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"Traffic Stops: Unknown Risks"

Series II Video 4

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

Training Guide
"Traffic Stops: Unknown Risks"
Series II Video 4

There is ALWAYS inherent risk in any contact.

*All vehicle contacts can be potentially dangerous
and be a possible threat to officer safety.*

A car can be a two and a half ton, 5000 pounds, lethal weapon.

"When officers make a stop, they sometimes see it as routine. A mistake.
You have to keep saying (to yourself), 'What if?'"

Ed Nowicki
Law Enforcement Trainer

**FIVE REASONS
FOR CONDUCTING VEHICLE CONTACTS:**

1. To issue a citation for a criminal or traffic violation
2. To issue a warning for a traffic or equipment violation.
3. To assist a motorist in apparent need.
4. To investigate a suspicious vehicle.
5. To investigate possible or suspected criminal activity unrelated to a motor-vehicle situation.

A PROPER ATTITUDE is important in surviving a traffic stop.

Be ALERT to the possibility of danger or threat from a subject or subjects.

When driving an emergency vehicle,
you must drive with "due regard" for public safety.

OBJECTIVES OF A VEHICLE CONTACT:

1. To protect yourself and others.

You need to act in such a manner that you are aware of possible dangers and do all you can to protect yourself and other people.

2. To protect your vehicle, the subject's vehicle, and any other vehicle from damage during the contact.

Where you position your vehicle is extremely critical.

3. To protect "due process."

It is your responsibility to ensure provision of a subject's right to "due process" in criminal proceedings. You must follow certain procedures during the contact.

a. Clearly identify yourself as a law officer

b. Verbally notify subject or subjects of suspected offense

c. Let subject know of rights

**As a law enforcement officer,
you should have legal justification to make
a stop or contact:**

1. It is your duty to enforce state motor vehicle laws and direct traffic by means of visual or verbal commands or signals.
2. You are authorize to arrest an individual if that person has an outstanding arrest warrant; if you believe that there is an issued warrant for that person's arrest; if you believe, on reasonable grounds, that another state has issued a felony warrant for the person's arrest; or if that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person is committing or has committed a crime.
3. You have reasonable suspicion that the person is committing, is about to commit, or has committed a crime.

**Once you have determined that
legal justification exists for you to make a vehicle contact,
then you have to determine whether
the contact is based on known or unknown information.**

KNOWN INFORMATION

that which is based on your belief that *there is possible cause* to make a stop, based on information about the vehicle, the driver, or the actions of the occupants in the vehicle.

UNKNOWN INFORMATION

You *do not have probable cause*, but instead you intend to make the contact because

- there is an unknown or disable vehicle
- a warrant
- a teletype
- a bulletin
- or a suspicious vehicle or vehicles, in which you have reasonable suspicion to investigate and the stop/contact is purely investigative in nature.

You might have to call in to get certain information or intelligence, so you need the following vehicle data:

- color*
- year*
- make*
- body style*
- license number*
- equipment or accessories*

ALWAYS CALL IN ALL TRAFFICS STOPS, VEHICLE LICENSE PLATE, LOCATION OF STOP, AND ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION TO THE DISPATCHER.

TROUBLESOME PLACES TO STOP A CAR:

1. Hillcrests
2. Curves
3. Heavy traffic areas
4. Narrow two-lane roads
5. Known high crime areas
6. Construction areas
7. Intersections

Choose an advantageous position for the stop.

Consider the following:

lighting,
traffic hazards,
environmental hazards,
and *the possibility of interference by spectators.*

If you determine that the stop will require the assistance of another officer or officers based on your assessment of the vehicle, occupants, offense, and environment, wait for the assistance before initiating the stop. You also wish to wait for the results of a check on warrants and warrants on the vehicle plate prior to initiating the stop.

THREE BASIC VEHICLE CONTACT POSITIONS:

1. *In-line position*: your vehicle is directly *in-line* with your subject's vehicle. You can use this position when there's a narrow shoulder or two-lane traffic. Your headlights, takedown lights, spotlight, and rotating lights should *all* be on.
2. *Off-set position*: You can use this position when there is a wider shoulder. It offers a *safety lane* for you to approach to the vehicle and avoid getting hit by on-coming traffic.
3. *Angle-left position*: it creates a safety lane, but also an area of *cover* using the front of vehicle and the motor. At night, though, headlights, which can offer concealment, point out and away from the vehicle your stopped.

What to remember when making a stop or vehicle stop:

1. Put the car in park, put on the emergency brake, unhook the safety belt, and open the door slightly (unless on highways with high speed traffic in close proximity).
 2. Keep watching the subject's vehicle and passengers, but also occasionally look in your rearview mirror and scan the area for oncoming traffic or someone approaching that might harm you.
 3. Keep your strong side (your gun side) free in case you have to draw your weapon.
 4. After you have called in your vehicle stop and there are not any outstanding warrants or concerns that might make it a non-approach vehicle, and that you have determined that you will approach the vehicle, then open you door cautiously, making sure that you don't walk out in dangerous traffic. Check your rearview mirror again for anything coming at you.
 5. Don't close your door securely and don't lock it (unless near high speed traffic), because you might have to return to your vehicle immediately. If you have to unlock your door, that might mean lost seconds that could cost you your life.
 6. Verbally ask the driver or occupants *to please keep their hands in view*.
-

7. Walk within the safety lane toward the vehicle.
8. Check the trunk to see if it is shut tight. Someone could be hiding inside and could attack you from behind.
9. As you reach the windows, scan the vehicle for hidden occupants, guns, or any other weapons that suspects could use against you.
10. Walk up to just behind the driver's door and identify yourself and why you stopping the vehicle. By staying behind the driver's door, you avoid getting hit if the driver opens it. (Some officers ask for license and registration before informing of the offense.)
11. Ask to see the driver's license, but don't closely inspect it there. Make the driver reach outside. You can do that back in the safety of your own vehicle. Advise the driver what actions you are taking, that is--citation, warning, etc.
12. Tell the driver to stay in the car and that you will return shortly.
13. Return to your car, always looking back for anything out of the ordinary, sudden movements, driver or occupants getting out of vehicle, or car leaves the scene.
14. As you sit in your car, if you have to write a citation, write high up the steering wheel so that you can always see the vehicle and occupants. You never want to look away for more than a few seconds.
15. Be aware of your surroundings, a crowd forming, individuals who approach your vehicles, anything that could be possible risks to you and to the stopped vehicle and its occupants.
16. When you return, repeat the same approach, leaving you door slightly ajar.
17. Hand the license back to the driver. NEVER REACH INTO THE CAR. Issue citation first, and when you have explained that process then return the license. If there are no other questions, advise the driver that he or she is free to go.
18. Say something such as "Drive safely." DON'T say "Have a nice day." Some drivers will take offense to that and explode and attack you. Don't hold court on the street.
19. Let the driver pull away before you turn you lights off.
20. As you pull away, look out for on-coming traffic.

Non-approach concerns:

1. Vehicles that afford concealment such vans, RV's, buses, semi's, vehicles with darkened windows
2. Multiple occupants in vehicle
3. Vehicle leaving the scene of a non-violent crime and suspects not thought to be armed or violent. (This stop might be a high-risk stop, depending upon the crime.)
4. Suspicious occupant behavior
5. During an approach stop, you make observations of the vehicle, occupants, or contents that cause you to be concerned. The non-approach stop offers increased officer protection.
6. High traffic area with little or no safety lane

You have some options on a non-approach stop:

1. Bring subject back to you to interview. Have subject stand in front of your car and you stand off to side, using the front of your car as cover or a barrier
2. Call for backup. Don't be paranoid to ask for help. Be safe, not sorry or a statistic.

NOTE:

If possible, do not interview subjects in your vehicle unless you frisk or pat down and handcuff those persons for your and their safety. Frisking does not always uncover concealed weapons.

Be careful of suspects who jump out of car and run toward you

Be alert if suspects keep one side, arm, or hand turned away from you.

If there are multiple occupants in the vehicle,
stay behind the passenger's door and ask the driver to pass
the driver's license back or have the passenger in the backseat
to pass it back.

Have front passenger to put hands on the dashboard.

Be aware of occupants reaching down or looking back at you
too often.

NIGHT STOPS:

1. Walk in a safety lane outside of your headlights. Don't cross in front of your headlights and give up your concealment; you then become a better target. You can walk around the back of your vehicle and up to the passenger side for safety reasons. Also, this movement will put the occupants off-guard.
2. Put your flashlight in your reaction armpit, keeping your strong side (gunside) free if you have to draw your gun.
3. Use your reaction hand to retrieve license, and don't inspect it closely at subject's vehicle.
4. Watch for on-coming traffic that could harm you or your subjects.

If you have any concerns, call for help. Sometimes it's better and safer to approach a vehicle with two officers. One officer can search a vehicle while the other interviews or watches the occupants.

ALERT, Inc., would like to thank the Wisconsin Department of Justice Law Enforcement Standards Bureau, Sheriff Allan Kehl, 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.

Test Questions
"Traffic Stops: Unknown Risks"
Series II Video 4

1. A proper attitude could help you survive a vehicle contact.

True

False

2. Name the two kinds of unknown risks stops:

a. _____

b. _____

3. When calling vehicle data into the dispatcher, which of these are unnecessary?

a. body style

b. motor size

c. make of vehicle

d. license number

4. Name the basic vehicle contact positions:

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

5. Vans with darkened windows and multiple occupants should be an approach vehicle stop.

True

False

6. During a night stop, you lose your _____ by crossing in front of your headlights.

7. Which vehicle contact position offers the best cover if an armed confrontation develops?

8. On a two-lane highway with little or no shoulder, you will probably use the _____ vehicle contact position.

Test Questions

"Traffic Stops: Unknown Risks" 2

9. When placing a subject in your vehicle, it's a good, safe idea to

a. _____

b. _____

10. At night, put your flashlight in your strong side hand.

True

False

11. Why should you look in your rearview as you get out of your car and approach a vehicle?

12. All persons driving an emergency vehicles, must drive with _____ for public safety.

13. Where do you closely inspect a subject's driver's license?

a. as you walk back to your car

b. at the driver's door

c. in the safety of your car

d. back at the station

14. When writing a citation or warning in your car, write _____ on the steering wheel.

15. Why should you check the trunk or rear doors of a car or van?

Test Answers
"Traffic Stops: Unknown Risks"
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1. True
 2. a. approach
 b. non-approach
 3. b. motor-size
 4. a. in-line b. off-set c. angle-left
 5. False, it is recommended as a non-approach vehicle contact
 6. concealment
 7. angle-left
 8. in-line
 9. a. frisk or pat down subject
 b. handcuff
 10. False, put in reaction side
 11. to avoid stepping out in on-coming traffic and look for someone in the area that might harm you.
 12. due regard
 13. c. in the safety of your car
 14. high up
 15. someone might be hiding inside that could attack you from behind
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