

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND	2
TOPICAL OUTLINE	2
I. INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION	3
II. VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION	5
III. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLE (DMV)	6
IV. CARGO HIJACK	8
V. CHOP SHOP INVESTIGATIONS	10
VI. VEHICLE FRAUD	12
VII. FIELD EXERCISE	16
VIII. TEST AND CRITIQUE	16

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

BACKGROUND

The course is directed at the training needs of detectives responsible for patrol officers investigating auto theft in the field. The Auto Theft Investigation for Patrol Officers Course provides the necessary information for patrol officers to perform their job. It also presents the duties and responsibilities frequently faced during an auto theft.

TOPICAL OUTLINE

Introduction and Orientation	.5 hour
Vehicle Identification	1.5 hours
Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Documents	1.5 hours
Cargo Hijack	.5 hour
Chop Shop Investigations	1.0 hour
Vehicle Fraud	1.0 hour
Field Exercise	1.0 hour
Test and Critique	1.0 hour
TOTAL	8.0 Hours

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Auto Theft Investigation for Patrol Officers Course
Expanded Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

- A. The course coordinator will perform the following tasks:
 - 1. Administrative Functions
 - a. Distribution of course materials

- B. The course coordinator will welcome the students.

- C. The course coordinator will explain the purpose of the course and the course objectives.
 - 1. The course is designed to provide patrol officers with the necessary information to perform their job when handling auto theft investigations.
 - 2. The classes offered in the course represent a sound basis of duties and responsibilities frequently faced by patrol officers when handling auto theft investigations.
 - 3. The course will prepare the students to meet the Department's goals and objectives.
 - a. **Core Value**
 - (1) "Quality through continuous improvement"

- D. Course schedule
 - 1. The course consists of six classes.

- E. Promptness
 - 1. Class breaks for lunch at 1130 hours and resumes at 1230 hours.
 - 2. Instructors should provide breaks approximately every hour.

- F. Critiques
 - 1. The students shall complete their critiques.
 - 2. The critiques shall be turned in with the final examination.

- G. Attendance
 - 1. Sign-out form
 - a. Students shall sign out when they are not attending class.
 - 2. Attendance roster
 - a. Students are required to sign the attendance roster to track attendance.

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

3. California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) roster
 - a. Students are required to sign the POST roster to get credit for the course.

- H. Dress Code
 1. The students may wear casual attire.
 - a. No Shorts
 - b. No tank tops
 - c. No sandals

- I. Parking
 1. The course coordinator shall explain the parking procedures for the facility.

- J. Food and drink in the classroom
 1. The course coordinator shall explain the rules for the facility.
 2. Location of eating establishments shall be given to the students.

- K. Facilities
 1. The course coordinator shall explain the following:
 - a. Location of restrooms
 - b. Location of vending machines
 - c. Location of break and smoking areas

- L. Telephone availability, pagers and cell phones
 1. Pagers
 - a. Set in vibration mode
 - b. Return calls at the break if possible
 2. Cell phones
 - a. Turn them off
 3. Location of telephones
 4. City Hall operator
 - a. Phone number: (800) 439-2909
 5. Emergencies
 - a. All emergencies should be handled through Commercial Crimes Division.
 - b. Roll of the course coordinator during an emergency

- M. Tape recordings of instructors
 1. A student must get prior permission from the instructor before tape recording.

- N. What is needed to pass the course?

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

1. The student must be in attendance.
2. Students must actively participate in class discussions and exercises.
3. Must pass a final examination.
 - a. Multiple choice or true/false examination
 - b. The minimum passing score is 70%.
4. The course coordinator shall explain the grade scale to the students.
 - a. Grading scale
 - (1) 100 – 90 = A
 - (2) 89 – 80 = B
 - (3) 79 – 70 = C
 - (4) 69 – 60 = D
 - (5) 59 and below = F

O. **Learning Activity:** Individual Activity “*Student Introductions*”

1. The students shall introduce themselves to their classmates:
 - a. Name
 - b. Rank
 - c. Division or Agency of assignment
 - d. Years in law enforcement
 - e. Years with LAPD or other agency
 - f. What do you expect to learn from this course?

P. Conclusion

1. The instructor will answer the students’ questions.

II. VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION

A. Introduction

1. The course coordinator will introduce the instructor to the class.
2. The student will be introduced to the Lesson Goals and Performance Objectives.
3. The reasons for the class and the importance of vehicle identification.
4. **Core Values**
 - a) “Integrity in all we say and do”
 - b) “Quality through continuous improvement”

B. Vehicle Theft

1. Annual rate of auto thefts within the State of California
2. Annual rate of auto thefts within the City of Los Angeles
3. Type of tools used

C. National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) books

1. What are they?
2. What do they contain?

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

D. History

1. Secondary numbers started in the 1930's
2. Prior to 1955, all vehicles registered by engine number
 - a) Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) not descriptive
 - b) Change engine
 - c) Change registration
 - d) Usually not re-registered under new engine
3. 1955 all vehicles registered by VIN
 - a) Usually 8 to 10 digits
 - b) Descriptive
 - c) Make, year and plant, production number
4. Stainless steel plate
 - a) Spot-welded, left door hinge area
5. Most engine numbers removed in 1955
 - a) Started to stamp engine/transmission numbers again in 1968
 - b) Engine/transmission numbers are a derivative of the VIN

E. Foreign vehicles

1. Passenger vehicles VIN stamped into firewall.
2. Toyota and Nissan trucks VIN stamped in different areas.

F. Check digit

1. Formula protected by law
2. Check digit in VIN automatically checked by computer

G. NHSTA Stickers

1. Placed on 14 different locations on certain high-dollar vehicles
2. Possible 20 locations on some vehicles

H. Can provide expert testimony in court

I. Conclusion

1. The instructor will answer the students' questions.

III. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLE (DMV)

A. Introduction

1. The course coordinator will introduce the instructor to the class.
2. The student will be introduced to the Lesson Goals and Performance Objectives.
3. The reasons for the class and the importance of recognizing fraudulent DMV documents.
4. **Core Values**

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- a) “Integrity in all we say and do”
- b) “Quality through continuous improvement”

B. Jurisdiction and Responsibilities of DMV

- 1. Responsible for:
 - a) Counterfeits
 - b) Altered or false applications
 - (1) Driver licenses
 - (2) Identification or title documents
- 2. The investigation unit also has jurisdiction with:
 - a) Automobile dealerships
 - b) Dismantlers
 - c) VIN verifiers and manufactures

C. California Vehicle Ownership Document

- 1. Many series; each series has different safety features.
 - a) Note the color of pink
 - (1) Current colors 60
 - b) Basket weave background
 - c) Clear state seal
 - (1) 2 ¼” diameter
 - d) All words spelled correctly
 - e) Press numbers located at the lower right hand corner
 - (1) The Press number is a part of the original printing process and not stamped.
 - f) Horizontal state seals on the backside
 - g) Safety paper
 - (1) Reacts to bleach
 - (a) Bleach must be fresh to work test on valid sample.
 - (b) When applied to safety paper, the stop or void will appear.
 - (c) No safety paper 1979 – 1981, prefixes TX/TTX

D. New title

- 1. Title first issued in September 1, 1989
- 2. The colors, green, yellow and pink are blended to allow detection of color copies.
- 3. The engraved border is lithograph.
 - a) This is harder to reproduce.
- 4. Under the State of California there is a high-resolution border incorporating a microprint line that under magnification reads “California Department of Motor Vehicles.”
- 5. The safety paper will react to 20 chemicals such as bleach.
 - a) The reaction that you will see is the word “STOP.”

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- b) Everything else is the same as a pink title.
- c) Horizontal state seals, sequential numbers on the right hand corner, etc.
- d) On the backside of the title you will notice the “certifying under penalty of perjury” statements regarding transfer of ownership and mileage statements by dealers.

E. Lien sales

- 1. The instructor will pass out the information packets.

F. California driver licenses

- 1. Built-in security features transparent retro reflective film
 - a) 26 current formats.
- 2. New California driver licenses
 - a) Made of plastic
 - b) The alpha and numeric information on the front of the card is also on the magnetic stripe
 - (1) This information is held in digitized form in a vendor's computer database for retrieval
 - c) Magnetic stripe card
 - (1) Transparent hologram covering the face of each card with three-dimensional multi-colored images
 - d) California State seal
 - e) The magnetic stripe may be read with DMV telecommunications system.
 - (1) Public line
 - (2) Court line
 - (3) Law enforcement line
- 3. California Department of Motor Vehicle **Video: “Is it Valid?”**
 - a) The class will discuss the key topics from the video tape.

G. Conclusion

- 1. The instructor will answer the students' questions.

IV. CARGO HIJACK

A. Introduction

- 1. The course coordinator will introduce the instructor to the class.
- 2. The students will be introduced to the Lesson Goals and Performance Objectives.
- 3. The reasons for the class and the importance of the correct reporting procedures and notifications when cargo thefts and hijacks occur.
- 4. Core Values
 - a) “Service to our communities”

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- b) “Integrity in all we say and do”
- c) “Quality through continuous improvement”

B. Video: “The Fast and The Furious”

- 1. The class will view the video.

C. Definition of Hijack and Cargo thefts

- 1. CARGO THEFT - Any theft of a commercial vehicle where the object of the attack is the cargo
- 2. KIDNAP/ROBBERY - Any taking of a commercial vehicle by force or fear, moving the driver against his will.

D. Hijack/Cargo thefts

- 1. The proper notification procedures
 - a) Burglary-Auto Theft Division (BAD) shall be notified of all cargo-theft/hijacks
- 2. Responsibilities of BAD
 - a) Burglary-Auto Theft Division has the investigative responsibility for the investigation of all cargo-thefts/hijacks involving commercial vehicles.

E. Types of Crimes Involved with Cargo Theft

- 1. Grand Theft Auto
- 2. Receiving Stolen Property
- 3. Kidnap
- 4. Grand Theft

F. Initial Investigation

- 1. Determine related crime
- 2. Secure Crime scene
- 3. Notify victim(s)
- 4. Interview driver
- 5. Interview trucking company dispatcher/owner
- 6. Check area for additional clues/witnesses
- 7. Notify Photos and prints
- 8. Notify Cargo Theft Detectives

G. Types of Trucks/Trailers

- 1. Chassis/Container
- 2. Refrigerated Trailer
- 3. Conventional Truck/Tractor
- 4. Cab-over Truck/Tractor
- 5. Bobtail Truck

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

H. Conclusion

1. The instructor will answer the students' questions.

V. CHOP SHOP INVESTIGATIONS

A. Introduction

1. The course coordinator will introduce the instructor to the class.
2. The student will be introduced to the Lesson Goals and Performance Objectives.
3. The reasons for the class and the importance of the proper procedures when conducting chop Shop investigations.
4. **Core Values**
 - a. "Integrity in all we say and do"
 - b. "Quality through continuous improvement"

B. Chop Shop

1. What is a "Chop Shop?"
 - a. 250 VC-Chop Shop definition
2. Establishing chop shop ownership
 - a. 10801 VC-Chop Shop owner/operator
3. Applicable Vehicle Code Sections
 - a. Laws
 - (1) 10802 VC-Chop Shop activities
 - (2) 10803(a) VC-Buyer
 - (3) 10803(b) VC-Seller
 - (4) 10750 VC-Altering VIN
 - (5) 10751 VC Manufacturer's Serial/ID No.
 - (6) 10752 VC Fraudulent Acquisition or Disposition of VIN
 - (7) 496 PC-RSP

C. Investigations

1. Notifications
 - a. Burglary-Auto Theft Division (BAD)
 - (1) Commercial Auto Theft Section (CATS)
 - (2) Phone: (213) 485-2676
2. Patrol officer responsibilities
 - a. Contact Area Auto-Theft detectives for advice, when available
 - b. Contact BAD/CATS for assistance
 - c. Notify Scientific Investigation Division Photo and Latent Prints Sections
 - d. Separate suspects. Interview suspects separately and attempt to obtain statements.
 - e. Secure consent search or obtain a search warrant

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- f. Investigating officer is to COORDINATE search location
 - g. Examine each vehicle to determine if it is a straight stolen or Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) switched stolen vehicle.
 - (1) Note: Check and verify all VIN numbers and license plates.
 - h. Examine vehicles for stolen parts (engine, transmissions, etc.).
 - i. Attempt to identify all serialized parts.
 - (1) Contact the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) to cross reference (800) 635-3709.
 - j. Contact victim and obtain description of personal property in stolen vehicle.
 - k. Impound identifiable and/or suspected stolen parts.
 - (1) Note: Non-serialized parts
 - (a) (1) report/(1) DR#
 - (i) (14) doors
 - l. Book all specialty tools used to facilitate the GTA/VIN switch operation.
 - m. Document who and where evidence was recovered.
 - n. Search location for:
 - (1) Stolen property
 - (2) Documents to establish suspect's dominion and control of the premises (utility bills, letters, etc.).
 - (3) Documents containing vehicle information which may lead to other stolen vehicles and/or chop locations
 - o. Identify and interview witnesses, including neighbors.
3. Examination and collection of evidence
- a. Search for
 - (1) Stolen Vehicles
 - (2) Component Parts
 - (3) Personal Property
 - (4) Tools of the Trade
 - (5) Investigative Leads
 - (6) Dominion and Control
4. Interrogation and statements
- a. Lock suspect into a story
 - (1) Determine ownership
 - (2) Determine when and who brought the vehicle/part
 - (3) Condition of vehicle/parts
 - b. Cover all vehicles/parts
5. Reports
- a. Engines/Transmissions
 - b. License Plates
 - c. VIN Plates
 - d. Sheet-metal parts

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- e. Non-serialized Parts
- 6. Search Authority
 - a. Search Warrant
 - b. Parole/Probation search
 - c. Consent
- D. Conclusion
 - 1. The instructor will answer students' questions.

VI. VEHICLE FRAUD

- A. Introduction
 - 1. The course coordinator will introduce the instructor to the class.
 - 2. The student will be introduced to the Lesson Goals and Performance Objectives.
 - 3. The reasons for the class and the importance of the proper procedures when conducting vehicle fraud investigations.
 - 4. **Core Values**
 - a. "Integrity in all we say and do"
 - b. "Quality through continuous improvement"
- B. Vehicle Theft by Fraud
 - 1. Due to the availability of personal information, vehicle theft by fraud is increasing.
 - 2. No longer is auto theft a Los Angeles County problem. It now crosses international borders.
- C. International
 - 1. Organized International Crime Groups based on regional and ethnic groups
 - a. Middle Eastern Groups (Arabs)
 - b. Far East Groups (Asians)
 - c. Immigrants from New Republics of the former Soviet Union
 - d. Groups based upon ethnic and regional associations, street gangs
 - e. Independent person(s) of all ethnic backgrounds
- D. Where the Cars Go
 - 1. Fraudulent registration
 - 2. Sold on the street
 - 3. Exported
- E. Obtaining Information (For Fun & Profit)
 - 1. Dumpster diving

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

2. Mail box theft
 3. Mail vehicle theft
 4. Purse/wallet theft
 5. Insiders
 6. Internet
 - a. Lexus-Nexus, Docusearch, etc.
 7. Burglary
- F. Complete Fraudulent Application
1. Phony information supplied
 2. Identification (DMV, cut & paste or purchase)
 3. Social security number
 4. Employment history
 5. Address
 - a. P.O. Box
 - b. Associates address
 - c. Former address
 - d. Mail forwarding
- G. Partial Fraudulent Application
1. Name: true or altered
 2. Address: true or mail drop
 3. Employment: true, inflated or mail drop
- H. Impersonations
1. Theft of Identity
 - a. Assume the identity of a living or dead person
 2. Why?
 - a. Person with high credit rating or little credit history
 - b. High ratings allow suspect to easily acquire financing
 - c. Walk in and drive out
 - d. Little or no credit history less chance that customer is aware of their credit history
 3. How?
 - a. Names often acquired from credit profiles, old credit applications, recent applications and dumpster divers
 - b. Suspects will obtain full name, address, SSI number, DOB and employment information
 - c. Often the previous address on the application will be the current address of the victim (theft of identity).
 - d. Suspects use answer services which will answer the phone with the appropriate business name.

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- e. Suspect will also have persons at supplied telephone number answer with the appropriate name: i.e., employer, personal reference, etc.
 - f. So that verification is completed when dealers check
- I. Problems Created by Dealerships
- 1. Bare minimum review of applicants
 - 2. Salesmen or Brokers more interested in securing commissions than verifying applications.
 - 3. Unless caught early dealer gets paid and salesman still gets commission.
 - 4. Collusive dealer employee
- J. Related Crimes
- 1. Salvaged Vehicles
 - 2. DMV Documents
 - 3. Insurance Fraud
 - 4. Organized Crime
 - 5. Chop Shops
 - 6. Exports
- K. Things to Look For
- 1. Suspects want the minimum number of instances where they can be identified as having possession of the vehicle.
 - a. Drive vehicle without license plates mounted
 - (1) Use plastic dealer's plates to hide true identity from the police or others who might be seeking vehicle
 - b. Drive vehicle without driver license
 - (1) So that suspect doesn't have to give real name
 - (2) Pose as friend or relative of the person (theft of identity) that was named on fraud application
 - 2. Plastic vehicle plates faded or if present no temporary registration on front windshield
 - 3. Vehicles that appear well used displaying plastic dealer plates.
 - 4. Plastic vehicle plate for Dealerships no longer in operation.
 - 5. Vehicle dirty, filled with trash and things that would appear to show a lack of pride of ownership for a new vehicle.
 - 6. Faded or written over dealer's temporary registration
 - 7. Faded DMV temporary registration (red)
 - 8. DMV check reveals vehicle license plates issued for vehicle being driven without plates displayed.
 - a. Drivers give story plates haven't been received yet.
 - (1) Even though vehicle was purchased weeks or months earlier

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- L. Goal
 - 1. Develop Probable Cause for vehicle stop

- M. Probable Cause for Stops/Investigation
 - 1. Unlicensed Driver 12500 (a) VC
 - 2. Unregistered vehicle 4000 (a) VC

- N. Things to Listen For
 - 1. Driver operating vehicle without driver license.
 - a. Ask yourself why a person would driver vehicle without a driver license.
 - 2. Driver unable to tell you how to contact registered owner-unable to give a time or location when vehicle is due to be return to registered owner.
 - 3. Driver statements tend to lessen number of occasions driver has driven vehicle.
 - a. Just borrowed vehicle, only driven today

- O. Goal
 - 1. Identify or Profile Potentially Fraudulently purchased vehicles
 - a. So that a strong identification of driver can be acquired
 - (1) Remember unlicensed driver is a misdemeanor arrest.
 - (2) So you can book if unsure of identity
 - (3) Or later cite and release from station once they prove their identity
 - b. Lock driver into story
 - c. Notify Detectives of observation so that investigation can be started.

- P. Questions to Asked Prior to Starting Investigation
 - 1. Did dealership verify any of the information on the credit application?
 - 2. What steps did dealership take to verify information on credit application?
 - 3. Has any of the information been proven false?
 - 4. Check priors with dealership

- Q. Resources
 - 1. DMV
 - 2. Social Security
 - 3. Bank Records
 - 4. Insurance Companies
 - 5. Utilities Records
 - 6. P.O. Box Records

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- R. Conclusion
 - 1. The instructor will answer students' questions.

VII. FIELD EXERCISE

- A. Introduction
 - 1. The course coordinator will introduce the facilitators to the class.
 - 2. The student will be introduced to the Lesson Goals and Performance Objectives.
 - 3. The reasons for the class and the importance of the field exercises.
 - 4. **Core Value:**
 - a. "Quality through continuous improvement"
 - 5. The course coordinator shall explain each field exercise to the students.
- B. **Learning Activity:** Field Workshop
 - 1. Examination of the following:
 - a. VIN switches
 - b. VIN recognition
 - c. Vehicle identification
- C. The students shall be assigned to the workshop stations and they shall perform the following exercises:
 - 1. VIN switches
 - 2. VIN recognition
 - 3. Vehicle identification
- D. Burglary-Auto Theft Division staff shall evaluate each student in the below listed field workshop exercises.
 - 1. VIN switches
 - 2. VIN recognition
 - 3. Vehicle identification
- E. Debriefing
 - 1. The students will report their findings to the class
- F. Conclusion
 - 1. The facilitators will answer the students' questions.

VIII. TEST AND CRITIQUE

- A. POST Critique
 - 1. Critique form

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
Vehicle Theft Investigation, Patrol 1850–30191
Expanded Course Outline

- a. The student shall complete the POST Course Evaluation Instrument
 - b. The form will be given to the course coordinator with the final examination
- B. Final Examination
- 1. Procedure
 - a. True/false, multiple choice examination
 - b. Select the best answer for each of the following questions.
 - c. In some instances, the question is answered by selecting the word(s) which best completes the statement.
 - d. The students will use the answer sheet provided.
 - (1) Do not write in the test booklet.
 - 2. Upon completing the examination, turn in the following:
 - a. Answer sheet
 - b. Test booklet
 - c. Course critique
 - d. POST critique
- C. Answer Sheet
- 1. The students will fill out the answer sheet as instructed by the course coordinator.