



VirTra – Virtual Interactive Coursework Training Academy™ (V-VICTA™)

HIGH-RISK VEHICLE STOP: COMMUNICATION TO CUSTODY

VirTra



MODULE 1: “INTRODUCTION TO HIGH-RISK VEHICLE STOP”

Module 1A

WHAT IS A HIGH-RISK VEHICLE STOP (HRVS)?



- A modified traffic stop that uses tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to direct the movement of the vehicle's occupants.
- Typically occur at the end of violent or potentially violent events.
 - Used to mitigate the risk to general public, officers and the occupants of the vehicle.
 - May occur at the end of a pursuit or motor vehicle accident.
 - Good verbal commands are a critical component.

GRAHAM VS. CONNOR



- Considered to be a seizure under the 4th amendment
 - Based on “reasonable and prudent” officer standard
 - Takes into account:
 - Severity of crime
 - Subject/s an immediate threat to officers or others
 - Actively resisting arrest or evading by flight
- Decision for HRVS should conform to agency-specific protocols



PRE-STOP CONSIDERATIONS



- Reading the Scene
- Proper Communication
- Develop a Tactical Plan



READING THE SCENE



- Know the Reason/s for the Stop
 - Is the reason for the stop reasonable?
 - No legally justified reason = no stop



- Proper Observation - Provides Tactical Advantage
 - Vehicle considerations
 - Allows for evaluation of potential threats
 - Allows for observation of vehicle occupants
 - Allows for observation of your surroundings (lighting, road conditions and potential escape routes)



COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS



- Communication with Dispatch
 - Ensure initial transmission was received
 - Coordinate with back up officers
- Control Occupants
 - Ensure you leave no doubt what you want the subject to do
 - Escalate and de-escalate according to subject's level of cooperation



DEVELOP A TACTICAL PLAN



- Assess what you see and the potential effects of your plan
 - Weather: hot, cold or icy pavement
 - Traffic patterns and flow
 - Terrain (ditches, barriers and embankments)
 - Population density
 - Backstops



DEVELOP A TACTICAL PLAN



- Equipment Available
 - Shields
 - Chemical Agents
 - Impact Munitions



DEVELOP A TACTICAL PLAN



- Escape Routes
 - Officer
 - Suspect
- Assistance/Special Requirements
 - K9
 - Air assets



TRAFFIC STOP BECOMES A HRVS



- Additional Units
 - Should not be conducted with only one officer present
- Control Occupants
 - Appropriate commands
 - Appropriate force
 - Is less-lethal cover an option/available?
 - According to your Agency policies and applicable laws
- **One officer should not make a High-Risk Vehicle Stop without backup officers.**



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



- Primary
- Backup/Support



PRIMARY OFFICER



- Primary Officer
 - Usually the Officer who initiated the stop
 - Their knowledge of vehicle or occupant
 - Responsible for overall control of the scene
 - Coordinate backup unit
 - Verbally controls clearing of the vehicle



BACKUP OFFICER



- Support and Assist Primary as Needed/Directed
- Cover Suspect Vehicle
- Search and Secure Occupants
- Gather Intel
 - Who?
 - How many?
 - Weapons?
 - 360 degree security
- Physically Clear the Vehicle

SPONTANEOUS ATTACK



- Use Appropriate Force
 - Less Lethal (bean bag, kinetic impact or chemical munitions)
 - Lethal
 - Back stop
 - Crossfire considerations - Know location of other officers
- Tactical Retreat
 - Position of Observation
 - Wait for Backup Officers to Arrive



SUBJECT INITIATED STOP



- Appropriate Force
 - Verbal Commands
 - Defensive Tactics
 - Deadly Force
- Appropriate Tactics
 - Tactical Retreat
 - Create Space

POSITIONING - VEHICLE



- Vehicle Distance
 - 25-50 feet or 2-4 car lengths
 - Distance = Time
- Position Patrol Vehicles at Slight Angle
 - Space between patrol units should be 8-12 feet at the front tires.
 - Both units should have doors open to aid communication between officers.
- Patrol vehicle lighting should be on and directed at the vehicle, day or night.

POSITIONING – VEHICLE ADJUSTMENTS



- Avoid dangers in the area
- Backlight or overhead lighting should be on police vehicle location
- Consider the locations of cross-traffic and oncoming traffic
- Be aware of and factor in escape routes



POSITIONING - OFFICER



- Maximize Communication
- Ensure Effective/Clear Fields of Fire
- Maximize Use of Cover and Concealment
- Access to Equipment



POSITIONING - FORWARD OBSERVER



- Air Support
- If the environment allows:
 - Vehicle support
 - On foot

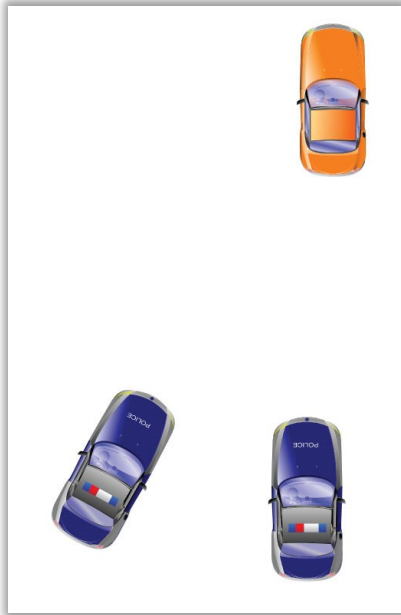
FANNING TECHNIQUES – FULL FAN



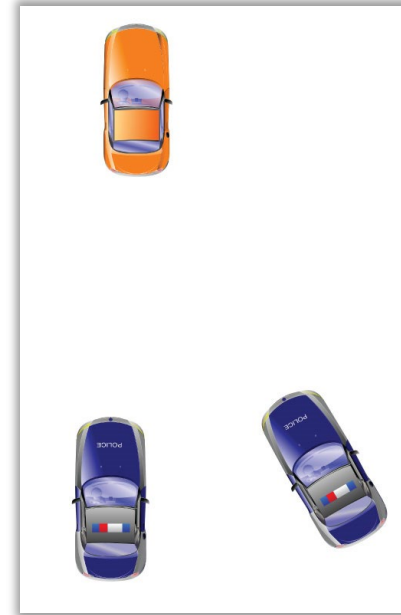
FANNING TECHNIQUES – LEFT/RIGHT FAN



- Left Fan



- Right Fan



VEHICLE STACKING



- Environment may make it impractical or unsafe to use a fanning technique
- Forward facing lights on back up units should be turned off
- Leave enough room to allow for a tactical retreat if necessary





OFFICER BODY POSITIONING



- Two Schools of Thought:
 - Seated inside patrol vehicle
 - Standing outside of patrol vehicle

SEATED INSIDE PATROL VEHICLE



- Maximizes the Use of the Vehicle's Structure for Cover
- Principles Include:
 - Keep feet off the ground/or brace outside leg
 - Reposition hips to allow for visibility through open door and "A" pillar
- Weapon position should
 - Allow for rapid response to threat
 - Full view of the threat area
 - Does not pose an unnecessary risk to innocents



STANDING OUTSIDE OF VEHICLE



- Allows for maximum mobility
- Use as much of the vehicle as possible that stop rounds
 - Engine block and
 - Canted wheels
- Look around patrol cars not over (lower angles)
 - Ricochet off
 - Hood
 - Glass



MODULE 1: “INTRODUCTION TO HRVS”

CONDUCTED IN VIRTRA SIMULATOR

Module 1B



- Topics to be covered within the simulator:
 - Pre-stop procedures
 - Reading the scene
 - Develop a plan
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Backup officer responsibilities
 - Vehicle and officer positioning/spacing
 - Distance, spacing, fan techniques, vehicle stacking, positioning in vehicle





MODULE 2: “COMMUNICATING WITH VEHICLE OCCUPANTS” & “SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE”

Module 2A



- Ensure subject can clearly understand commands
 - Use a PA system if necessary
 - Keep in mind language barriers and deaf/hard of hearing individuals
- Commands should be specific to the person
 - Position of the vehicle (e.g. “driver” or “passenger”)
 - Clothing description (e.g. “male in red shirt”)
- Commands in the affirmative
 - “Occupants, keep your hands out the window”
 - “Do not move until I tell you to”

SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE



- Establish willingness to comply
- One occupant at a time
 - Obtain visual identification of threats; subjects are told to turn when removed
- Ensure subjects hear and understand commands
- Ensure commands are specific to the person

SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE – COMMAND TYPES



- “Occupants, keep your hands ...” (On the roof, out the window, etc.)
- “Occupants of the vehicle, you are considered armed and dangerous ... Do not move until I tell you.”
- “Driver, remove the keys and place them on the roof of the vehicle”
 - If the vehicle has a cracked ignition, there may be no keys. Instead, tell the subject to turn off the engine.



EXITING THE VEHICLE



- Driver Commands:
 - “Driver, from outside the vehicle, open your door slowly and step out of the vehicle”
 - “Driver, face away from me with your hands in the air”
 - “Driver, with one hand reach behind your neck and pull up your shirt”
 - “Higher!”
 - “Driver, turn around until I tell you to stop”
 - You and your partners should be looking for weapons while the subject is turning 360 degrees. Have a plan for the subject should you see a weapon.



- Avoid having subject count steps
 - Example: “Move left 3 steps” or “Move back 5 steps”
- Affirmative commands take away the subject’s ability to “game” the officers commands and position himself where he feels safe
- Always place your subject in position that is most advantageous to you, according to policy and training

DIRECT OCCUPANTS INTO A PRONE POSITION



- Careful consideration should be given to directing occupants into a prone position in certain environments
 - Officers have the right to use force during HRVS, but the intrusion must be balanced against the subject right to not be harmed and governments interest
 - Take care not to have subjects prone on extremely hot or cold asphalt



KNEELING OR STANDING



- Similar to the prone position, kneeling may not be possible depending on clothing and the environment.
- When standing, subject should:
 - Spread feet wide apart
 - Hands out like an airplane
 - Bend forward at the hips
- The subject can then be moved into a position where the cuffing/securing officer is able to use cover.

WHEN CUFFING...



- Is there probable cause for arrest?
- Is there reasonable suspicion to detain?
- Question the subject based on officer safety considerations:
 - Are there any weapons in the vehicle?
 - Who else is in the car?
 - What are their names, what type of clothing, where they are in the vehicle

WEAPON DISCOVERED IN VEHICLE



- There are multiple schools of thought on how to handle the subject if a weapon is discovered upon exiting the vehicle. VirTra does not endorse any position concerning this topic.
- Go with department SOP where this is concerned
- Consideration needs to be made for:
 - Does the subject remove the weapon?
 - Where is the weapon placed?
 - Does an officer disarm the subject?
 - Optimum position of disadvantage (prone or kneeling)

CHILDREN IN VEHICLE



- Option 1: Verbally direct adults to bring children back to your patrol vehicle.
 - Carefully observation of the adult's hands is paramount. Weapons and contraband can be easily concealed in blankets and clothing.
- Option 2: Leave the children in the vehicle
 - Be aware that some adults may absolutely refuse to leave their child's side in spite of your verbal commands.
- Option 3: Give the children verbal commands to come to you
 - Probably the least attractive option as scared children can be unpredictable.



SUSPECT FLEES



- Maintain a Position of Cover
 - The vehicle has likely not been cleared yet
- Maintain Cover and:
 - Consider repositioning further away from suspect vehicle to open up fields of vision/fields of fire
 - Scan - Continue to scan your threat area and the periphery to avoid being flanked by the suspect

FOOT PURSUIT CONSIDERATIONS



- Are there enough resources available to...
 - Clear the vehicle
 - Back up pursuing officer/s should they need support
- Consider Air Support
 - Broader field of view
 - Much better low-light capability than officers on the ground
 - Nightsun Spotlight or FLIR

AFTER ALL SUBJECTS ARE REMOVED



- Issue an additional verbal challenge
 - “You, still in the vehicle we know you are there”
 - “Come out now with your hands up or we will send the dog”
 - “This is your final warning or you will be bit”
- This is your last opportunity before officers go forward and clear the vehicle. Take a second to gather your thoughts and decide upon your responsibilities upon approach to the vehicle.
- If there is reason to believe that the vehicle contains subjects who refuse to come out, treat it as a barricaded subject



MODULE 3: “OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING” “CLEARING THE VEHICLE” “CLEARING THE TRUNK” “UNCONVENTIONAL VEHICLES” Module 3A



- Topics to be covered within the simulator:
 - Clear and functional commands
 - Specific to person - “driver,” “passenger”
 - Removal of occupants
 - Directed to desired positioning
 - Dealing with weapons
 - Subject flee
- The following simulations will be used:
 - “High-Risk-Clown Car: (Argue and Comply Options)
 - “High-Risk-Driver with Gun”
 - “Advanced High-Risk - Run Double Back” (Fleeing subject)



MODULE 2: “COMMUNICATION WITH OCCUPANTS” “SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE” **CONDUCTED IN VIRTRA SIMULATOR** Module 2B

OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING CONTINGENCIES



- Use Appropriate Force
 - Based in policy
- Re-evaluate Priorities and Establish a Plan
 - Injured subject does not automatically mean risk exposure of the officers to render aid
 - Aid is provided when it is first safe to do so

CLEARING THE VEHICLE



- This procedure can be problematic due to:
 - Little cover available
 - High level of exposure to approaching officers
- Officers should consider the use of a K-9 or a ballistic shield
- Multiple officers can cover multiple angles and deliver more rounds on target to eliminate a threat should one arise
- Some agencies allow for last subject in vehicle to open all doors (consider local protocols)
 - Have the last occupant open the trunk slowly with the key, then have him close it and leave the key in the lock.



FLANKING PROCEDURES



- 90 degree approach to direction the vehicle is facing
- Allows for multiple officers to cover multiple angles
- Allows for flexibility based on vehicle type, vehicle position and vehicle construction
- Allows officers to choose either side based on tactical advantages and disadvantages
- Mitigates the casting of shadows from headlights and overheads of the patrol vehicles
- Better visibility into vehicle



DIRECT APPROACH



- Passenger side rear approach if feasible
- Allows officer to clear from the rear of the vehicle and work their way forward
- Allows for low angle of approach
- Care should be taken concerning light and noise discipline as officer's approach could cast shadows from the patrol vehicle's headlights and overheads

ADDITIONAL OBSERVED OCCUPANTS



- If possible, have clearing officers retreat
- Provide intel to primary officer about what they saw
- Clearing Officer should avoid providing verbal commands
- Primary Officer should avoid giving additional verbal commands until clearing officer is back behind cover



CLEARING THE TRUNK



- Clearing the trunk area should be done only after the passenger compartment of the vehicle is confirmed to be clear
- Critical tactical considerations include:
 - Noise discipline
 - Muzzle discipline
 - Crossfire situation

CLEARING THE TRUNK



- Consider how the trunk is going to be opened and who will be responsible for opening it
- If possible, use the key fob to allow officers better positioning



Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trunk_of_a_car.jpg)

UNCONVENTIONAL VEHICLES



- RVs, vans, large SUVs and semi-tractor trailer rigs can present multiple challenges
 - Limited visibility into the vehicle
 - Multiple exits
 - Areas that can easily conceal weapons, people and contraband

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS



- Officers should allow for longer stopping distances
- Right fan or full fan is considered safest vehicle positioning depending on terrain and environment
 - Extended offset
 - Allow 70-80 feet of separation between patrol vehicles and suspect vehicle

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS



- Do all that you can to light the interior of the vehicle up to and including having occupant turn on interior lights prior to approach
- Monitor the roof of the suspect vehicle
- Driver can be directed to open hatches, tailgates and rear doors



MODULE 3: “OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING” “CLEARING THE VEHICLE” “CLEARING THE TRUNK” “UNCONVENTIONAL VEHICLES” **CONDUCTED IN VIRTRA SIMULATOR** Module 3B



- Topics to be covered within the simulator:
 - OIS protocols
 - Clearing vehicles - Modeled by Actors
 - Clearing trunk- modeled by actors
- The following simulations will be used:
 - “Advanced High-Risk - Run Double Back”
 - “Advanced High-Risk - Vehicle War”