



TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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OFF-DUTY ACTIONS

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide officers with factors to consider before taking police action while off-duty.

Each year, peace officers are seriously injured and killed during off-duty enforcement actions. Off-duty incidents give light to the critical importance of officer safety and general environmental awareness.

Under California law, off-duty officers have peace officer authority to take action as to any public offense committed or when there is probable cause to believe an offense has been committed in their presence and with respect to which there is immediate danger to person or property, or the escape of the perpetrator of such offense. However, off-duty officers both inside and outside the City limits should give **first consideration to the responsible law enforcement agency to take the appropriate action**. Off-duty officers should act only after considering the tactical situation and possible liability for themselves and the City of Los Angeles.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Good judgment is critical to the success and safe outcome of any off-duty peace officer action. Officers should consider the safety risks involved to themselves and to others before taking any peace officer action while off duty. Unless presented with no other option, **being a good witness may be the off-duty officer's best course of action**.

Officer Recognition

Suspect(s) may not recognize or take the officer seriously.

- Suspect(s) may fail to acknowledge or follow any commands issued by an officer who is not armed and/or not in uniform
- If officers decide to take any peace officer action while off duty, they should clearly identify themselves as peace officers

Responding officer(s) may fail to recognize the off-duty officer as a peace officer.

- Off-duty officers may not be in an area within their own jurisdiction

- Responding officers may mistake an off-duty officer for a suspect or an accomplice

Being identified as a peace officer may place the officer at greater risk.

- A situation may escalate merely because the suspect becomes aware that a peace officer is present.
- Indicators that an individual may be a peace officer include:
 - Clothing that depicts peace officer employment
 - Police equipment that is not concealed
 - Personalized license plates or plate frames that indicate peace officer activities or status
 - Peace officer decals on personal vehicles
 - Wallets containing badges, official identification, or peace officer related business cards

Family Members/Friends Present

When off duty, officers need to seriously consider the potential danger to themselves and family members or friends who may be with them at the time.

- Do you have a plan if something should occur?
- Do your friends or family members know what to do?
- Consider programming 911/local police numbers into family cell phones.
- If you or your family are being followed, do not go home, drive to a police station.

Tactical Limitations

Officers rarely have all or even part of their normal equipment with them when they are off duty (i.e. radio, handcuffs).

Communication Equipment

Communication equipment may be lacking or inadequate. Officers may not be able to:

- Call in the incident
- Request backup officers
- Request any other assistance

Use of Force

Officers taking police action or who get involved in a use of force while off duty are subject to the same objectively reasonable standard used to adjudicate on-duty uses of force.

If Involved in an Off-Duty Incident

- Identify yourself in a loud, clear voice to responding uniformed personnel
- Keep your hands away from any weapon(s) and don't make sudden moves that may appear threatening (i.e., reaching for wallet or badge)
- Follow all commands given to you by uniformed personnel (this is not the time to let ego get in the way)
- Relay any suspect(s) information and direction of travel as soon as possible

CONCLUSION

A successful and safe outcome of any off-duty peace officer action requires situational awareness and good judgement. In an effort to balance officer safety and a sense of duty, officers should always consider the safety risks involved to themselves and others before taking any action while off duty. Unless taking action is unavoidable or absolutely necessary, being a good witness may be an off-duty officer's best option depending on the totality of the circumstances.

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