

GUIDANCE TO INSTRUCTORS
HPD “Slower is Faster” Police Driving Course
November 20, 2015

General Suggestions

- While it’s important to be generally familiar with these guidelines – they are guidelines, not rigid instructions. Each instructor has their own style and approach that works best for them. This is one reason the officers get matched with three different instructors during the day, so they can benefit from different instructor perspectives and styles. To be effective, instructors have to be flexible, teach to the situation, moment, and officer’s greatest needs. As you’ve heard me say before, “just get in the car and instruct.” Trust your experience, instincts, have fun, and be the best possible coach you can be. You are not only helping these officers, who are all instructors/trainers, but sharing information they will teach to the officers in their departments.
- Focus post-run suggestions to the top 2 - 3 points for improvement, otherwise your critical message risks being lost due to too much information. Using a “triage” approach simplifies your message, makes it easier to coach, and increases the probability of the most critical needs being improved. Always find something the officer did well or improved on to reinforce those strengths.
- Watching to insure officers are braking plenty early and “looking ahead” is important since the root cause of collisions/injuries is frequently:
 1. Braking too late and/or not enough.
 2. Being surprised, not looking or thinking ahead.
 3. Driving too fast, lack of sufficient safety buffer or reactionary gap.
- Asking officers for their thoughts on the run, often before providing your analysis, helps develop their ability to monitor and coach themselves when driving. Learning to recognize when they are approaching the limit so as to “slow down” and increase their safety buffer is a critical skill.
- **Vehicles equipped with Electronic Stability Control (ESC)** will operate with it activated. It creates a liability risk if we don’t train on it and give officers the opportunity to feel and experience what it does. If the ESC is being regularly activated it likely means the vehicle is being driven too close to the limit (i.e., the safety buffer is almost used up) and the officer needs to slow down and brake earlier. It’s important that officers don’t regularly rely on ESC to get themselves out of trouble.

Session #1: Baseline Drill

- **Aggression level: Stick, slither, and slide.** Officers should drive hard enough where they can make mistakes, learn the limits of car/driver, and understand why the key instructional points are so critical. If an officer is not driving aggressively enough to make mistakes, in this session, feel free to push them harder. If they are overdriving, too much, then you may need to rein them in a bit.
 - 1 Navigation Run. Low to medium speed.
 - 2 officer runs. Ask for their thoughts on the run they just completed. Offer suggestions to improve their technique (e.g., brake points, smoothness with hand/foot inputs, vision, line, hand position).
 - 2 instructor demo runs. The first runs should be at 70 – 85% to demonstrate proper line, technique, braking zones, etc. Driving too hard on the first run can overwhelm students where they can’t process what just happened. Remember, it always seems 10 MPH faster from the passenger’s seat, so that takes the pressure off you as an instructor when you are driving! Explain what you are doing while driving on the first run. Try to talk through areas where they may have been struggling (e.g., braking too late).
- The second run can be at 90 – 95%. Driving well over the limit and getting in too much trouble during a demo run is **not** reinforcing the type of discipline/skills we are trying to model. **There is a condition referred to as “mirror neurons” – if you drive well over the limit it is more likely that officers will naturally want to replicate what you did.** It is fine to make mistakes during your run as we are all going to botch multiple features during the day. In fact, it’s a good learning opportunity to identify your mistakes, what, and why they happened.
- 3 officer runs – Keep reinforcing core driving principles. If you notice officers being “surprised” and getting behind in elements, then pointing out the benefits of getting their vision further down the road will be a good lead into the next session.

Session #2: “Scan & Plan” Drill

- *Aggression level: “stick.”* Decision stations will continue operating and changing entrances/exits to various features to force officers to look ahead and respond appropriately.
- 1 officer run. The course will run in the opposite direction from Session #1, with no practice runs. Officers provide “commentary” while driving, describing where they are looking and/or what they plan to do while driving. Having officers talking while driving an unfamiliar course further complicates the process. This provides a more realistic and stressful drill. It also helps the instructor know where/when/what the officer is looking at. The quality driving often declines and mistakes increase during this session by adding this one task. This emphasizes the point of slowing down, braking early, “scanning & planning” to avoid surprises, and maintaining a reactionary gap when multi-tasking and/or under stress.
- 1 instructor run. Before taking your demo run in this session, consider asking the officer to look down the road from their view in the passenger seat as if they were driving. That will allow them to compare what they are looking at to what you are doing. Describe where you are looking to demonstrate how vision and scanning ahead avoids surprises, helps smooth out lines and inputs.
- 2 officer runs. Repeat what officer did during their first run. The officer focuses on vision, avoiding surprises, and adhering to the limit. There should be few if any cones hit. If an officer is not looking ahead, feel free to remind them by asking “what’s next” in the middle of the run. They don’t have to respond, it’s simply a reminder.
- This session may present discussion opportunities between runs to reinforce the points that looking down the road and through corners slows things down and combats stress. Looking off the hood of the car makes things appear as a blur, increasing adrenaline and inducing many of the degrading effects of stress (e.g., tunnel vision, auditory exclusion, decreased reaction time and hand-eye coordination, forebrain functions slow, diminished depth perception, etc.). “Peeking ahead” is one tactic to combat surprises as a way to see what’s ahead or through a corner.

Session #3: Code 3/Distraction Drills

- *Aggression level: “stick,”* like they are on rails, no slithering, no cones hit, maximize reactionary gap/safety buffer.
- Calls will be dispatched by Chief Hampton. Additional changes will be made to the course and distractions/obstacles will be added. The course will be run in same direction as Session #2. Officers must increase their reactionary gap as the distractions go up. Vision, breathing, and making good decisions are critical to managing stress and successfully completing this drill.
- If the officers don’t slow down sufficiently to deal with the challenges posed by “divided attention” you will observe the quality of their driving degrade and mistakes increase (e.g., braking too late, initiating steering input too late, sliding out in corners, making incorrect choices at decision-stations, not seeing key elements of the course, etc.). Make sure to point this out between runs to ensure they don’t miss this critical learning opportunity. Once again, increasing officer awareness of the connection between stress, multi-tasking, and driving performance is critical so officers can learn to monitor their performance and make good decisions in the field.
- Each of the two drills will be a “deuce” or 2-lapper.

Scenario #1: response to an officer down call. Cars will be paired, one being lead, the other back-up.

Scenario #2: lead & back-up cars from each pairing switch positions. Response to a stolen vehicle. On the second lap dispatch will inform the officer the stolen car is actually a 14-15 year old who took her mother’s car, so it’s an unauthorized use. The officer should disengage the pursuit immediately.

Other scenarios: Veteran officers will likely receive a different scenario than the two above, since they’ve likely been through those before.

- **Combat breathing** – this is a key learning point during the session. Looking ahead, scanning, and slow controlled breaths are keys to managing stress. During intense driving (police or racing) it’s natural to breathe too fast or stop breathing. Try to remind the officers during the session to “breathe.”

PURPOSE OF KEY COURSE ELEMENTS

Camber changes on the pavement – The lot has several elevation changes that provide for on/off camber maneuvers, thus increasing push or loose conditions at different features. This conveniently recreates real world features officers have to factor when driving. Crowns/camber changes in the road are another reason to maintain an adequate safety buffer.

Slow pivot, various 90s, sweepers – These features are excellent learning tools for a variety of reasons. First, accidents are most likely to happen when officers brake too late. As we know, these features will provide immediate feedback and punishment on the cone course as the car picks up a terminal push or gets loose if the driver gets greedy. Its important officers learn there is simply no fast way around or through slow/tight features. “If it feels like you can get out and walk faster than you’re driving through this section, then you’re probably at the right speed.”

Officers must gain experience and practice the discipline of recognizing features that just can’t be pushed – learning to execute these features well in the school should add to their experience base so they remember to be controlled during the “heat of the moment.” The sweepers and pivot are classic elements for teaching “looking ahead” as they should be looking out the side of the window at times looking at their exit.

Slaloms & Chicago Box – Looking ahead and not being surprised, getting the car under control at the entrance is critical so as to avoid having to brake during the middle of heavy transitional maneuvers. This feature is intended to demonstrate how easy it is to get into trouble when a driver does not get the car slowed down and under control upon entering a feature.

Decision Stations – These stations will be operated by experienced on-course workers. Officers must decide which way to go based on directions provided by signs, cones, and the traffic light. The on-course experienced workers will randomly change entrance/exit points throughout the day at these stations.

The purpose of the decision stations is to emphasize the importance of drivers looking down the road so as to avoid being surprised, especially when multi-tasking and under stress. In addition to encouraging downstream vision, it requires officers “think ahead” or

“scan & plan.” Often, this requires earlier braking depending on the direction the light, signs, or cones.

Intersections – One or two intersections will be included on the course. Intersections account for approximately 50% of line of duty deaths in police driving. In addition, collisions with civilians turning in front of officers are often serious and deadly. Hence, these are critical features to train on. Either stops signs or the light will be used at an intersection. When Green/Go, officers still need to slow, at least cover the brake pedal, scan, and clear the intersection. When Red/Stop, officers need to either stop or slowly roll through as they clear the intersection. Whether green or red, officer should respond as they would in a real world situation. Note: we may or may not have an intersection this year.