



TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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BUS STOP TACTICS

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (LACMTA) buses provide transportation service for over 1.5 million people each day. Bus patrons generally enjoy a peaceful, uneventful ride to their destination. However, incidents sometimes occur that require police action.

The physical layout and the many windows of a bus often restrict officers from employing conventional tactical methods for stopping, searching, and clearing the bus. Officers stopping a bus for a traffic violation or minor investigation should follow basic vehicle pullover procedures. However, due to the unique aspects of a bus, modified tactics are required to conduct an investigative/high-risk bus stop. The purpose of this Bulletin is to inform officers how to safely stop a bus, disable the engine, conduct an investigation, and, when applicable, enter to confront a person or make an arrest in the safest manner possible. Remember, any basic pullover may become a high-risk pullover at any time.

Tactical Considerations

Officers stopping a bus for any reason should keep in mind the following tactical considerations unique to buses:

- Narrow foot wells and aisles can provide an advantage to a suspect by limiting the approach and maneuverability of officers.
- Elevated passenger areas prevent direct observation of the seating area. Observations are restricted to views of seated passengers from chest level up. This gives a potential suspect the strategic high ground advantage over approaching officers.
- Most buses do not have a rear window. This prevents officers from seeing inside the bus from the rear. However, this does provide officers with a tactical advantage when approaching from the rear.
- Shaded windows hinder the ability of officers to see inside.
- Multiple entry/exit points.
- Multiple emergency exits may permit an unanticipated escape from the sides or roof of a bus and must be monitored.
- Location (often a high traffic area), type of stop, and approach.
- Large numbers of passengers could present a safety concern should they unexpectedly disembark.
- A staging area should be considered if passengers must disembark.

Silent Alarm System

All LACMTA buses are equipped with a Silent Alarm System (SAS) located on the driver's console. Bus operators are instructed to activate this system only during dangerous situations, such as when a bus operator and/or passengers are confronted with a violent or possibly armed suspect(s) and police response is required.

An SAS activation **does not disable** the mechanical operation of a bus. When the alarm button is activated a number of things happen:

- The LACMTA Communication Dispatch Center is alerted.
- The LACMTA dispatcher will contact LAPD Communications Division and provide the bus number, direction of travel and scheduled stop locations.
- The bus driver's two-way radio system is disengaged. This is designed to prevent a hostage situation from developing by not allowing the suspect(s) to make verbal demands to the dispatch center.
- The signs on the front and right front side, which normally display the route number and destination, will change to "Emergency - Please Call Police."
- The exterior running lights will begin flashing to attract attention.
- Bus operators are trained to use the "**SLOW**" concept when dealing with the police. **Stop** the bus, **Leave** lights on inside, turn **Off** engine and open all doors, **Walk** to nearest police officer.

Officers assigned to a call on an SAS activated bus should treat the pullover as a high-risk stop. Once the bus stops, the situation may become unpredictable. The bus operator and/or passengers may panic and exit. If the bus operator exits the vehicle as officers approach, the driver should be directed to a safe location out of the flow of traffic and to the rear of the bus. Some passengers may either run away to escape from the suspect(s) or linger around the bus looking for direction. Officers should also be aware that the suspect(s) may exit and attempt to escape by blending in with the passengers. Treat everyone who exits with respect but also, as a potential suspect until determined otherwise. Therefore, providing clear instructions is important.

High Risk Bus Stop Procedures

Three 2-officer units are recommended to perform a high-risk bus stop. A stop with less than six (6) officers should only be attempted when exigent circumstances exist or time constraints are so critical as to warrant it. During a high risk situation, any actions after the actual stop has been made should be attempted only when additional officers arrive. Ideally, additional resources should be requested for traffic and perimeter containment. When possible, a staging area should be identified in the event passengers start to disembark before back-up arrives.

Primary Unit

The primary unit has the responsibility of controlling the situation. The senior officer acts as the "team leader" and if possible will select a location away from crowds and other traffic to make the stop. The team leader will generally give all verbal commands to minimize confusion.

When a site has been selected, the primary unit activates its emergency lights. Once the bus pulls over, the primary unit deploys approximately 15 to 20 feet behind the bus, at an angle to the curb.

Secondary Unit

The secondary unit deploys approximately 15 to 20 feet behind and offset to the left of the bus. The driver and passenger officer exit the vehicle and take appropriate positions of cover. These officers cover the left side and top of the bus.

Tertiary Unit

The tertiary unit deploys directly behind the secondary unit. The driver and passenger officer exit the vehicle and take appropriate positions of cover. These officers provide security to the rear area and are responsible for controlling passengers directed out of the bus.

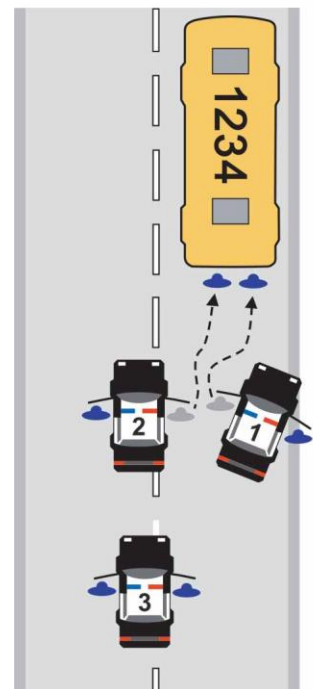
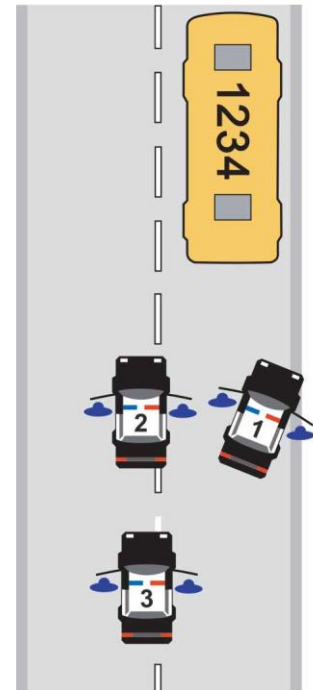
Disabling the Bus

All buses are equipped with an engine-disabling switch. The bus disabling switch panel is located in the engine compartment. The team leader will direct an officer, along with a cover officer to disable the bus.

To immobilize a bus:

- 1) Open the engine compartment door using the release latch located near or behind the license plate.
- 2) Turn the "Engine Run" switch to the OFF position (the disabling switch panel has three toggle switches labeled: "Lights," "Engine Run," and "Start.") This action will disable the engine and prevent the bus from being driven, but will not turn off the lights.

After the bus is disabled, these officers become part of the contact team.



Situation Evaluation

One of the following scenarios may occur that will affect your decisions and tactics:

1. The bus operator following the “SLOW” concept exits the bus and walks to the nearest police officer;
2. The bus operator, followed by the passengers, exits the bus as instructed. The suspect(s) exits the bus as directed and is arrested by officers;
3. The bus operator and passengers exit the bus, but the suspect refuses to exit and officers must determine if it has risen to a barricaded suspect situation; or,
4. The suspect(s) will not allow the bus operator or passengers to exit creating a hostage situation.

For scenarios 3 & 4, officers should request resources to secure the area and establish a perimeter. Following the four Cs concept, notification should be made to the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Section, Metropolitan Division.

Tactical Four Cs

- Control
- Communicate
- Coordinate
- Contain

Operator Exits the Bus

Generally, a bus operator trained in the “SLOW” concept will stop the bus, leave the lights on inside, turn off the engine and open all doors, exit the bus and walk to the nearest police officer.

If the operator and passengers remain on the bus, the team leader, using the police vehicle public address (PA) system, will instruct the bus operator to exit the bus, leaving all the doors open, and come to a secure location to the rear of the bus. The team leader will designate an officer to interview the bus operator.

Once the bus operator exits the bus, examine the LACMTA identification card to verify the operator’s identity. Determine the problem, number of suspects, their description, location on the bus, and if any weapon is involved.

Call Passengers off the Bus

Use the police vehicle’s PA system to communicate to the passengers. Instruct the passengers to exit through the front door with their arms above their heads. Direct each passenger to rotate 360 degrees to check for weapons, if feasible.

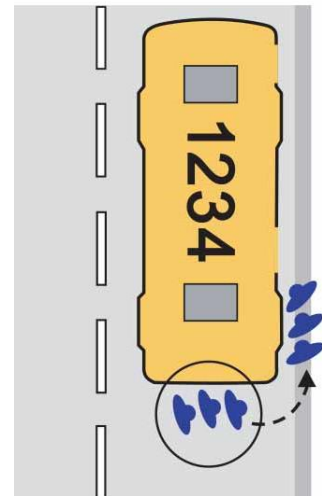
Once a visual search has been completed have the passengers walk to the rear of the bus or other safe area. Designated officers can then conduct a further search if necessary and interview the passengers from a secure location.

When all passengers have exited the bus, the team leader will give commands to the suspect(s) to exit. If the suspect(s) refuses to exit, an arrest team (contact officer, cover officer and team leader (with less lethal weapons) may have to enter the bus and apprehend the suspect(s).

Arrest Team

The arrest team will approach the rear door of the bus along the right side as quickly as possible, staying close to the side panel. Officers should watch the right side rearview mirror for activity inside the bus to determine the location of the suspect(s).

Once at the rear door of the bus, officers can view the interior and center aisle through the side windows, which are usually low and quite large. By conducting “quick peeks” the officers may be able to locate where the suspect(s) is positioned and communicate with him or her before entering the bus.



Suspect Apprehension

The arrest team will continue along the rear of the bus and enter through the rear side door. If closed, one of the officers, crouched low, can manually open the door. The contact and cover officers enter first, taking positions of safety behind the seats on both sides of the aisle.

The team leader will stay near the rear door and direct the operation, guard the officers and prevent other individuals from entering or aiding the suspect(s).

When the suspect(s) is located, the contact officer will order the suspect(s) to stand up, face away, with arms raised. The contact officer will then order the suspect to walk backwards to them. If the suspect(s) fails to comply, the contact and cover officers should advance cautiously. The contact officer will take the suspect(s) into custody and conduct a thorough search. Be aware, the seats block an officer's view and additional suspects may be lying in wait to attack a passing officer.

CONCLUSION

A high-risk bus stop presents a tactical challenge to police officers. By following these procedures, developing a flexible tactical plan and having sufficient resources, officers can maximize a safe apprehension of the suspect(s) in a bus.

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