

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hillsborough, NC Police Department

“Slower Is Faster” Driver Safety Program



Prepared for the “Destination Zero Program”

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Hillsborough Police Department – “Slower Is Faster” Driver Safety Program

The HPD takes a slightly different approach to police driver safety than what is often done. While braking, navigating turns, and correcting skids are covered during in-car training, they take a back seat to decision-making, situational awareness, and emphasizing key skills that allow officers to remain in control and stay out of trouble, especially during stressful emergency responses. The HPD’s goal is not to produce great drivers, but rather great decision-makers behind the steering wheel!

Understanding the constraints of limited time and resources, the HPD applies a triage approach to police driver training by emphasizing five key tactics to reduce collisions: vision, early braking, slowing down to leave a margin for error when the unexpected occurs, self-talk by asking if it’s worth driving fast in a situation, and breathing techniques to reduce the performance-robbing effects of stress and adrenaline. Prioritizing in-car tactics has the added benefit of not overwhelming officers with too much information during in-car training, thus increasing the likelihood these tactics will be implemented when most needed.

Unique features of the HPD driver safety training program

- ✓ Decision stations emphasize situational awareness
- ✓ On-course distractions including moving devices
- ✓ Variety of drills and scenario-based exercises
- ✓ Low officer to instructor ratios (often 2:1 or better)
- ✓ Volunteer instructors with motorsports backgrounds serve as coaches and bolster the instructor pool
- ✓ Demonstration runs showing “Slower Is Faster”
- ✓ Critical Concepts Guide covers essential law enforcement driving information, challenges, tactics, and dangers

Partnership increases police driver training in N.C. The HPD has partnered with the North Carolina League of Municipalities (the League) in recent years on several “Slower Is Faster” initiatives. The League’s Risk Management Services Division is the insurance provider for over 250 police departments in the state.

- ✓ Production of the 27-minute “Slower Is Faster” video.
- ✓ Week long five city tour, featuring Tulsa Police Captain Travis Yates and the Hillsborough town manager to promote use of the video and encourage departments to bolster their driver safety efforts. The video was used by the N.C. Justice Academy as part of statewide in-service training in their Below 100 training module.
- ✓ Annual two-day training seminar provided free of charge to police trainers and instructors by the League. The seminar provides a “toolbox” of resources officers can take home and adapt for use in their departments, classroom presentations, Critical Safe Driving Tactics &

Stress Inoculation Drill at the GoPro Motorplex karting facility, and one full day of in-car training identical to the HPD’s annual training program.

Additional HPD driver safety efforts include annual classroom training and policy review, Below 100 participation, inviting other agencies to participate in vehicle training, participation in Cognitive Command research study on police driving and stress, new vehicle graphics packages with higher visibility, new distracted driving policy in 2015, and prioritization of seatbelt use.

Officer buy-in, program history, & top-down leadership: HPD driver safety efforts have evolved since the first course in April of 2000. Officers have been instrumental in enhancing the program each year via suggestions, helped in development of the “Slower Is Faster” video, and assisted with training provided to other officers statewide through the League’s annual two day seminar. Officers continue sharing experiences on how tactics they’ve learned from the annual in-car school have prevented collisions.

The HPD’s program is led by its police chief and town manager. The chief is a certified driving instructor, ALERT International member who serves on the board of directors, has also made presentations on driver safety to the public safety community as well as elected officials. The town manager has designed, coordinated, instructed, and found affordable ways to implement driver training. His local government management and competition motorsports experience have helped support this effort, including numerous articles and presentations to raise awareness on this issue. Many of the Town’s elected officials have attended the HPD’s annual in-car training as a way to better learn about and support their police department. As a result, annual driver training and other efforts have been strongly supported for the last 15 years.

Results/Success:

- ✓ Maximum insurance discount on property & liability insurance via few incidents/small cost per event.
- ✓ No injuries: no driving-related injuries or workers compensation claims in the last five years.
- ✓ Long-term: since April 2000 there have only been three at-fault serious collisions with major damage. In one of the collisions the patrol vehicle was still repairable and returned to service.
- ✓ Statewide impact: The League reported in the August 2015 article in Southern City Magazine, “Steering Clear of Accidents” that the 52 police departments that have participated in the Annual 2-day “Slower Is Faster” Seminar since 2013 have experienced a **20% decrease in vehicle-related claims.**