

TEXARKANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDERS MANUAL

SUBJECT	Motor Vehicle Stops		
NUMBER	1105.11	EFFECTIVE DATE	April 12, 2011
Scheduled Review Date	August 30, 2018	ISSUE DATE	April 12, 2011
Date Reviewed	June 27, 2017	REVISION DATE	June 27, 2017
APPROVED BY		ALEAP Standards	7.30

I. Purpose and Scope

A. Although stopping motorists on the highway for traffic violations or other purposes is often considered a routine function of patrol officers, it is one that has been demonstrated to be potentially dangerous for both officers and motorists even during apparently “routine” situations. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines that govern the manner in which officers of the Texarkana Police Department conduct motor vehicle stops.

II. Policy

- A. It shall be the policy of the Texarkana Police Department to implement and manage a set of guidelines that governs the manner in which officers of the Department conduct motor vehicle stops.
- B. It shall remain the policy of the Texarkana Police Department that all motor vehicle stops be performed professionally, courteously and with a view towards educating the public about proper driving procedures while consistently taking necessary steps to minimize the inherent dangers to the officer, the motorist and other users of the roadways within our City.
- C. Officers of the Department shall recognize and adhere to the guidelines set forth within this policy.

III. Procedures

A. Stopping and Approaching Traffic Violators

- 1. The following procedures are to be followed whenever possible. It is recognized that varying conditions such as roadway construction, traffic volume and the urgency of making vehicle stops may require officers to adjust these procedures to particular conditions.
 - a. Officers shall perform vehicle stops only when they have particular reason to do so.
 - b. Once an initial decision has been made to stop a motorist, the officer shall select an area that provides reasonable safety, avoiding curves, hills, heavily trafficked and poorly lit areas and roads without shoulders. Whenever possible, the officer shall also avoid the use of private drives, business locations and areas where a large volume of spectators are likely to gather.
 - c. When a location has been selected for the stop, the officer shall notify the communications center of the stop—providing unit location, a description of the vehicle, vehicle tag number

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and the number of occupants. At the officer's discretion or dispatcher's request, additional information may be exchanged.

- d. At the desired location, the officer should signal the operator to stop at the far right side of the roadway or at the safest spot by activating the overhead emergency lights and siren as necessary.
 - (1) On multilane roads, the officer may facilitate movement to the right shoulder by gradually changing lanes behind the violator until the right side of the roadway is reached.
 - (2) Should the violator stop abruptly in the wrong lane or location, the officer should instruct him/her to move by using the appropriate hand signals or by activating the vehicle's public address system.
- e. Once properly stopped, the officer should position the police vehicle about one-half to one car length behind the violator's vehicle and at a slight angle, with the front approximately 2 feet to the traffic side of the violator's vehicle.
- f. During periods that require the use of the patrol unit's spot light, the officer should position the police unit about one-half (1/2) to one car length behind the violator's vehicle at a slight angle with the front of the patrol unit offset approximately two (2) feet towards the traffic side of the violator's vehicle.
- g. When exiting the patrol vehicle, the officer should be particularly alert to suspicious movements or actions of the vehicle operator or passengers.
- h. Approaching from the driver's side, the officer should be observant of the passenger compartment and stop at a point to the rear of the trailing edge of the left front door in order to communicate with the driver.
 - (1) At any time the Officer believes it is safer or more tactical to approach the violator vehicle on the right (passenger) side, the officer may elect to approach the violator's vehicle in that manner.
 - (2) Officers may elect to stop at the rear of the rear passenger door and communicate with the driver from a distance which does not directly expose the officers to rear seat passengers.
- i. During those periods in which there are two officers within the police unit, the secondary officer shall be responsible for radio communications, note taking and relaying messages to the communications center. He/she will also act as an observer and provide cover for the primary officer.
- j. Non-uniformed officers operating unmarked patrol units that contain concealed emergency lighting/siren equipment shall not normally make vehicle stops for traffic violations.
 - (1) During those situations where a failure to act would create unreasonable risks of injury, death or significant property damage, personnel operating unmarked patrol units shall contact the communications center and request a marked patrol unit to act as the primary unit; however, depending upon the urgency of the situation—coupled with other factors unique to each situation—the unmarked unit may be utilized to conduct the traffic stop after the activation of the unit's concealed emergency equipment.
- k. Non-uniformed officers operating vehicles not equipped with emergency equipment shall not make motor vehicle stops unless there is imminent danger of the loss of life should they fail to take action. In other less urgent cases that demand action, officers shall contact the communications center to request a response from a marked patrol unit to act as the primary stopping unit and assist by directing the marked unit to the desired location.

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B. Issuing Citations

1. When issuing citations, conducting roadside sobriety tests or conversing with the violator, the officer and other parties should attempt to position themselves to the side of the road, clear of the motor vehicles.
2. As soon as possible, and unless providing such information compromises the safety of officer or other persons, officers of the Department shall introduce themselves—to include their name and their affiliation with the Texarkana Police Department—and explain to the citizen the reason for the stop. During periods that involve vehicle stops, this information should be provided before asking the violator for his/her driver’s license and registration.
 - a. The Texarkana Police Department subscribes to the following seven (7) point violator contact procedure. Section (5) below will remain the officer’s discretion:
 - (1) “ *Good Morning...Good Afternoon...Good Evening* ”;
 - (2) “ *My name is Officer/Sergeant/Lieutenant/Captain _____ with the Texarkana Police Department* ”;
 - (3) “ *May I see your driver’s license?* ”;
 - (4) “ *You have been stopped for the violation of _____* ”;
 - (5) “ *You will be issued a citation/warning/verbal warning for the violation* ”;
 - (6) Advise the violator of the court procedure; and
 - (7) “ *Drive safely and thank you for your courtesy* ”.
3. During the stop, the violator should remain within his/her vehicle while the officer issues the citation and conducts other police related functions. Violators should not be permitted to sit within a patrol unit while citations are being prepared or when other police related functions are conducted.
4. While preparing citations or performing other police related functions, the officer should take a position that serves to provide the officer tactical superiority while maintaining vantage over the violator, the violator’s vehicle and others.

C. Stopping an Approaching Motorist

1. In those cases when a motorist must be stopped in the midst of on-coming traffic, the following actions may be taken:
 - a. Position the police unit to the extreme right hand portion of the roadway, and as the violator approaches, signal him/her to stop by using hand signals and emergency lights.
 - b. Because of the potential hazard involved, officers shall not leave his/her vehicle when attempting to stop oncoming motorists.
 - c. If the violator complies with the hand signals and yields to the unit’s emergency lighting, the police unit may be turned around and appropriately positioned to the rear of the violator’s vehicle.
 - d. Should the violator be non-compliant with the hand signals/emergency lighting, the officers should safely turn the unit around and engage, stop and approach the violator in the prescribed

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manner. All pursuits shall be governed by the Department's pursuit policy which can be found within [General Order 1102.30---Pursuit Driving](#).

D. Stopping a Following Motorist

1. When stopping a violator who is positioned to the rear of the police unit, the following procedures may be followed:
 - a. The officer should move the police unit to the extreme right hand portion of the roadway, and as the violator passes, the officer should signal the violator to come to a stop.
 - b. Should the motorist fail to comply with the officer's signals, the officer should return the unit to the roadway, stop and approach the violator in the prescribed manner.
 - (1) Officers should not exit their patrol units in order to stop a violator who is positioned to the rear of the police unit.

E. Making High-Risk Traffic Stops (Felony Stops)

1. The following procedures may be employed when an officer initiating a traffic stop has reason to believe those within the vehicle may be armed and dangerous:
 - a. When preparing to stop the suspect's vehicle, the officer shall notify the communication center of the circumstances and provide a description of the vehicle, the vehicle's license plate number, the number of occupants within the vehicle, location and direction of travel. Appropriate assistance to safely conduct the stop should be requested.
 - b. Unless additional units will not become available to assist—or the urgency of the situation demands immediate action—officers should avoid initiating high-risk (felony) traffic stops without the assistance of other officers.
 - c. After selecting an appropriate location—and with adequate support units in place—the primary officer should signal the suspect to stop.
 - d. Once the suspect vehicle has been brought to a stop, officers should quickly exit their units and assume positions of cover. Officers should position their units approximately thirty (30) feet behind the suspect vehicle in a manner that provides the officers involved with tactical superiority while illuminating the interior of the suspect vehicle during periods of darkness.
 - e. The primary officer—or the officer who has the best vantage point—should issue verbal commands to those within the suspect vehicle utilizing the patrol unit's public address system. These commands should only be provided by one officer.
 - f. The officer giving the commands shall first identify himself/herself and notify the occupants they are considered armed and dangerous, indicate that all of the occupants within the vehicle are under arrest and instructions are to be followed without hesitation or suspicious movements.
 - g. The operator of the suspect vehicle should be ordered in separate commands to perform the following tasks, with the additional occupants issued these orders one at a time until all of the visible occupants have exited the vehicle:
 - (1) Lower his/her window;
 - (2) Remove the keys from the vehicle ignition with his/her left hand;
 - (3) Drop the keys onto the ground outside the vehicle;

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- (4) Open the door from the outside of the vehicle;
 - (5) Step out of the vehicle;
 - (6) Turn completely around;
 - (7) Face away from officers;
 - (8) Walk backwards until commanded to stop; and
 - (9) Lie face down on the ground with his/her hands outstretched to the sides.
- h. With the appropriate cover officers in place, officers should approach the suspect vehicle to inspect the passenger compartment and trunk.

F. Stopping Oversized and Over Weighted Vehicles (Commercial Vehicles)

1. In the event an officer needs to stop commercial and similarly configured oversized or over weighted vehicles, the following procedures should be followed:
 - a. Select a location for the stop that provides adequate room for the vehicle's size and sufficient stability for its weight. Adequate time and distance must be allowed for the operator to bring the vehicle to a stop.
 - b. Approach the cab from the rear while using the driver's side outside mirror to observe the driver and his/her activity occurring within the cab.
 - c. Officers are prohibited from climbing onto the vehicle's running boards to make contact with its driver. Officers are encouraged to maintain a position to the rear of the driver's side door and issue commands that otherwise order the driver to exit the vehicle.

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