



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
TACTICAL CONCEPTS
Tactics Training Overview

Tactical Concept No. 13

April 2025

**VEHICLE PULLOVERS –
L-UNIT TACTICS**

PURPOSE

In order to respond to varying law enforcement needs throughout the City, the Department has organized resources to provide the highest level of service possible. Among these resources is the deployment of individual officers to the field as "L-Units" to enhance patrol operations. There are some important tactical considerations for L-Units during vehicle pullovers. This Tactical Concept was developed to provide an overview of tactics and safety techniques during vehicle pullovers for officers assigned to work an L-Unit.

PROCEDURES

When assigned to the field as an L-Unit, officers can expect to draw on several aspects of the training, experience, and safety skills learned throughout their careers. To be effective in this role, officers must be mentally prepared, exercise self-discipline, use good tactics, and practice teamwork. In addition to their normal field equipment, it is recommended that officers assigned to work alone also deploy a shotgun during their shift. A TASER and body armor shall be worn during any field assignment.

Planning ahead is a vital part of working alone. Partner officers discuss tactics and how they will work as a team to resolve field situations either as a "contact " or a "cover" officer. As an L-Unit, an officer should think through various situations and anticipate how to resolve them or utilize their resources. Working alone requires some adjustments to tactics and field procedures. The following guidelines should be used by officers working an L-Unit to conduct vehicle pullovers.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

Initial Procedures:

- Ensure there is reasonable suspicion or probable cause for the pullover.
- Record the license plate number and a short description of the vehicle by utilizing the radio and/or Mobile Data Computer (MDC).

- Check the license plate through the Stolen Vehicle System (SVS) and Automated Want/Warrant System (AWWS). Utilize the radio if the MDC is not available or if the use of the MDC is hazardous while driving your vehicle.
- When practical, wait for the license plate information prior to initiating the vehicle pullover.
- Close the distance to the violator's vehicle just prior to activating the emergency lights.
- Know your location and direction of travel.
- Maintain observation of the vehicle occupant(s).
- Prior to the pullover, when multiple occupants are in the violator's vehicle, evaluate and determine if an additional police unit is needed.

Location of the Stop:

- Notify Communications Division of your location. For officer safety purposes, Officers working an L-Unit should generally use the radio, instead of the MDC, to notify Communications Division and other units of their location.
- Attempt to stop the vehicle at a legal location, out of the flow of traffic.
- Be aware of potential avenues of escape, such as a nearby alley.
- Avoid stopping in front of or near locations where hostile crowds may gather.
- At night and when possible, choose a familiar area with advantageous lighting conditions.
- Avoid areas with buildings that have reflective windows that may take away your tactical advantage.
- If necessary, utilize the public address system to direct the violator to where you want the violator to stop.

Pullover Procedures:

- When close enough to control the stop, and when you are at a suitable location, activate the emergency lights. Daytime vehicle pullovers should include the use of high beams as used during darkness.
- Offset to the left approximately half the width of the patrol vehicle and approximately one patrol vehicle length behind the violator's vehicle.
- Place the patrol vehicle in "Park" and set the parking brake. Officers have the option of whether to leave the engine running. Officers should turn the front wheels to the left.

Approach:

- Evaluate the scene and remain alert. Attempt to observe the driver's actions. Unlock your front passenger door and exit the patrol vehicle quickly.
- If the driver's action(s) cause you to sense danger, do not approach. Request an additional unit to respond to your location and inform them of the situation. Remain at your vehicle, maintaining cover behind the ballistic doors. Order the occupant(s) of the vehicle to remain inside with their hands clearly visible and/or

order the violator to exit the vehicle and direct them to a safe area out of the flow of traffic.

- Remain alert to oncoming traffic while exiting the patrol vehicle and use caution during your approach. If the driver appears to be reaching for paperwork, be alert. Wait until the movement stops. If the driver's hands are not visible, politely ask the violator to put them on the steering wheel. A courteous demeanor is essential for a successful interview, but you should remain alert.
- You may choose to approach on either the left or right side of the violator's vehicle (Figure No. 1 and 2). Avoid walking between the patrol vehicle and the violator's vehicle. Ensure the trunk is closed and scan the rear seat of the violator's vehicle for additional occupants or possible weapons.
- If the driver exits the vehicle as you approach, **STOP** the violator, request an additional unit, and direct the driver to a safe location out of the flow of traffic. If there are additional occupants inside the vehicle, position the driver between you and their vehicle.

The Interview:

- Minimize exposure by standing just to the rear of the violator's door or door post (B-Pillar). If approaching from the passenger side, stand just to the rear of the front passenger door (B-Pillar).
- Remain aware of oncoming traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian.
- Return to the passenger side of the patrol vehicle without exposing your back to the violator.
- If a citation is to be issued, complete it from a position of advantage, where you can continuously scan the area and the occupant(s) in the vehicle.
- Do not sit inside your vehicle while completing the citation.
- When using the MDC to check license status, etc., adjust your rearview mirror so that you can see approaching pedestrian traffic. Anytime you have a concern for officer safety, use the radio rather than the MDC.
- After the citation has been completed, treat the reproach to the violator as an entirely new traffic stop. Do not assume that a formerly cooperative violator will continue to remain cooperative.
- After returning to your patrol vehicle, if necessary, assist the violator back into the flow of traffic.

INVESTIGATIVE

Unless you are investigating an unoccupied or abandoned vehicle, it is recommended that an additional unit be requested to the location when conducting an Investigative Pullover. The seriousness of the crime involved, number of occupants in the vehicle and the type of vehicle (e.g., a van) are among the factors that should be considered prior to conducting the pullover.

Initial Procedures:

- The initial procedures for making an Investigative Pullover are the same as those described for a Traffic Enforcement Pullover (Page No. 1 and 2).
- Maintain visual oversight of the vehicle occupant(s).
- If an additional unit has been requested, wait for it to arrive prior to making the pullover. Inform Communications Division of the location and type of investigation when the stop is made.
- An Investigative Pullover may become a High-Risk Vehicle Pullover at any time. Be prepared to react appropriately.

Choosing a stop Location:

- Avoid conducting a pullover near locations where there may be large numbers of pedestrians (schools, apartment buildings, warehouses, etc).

Pullover Procedures:

- Follow the procedures for a Traffic Enforcement Vehicle Pullover (Page No. 2); however, the distance behind the suspect vehicle should be increased to two patrol car lengths and offset the patrol vehicle approximately half the width of the suspect vehicle (Figures No. 3-6).
- The second patrol unit's position may be to the left, right, parallel, or slightly angled (Figures No. 3-6).
- Environmental factors at the location of the pullover will determine the feasibility of having the second unit positioned to the right of the primary patrol unit.
- If the second unit is a two-officer unit, that unit is to be the primary unit and will conduct the investigative pullover.

Approach:

- Your approach will be based on the type of crime that is suspected and the number of occupants present in the vehicle.
- If the additional patrol unit at the scene is an L-Unit, the "Contact and Cover" officer concept should be utilized to conduct the investigation.
- Communication between all officers prior to and during the investigation is vital to prevent confusion and establish roles.

Removal of Suspects:

- Do not approach or remove the occupant(s) of the suspect vehicle alone, wait until the arrival of an additional unit.
- Should the driver of the suspect vehicle abruptly stop prior to the arrival of an additional unit, maintain a position of cover and order the occupants(s) to remain inside the vehicle with their hands clearly visible.

- When circumstances indicate the need to remove the occupant (s) from the suspect vehicle, remain behind cover.
- Order each occupant out, one at a time, to an advantageous position for you and the cover officer.
- When possible, have all the occupants exit from the same side of the suspect vehicle.
- Use clear, concise commands that are easily understood to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding.
- Prior to making contact with the occupant(s) who have exited, if you are the primary unit or contact officer, check the suspect vehicle's trunk to verify that it is latched, then cautiously check the interior of the suspect vehicle to ensure that there are no other occupants.

High-Risk Guidelines:

- If the suspect vehicle is moving, follow it at a safe distance.
- Advise Communications Division of the circumstances and request appropriate backup and an Air Unit to intercept the vehicle.
- If the arriving backup unit is an A-unit, the vehicle pullover is to be conducted by the A-unit. You, as an L-Unit, become their backup (Figure No. 7 and 8).
- Should the backup unit be another L-Unit, communicate and coordinate your vehicle pullover tactics and procedures prior to making the High-Risk Vehicle Pullover.
- If the suspect vehicle abruptly stops prior to the arrival of a backup unit, take a position of cover behind the vehicle's ballistic door and order the occupant(s) of the vehicle to remain inside with their hands clearly visible. Do not approach.
- Should the occupant(s) flee, broadcast information describing the suspect(s), direction of travel, and the suspected crime committed. Establish a perimeter and coordinate the responding units.
- **SINGLE OFFICER FOOT PURSUITS ARE HIGHLY DISCOURAGED.**

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- While working alone, pay attention for possible weapons or contraband being thrown from a vehicle prior to a vehicle stop.
- Make a habit of disengaging the seatbelt just prior to the patrol vehicle stopping. Left-handed officers should be conscientious to ensure access to their firearm while belted in. Be prepared to secure the seatbelt should the vehicle suddenly drive away.
- Although you may be investigating a vehicle that appears to be abandoned, approach cautiously and be alert for possible signs of an ambush or setup situation.
- If the vehicle you stop is a van, the distances between vehicles described in the previous pages remain the same. However, do not offset the patrol vehicle during a van stop. Your patrol vehicle should be positioned directly behind the

van, which affords you a view of possible exiting by occupants from either side of the van (Figure No. 9 and 10).

- If you are initially assigned to the field as a two-officer unit, but your partner is called away to court or other duties, you must notify Communications Division of your new status as an L-Unit.
- The gender, age, size, and behavior of an arrestee must be considered before providing transportation as an L-Unit. If the patrol vehicle is equipped with a safety barrier between the front and rear seats, the arrestee must be placed in the rear seat for transportation.
- When participating in a high-risk pullover, consider directing a unit to provide traffic control.
- Backup units responding to a vehicle pullover where it is not possible to offset the primary patrol vehicle may have to position the backup vehicles as shown in Figure No. 11 and 12. At night, the headlights of the backup unit(s) should be turned off to avoid interfering with the primary unit at the scene.

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics Traffic Enforcement Approach

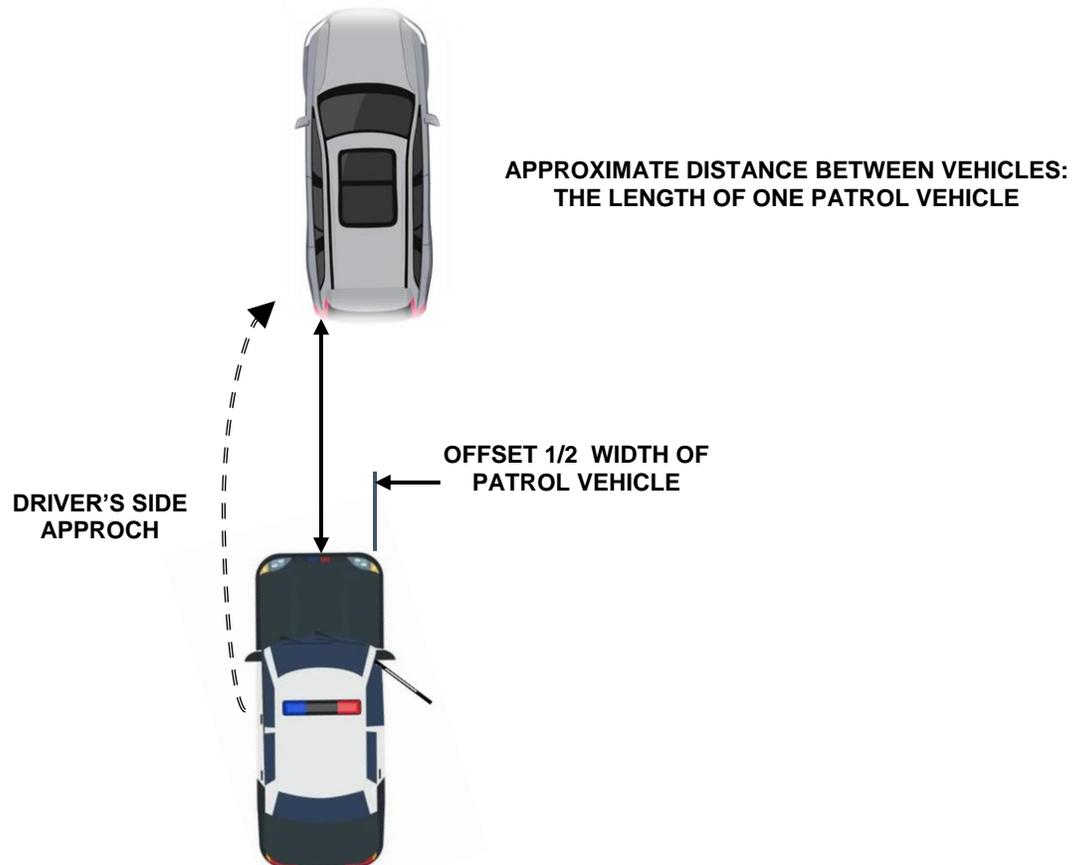


Figure No. 1

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics Traffic Enforcement Approach (Option)



Figure No. 2

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics

Investigative Pullover

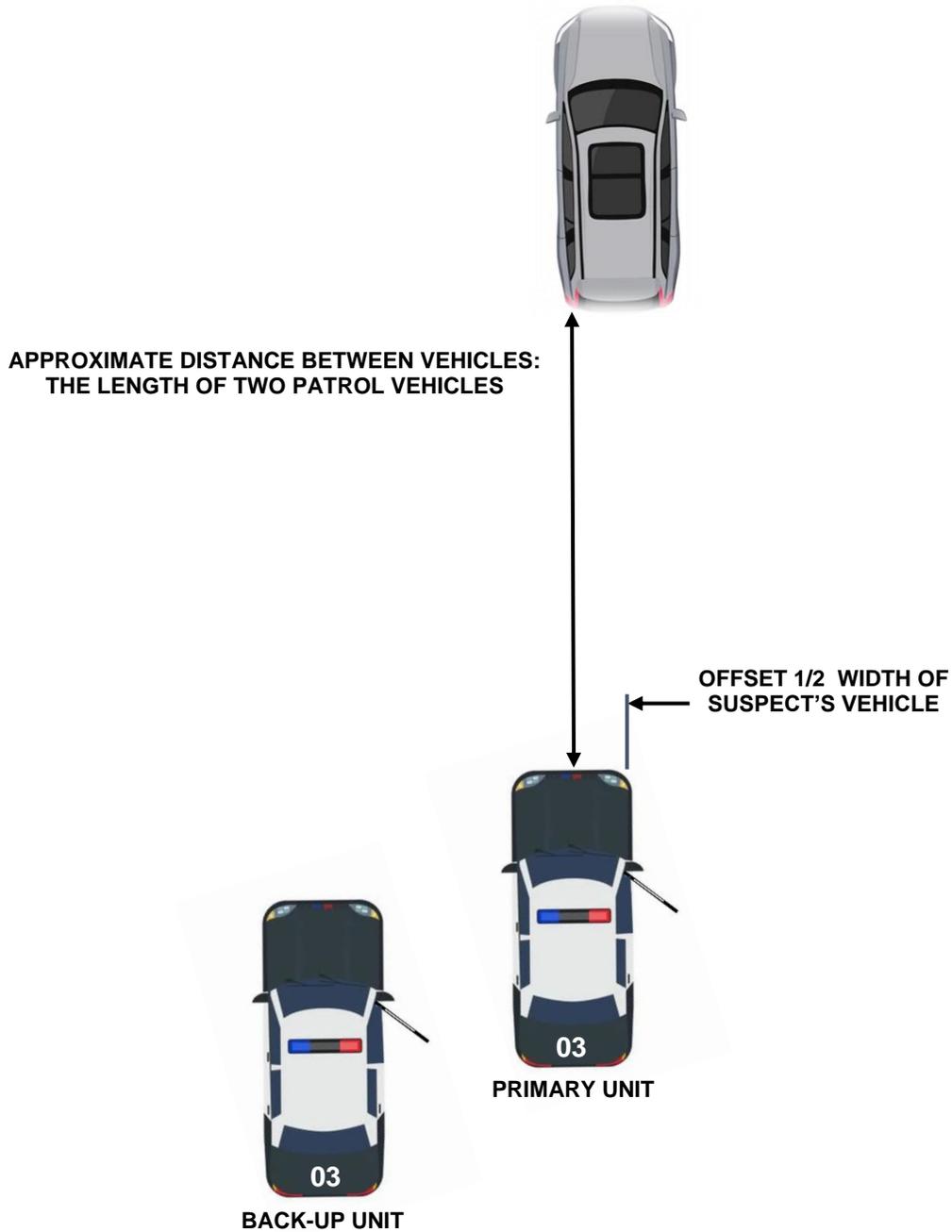


Figure No. 3

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics Investigative Pullover (Option)

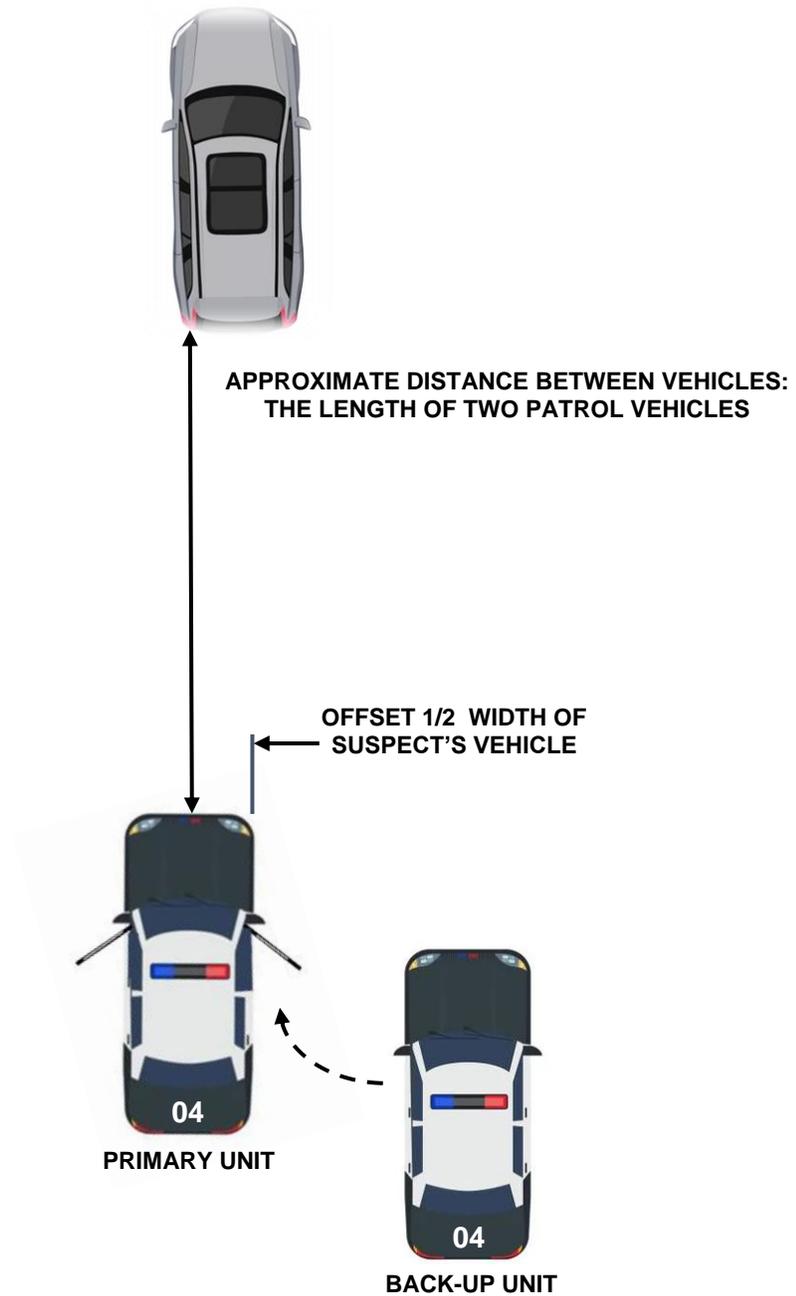


Figure No. 4

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics Investigative Pullover (Option)



Figure No. 5

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics Investigative Pullover (Option)

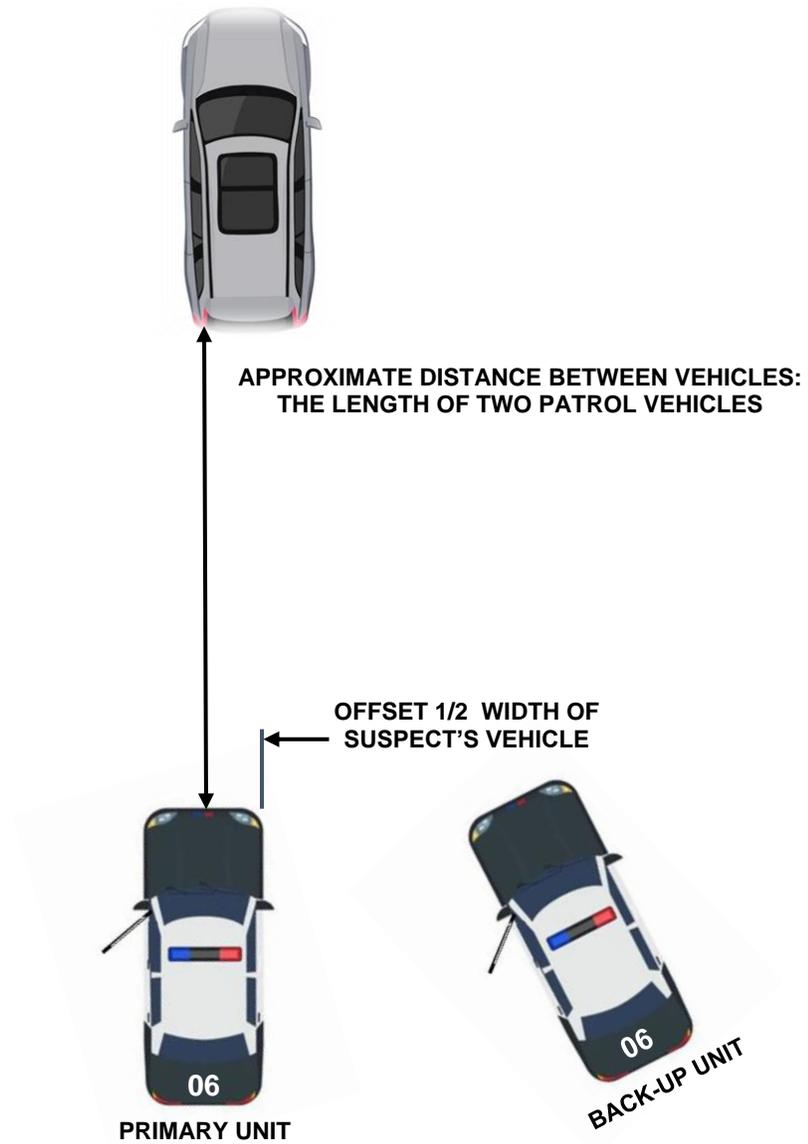


Figure No. 6

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics High-Risk Vehicle Pullover

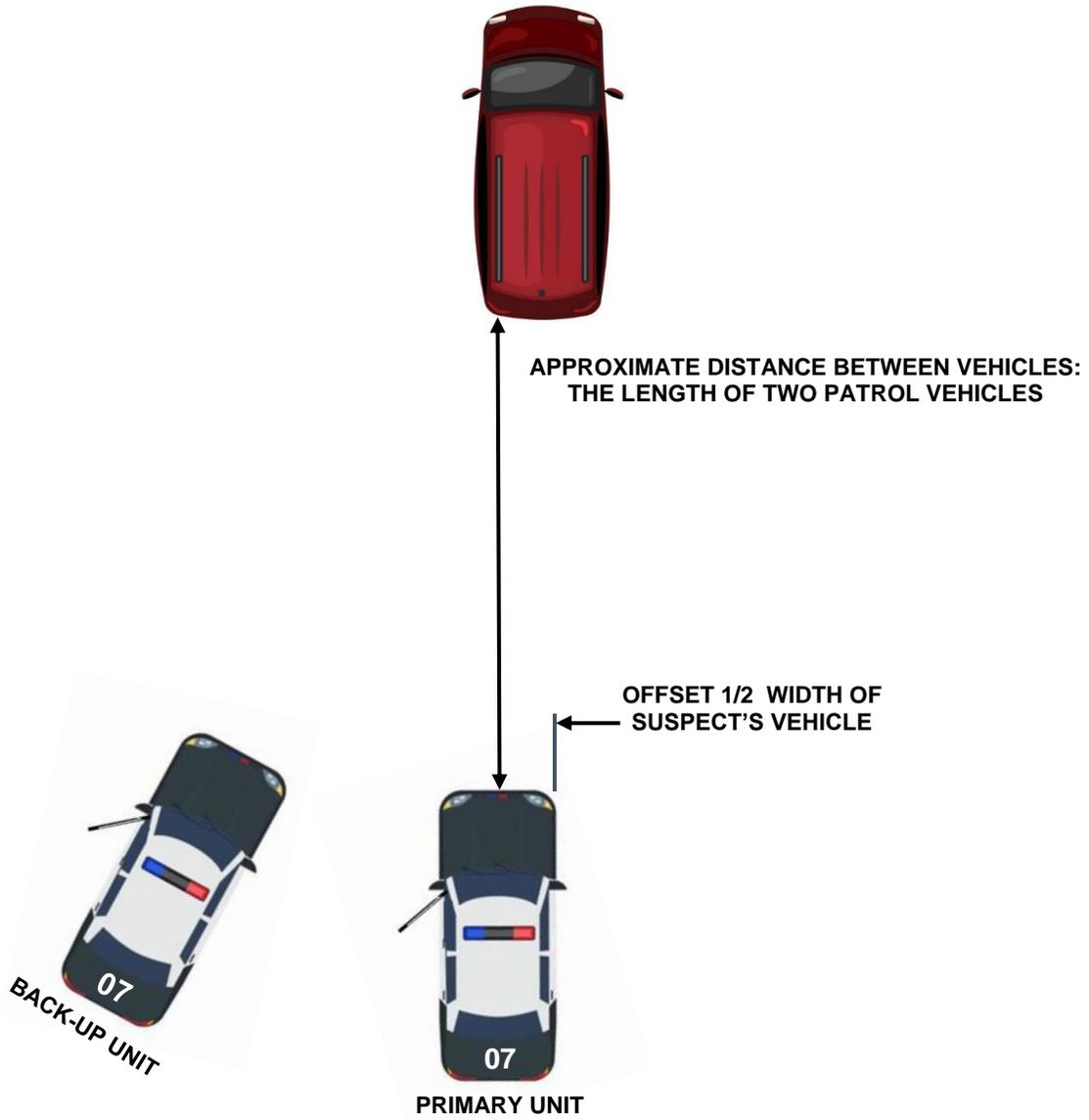


Figure No. 7

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics High-Risk Vehicle Pullover (Option)

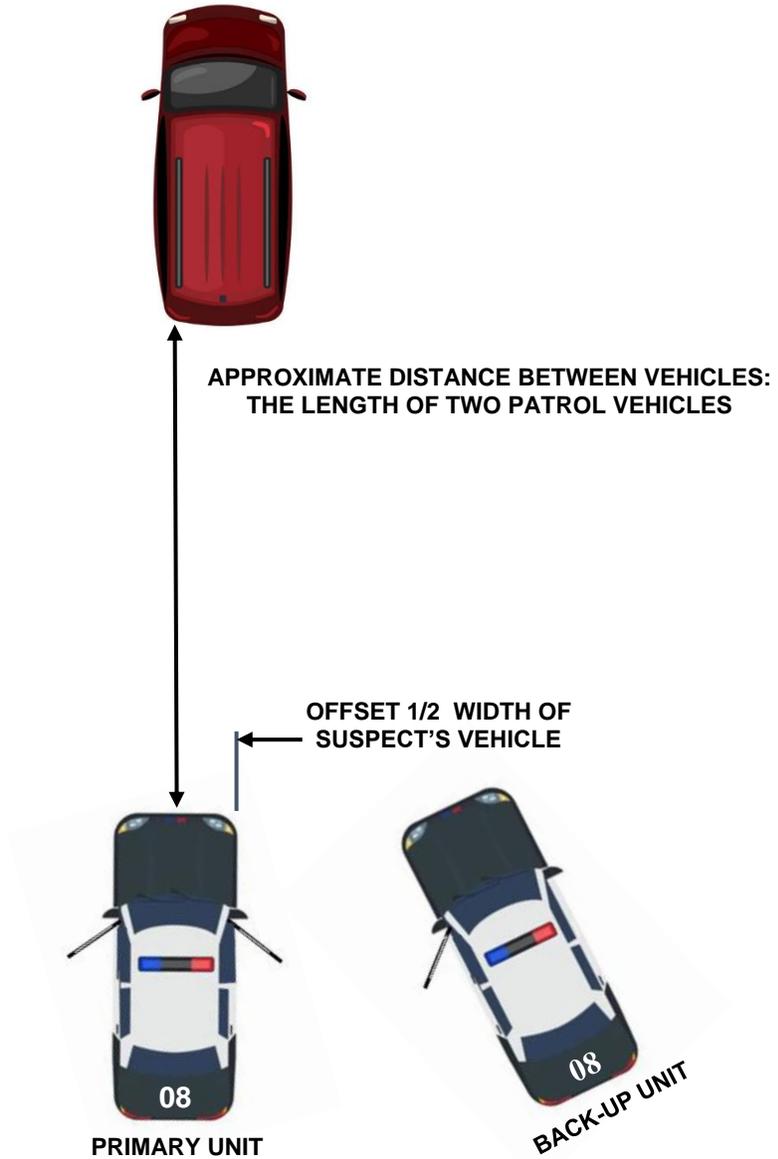


Figure No. 8

**L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics
Van Pullover (Traffic Enforcement)**

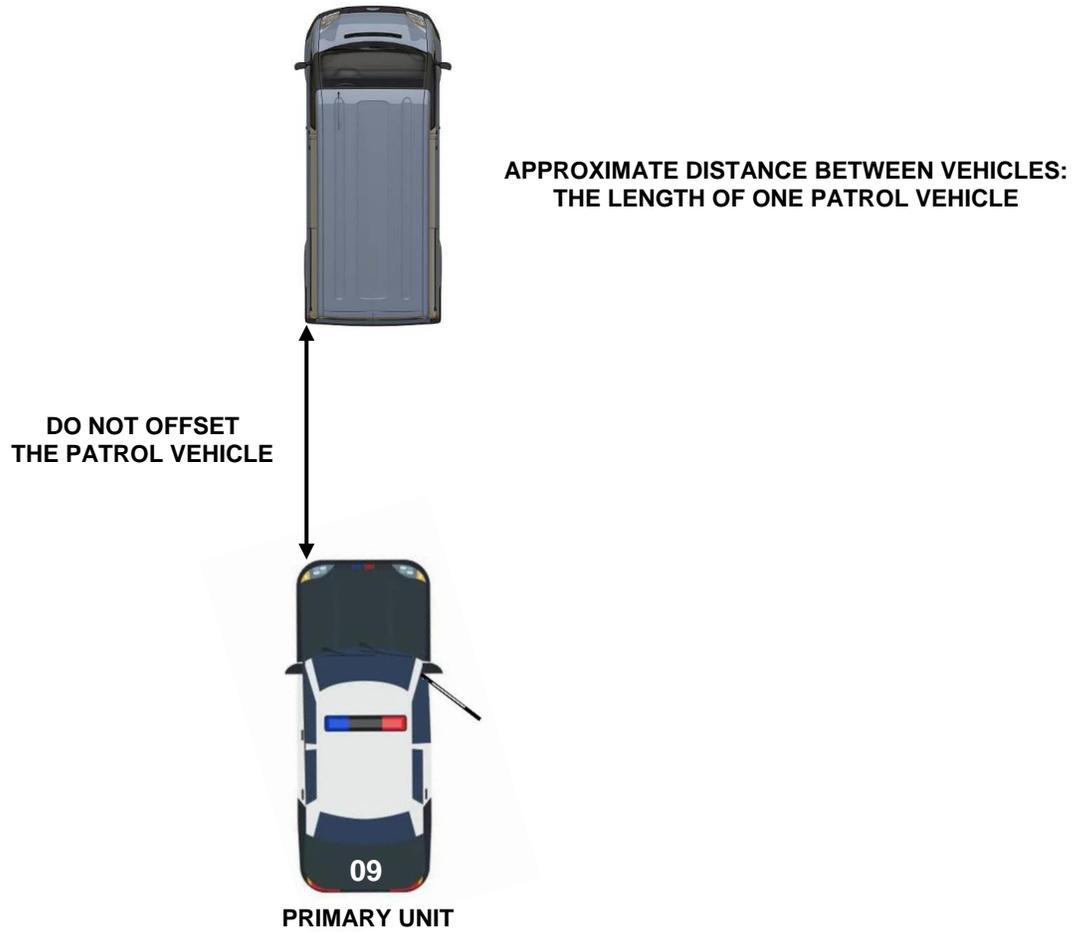


Figure No. 9

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics Van Pullover (High-Risk)

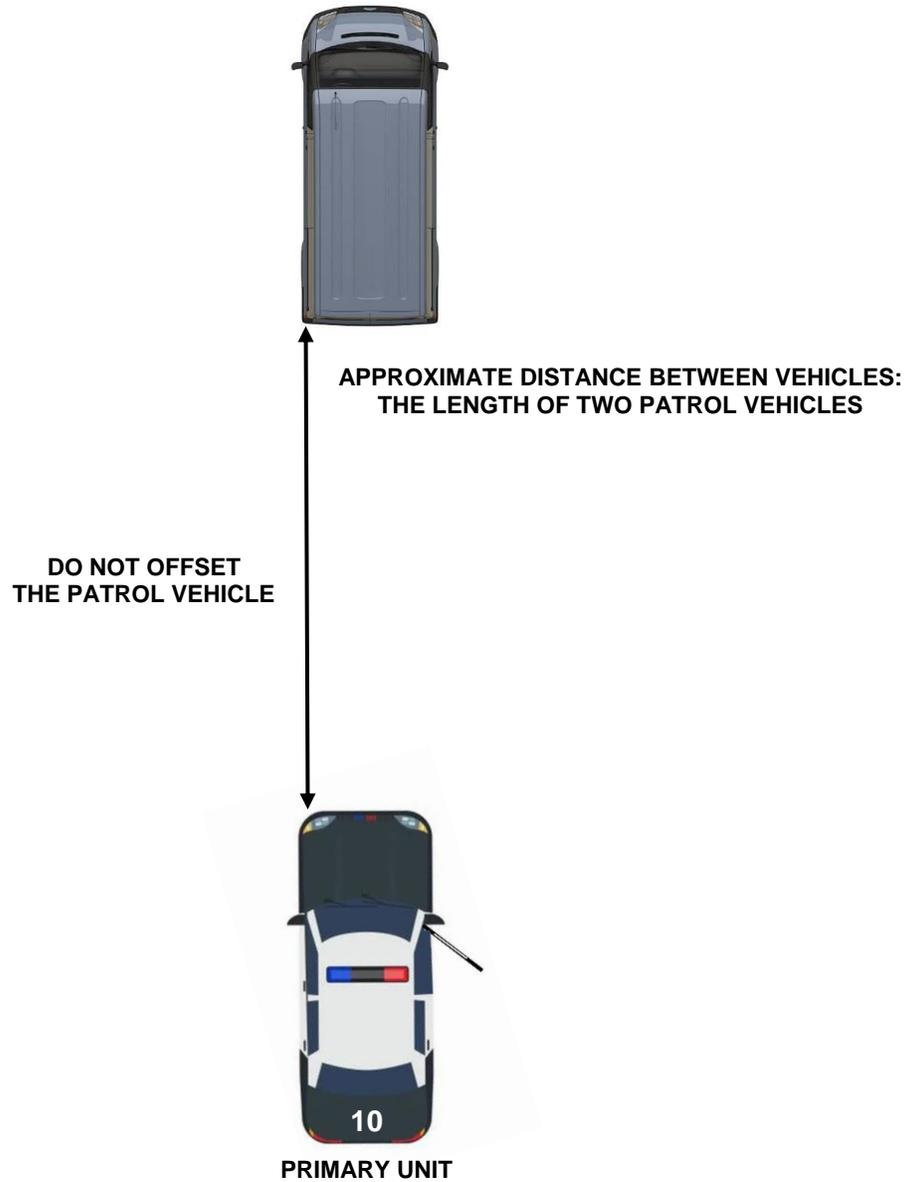


Figure No. 10

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics
Traffic Enforcement (Unable to offset patrol vehicle)

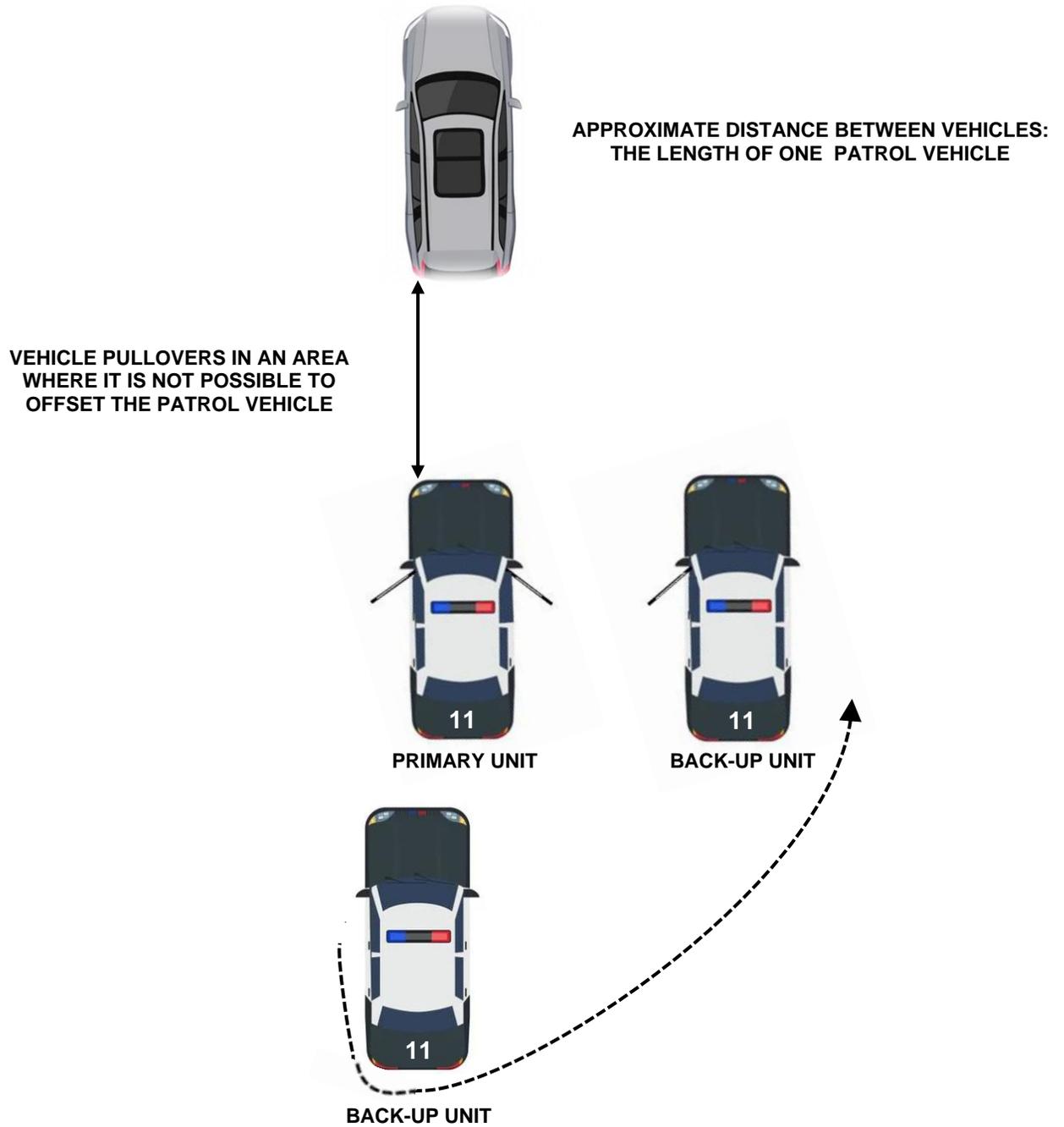


Figure No. 11

L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics High-Risk (Unable to offset patrol vehicle)

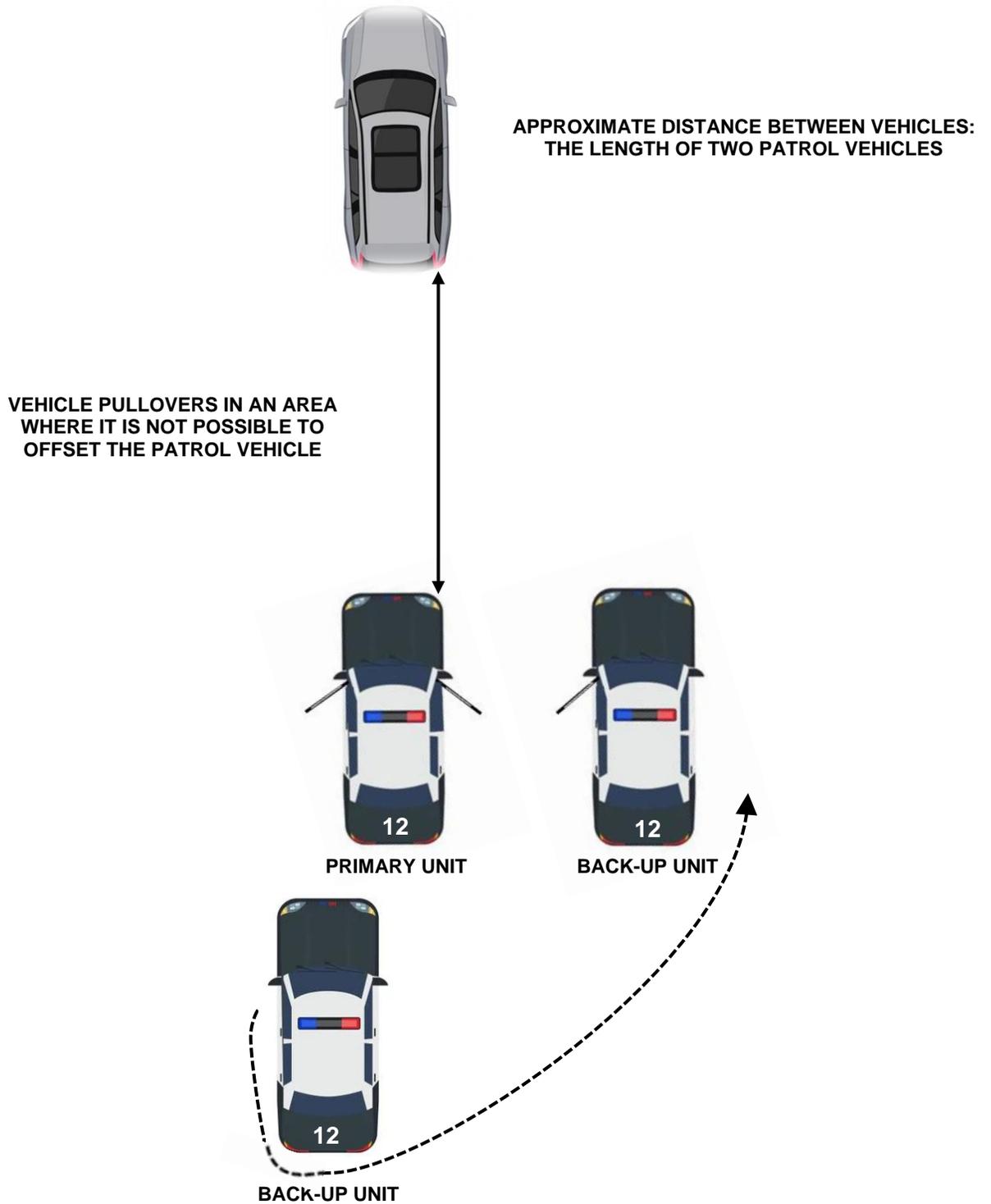


Figure No. 12

CONCLUSION

Generally, uniformed officers deployed to field assignments work as two-officer units. A two-officer unit allows officers to deploy a basic “contact and cover” technique to maximize officer safety. However, conducting vehicle pullovers as an L-Unit requires adjustments to tactics and officer safety skills. Self-discipline, along with the use of sound tactics and teamwork, are keys to working successfully as an L-Unit. By studying and discussing tactical situations, including L-Unit pullovers, officers can embody the Department's Core Value of “Quality Through Continuous Improvement.”

Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force policy.

This Tactical Concepts – Tactics Training Overview replaces Training Bulletin Volume XXIX, Issue 9, L-Unit Vehicle Pullover Tactics, September 1997.

Field Training Services Unit
Police Training and Education

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