenger side sliding door if officers can maintain an adequate view of suspects.
  3. The last subject to exit the vehicle should be ordered to open the doors, so as to improve the view of officers into the vehicle without approaching it. If hidden occupants are detected, the suspect should be ordered to sit up and display his hands. If necessary, the door (s) could be shut again to reduce the opportunity to escape.
  4. If possible, separate the prisoners from each other, thus reducing the chances of a confrontation and does not allow them to collaborate on their stories.
  5. Keep all subjects under observation and control during their arrests.
  6. The Cover Officer(s) must stay with their assigned area of responsibility.
  7. Gather intelligence from other suspects about remaining/hidden suspects in the vehicle.
-



### CLEAR THE VEHICLE

After all the subjects that you are aware of have left the subject vehicle, the next step is to clear the vehicle.

The Contact Officer should call out loudly to challenge hidden subject and order them out of the vehicle.

This verbalization should be done even if you suspect the vehicle to be empty. You cannot guarantee that a subject is not still hidden in the vehicle or trunk.

Be patient and take your time. Issue the order several times and wait for a response.

After a period of time that you feel comfortable with, an officer, or preferably officers, can slowly approach with your weapons drawn and ready.

Have one officer open the trunk latch and have other officer(s) stand to one side to avoid a suspect hiding inside and shooting back.

Be careful along the way. You are leaving cover and concealment. Look for cover in case someone starts shooting or you see movement inside the subject vehicle.

Use your instinct itself. Trust it. Be aware of movement, condensation, light patterns, moving shadows, sound, and/or vibrations in the area of the vehicle.

If a forward observer involved in the situation, the officer should move on the same side of the subject vehicle at which the the forward observer is located.

Besides a One Officer or Two Officers Flank, you can use a K-9 unit to clear a vehicle.

Take enough time to clear the vehicle and continue to issue verbal commands and warning to possible subjects.

### You can have these other options:

Time (waiting)

Talk (continued dialogue)

Negotiations

Use of a tactical team

Then you can call an *all-clear* when you feel safe that you have cleared the vehicle.

ALERT, Inc., would like to thank Sergeant Harvey Hedden, of the Kenosha County, Wisconsin, Sheriff's Department, and Ed Nowicki, for their professional assistance with the production of this training guide and video.

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**TEST ANSWERS**  
*"Traffic Stops: High Risk Vehicle Stops"*  
Series II Video 5

1. c. kneeling
  2. b. Contact Officer
  3. Communication  
Coordination  
Control
  4. driver
  5. True
  6. alone, backup
  7. 4, 50
  8. d. Tell your subjects to wait for your backup.
  9. GUN
  10. False, turn off engine and throw out keys
  11. Trunk
  12. crossfire
  13. True
  14. clothing
  15. threatened or in danger
  16. False, to the side
  17. separate
-

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