

WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

III-37 BAIT VEHICLE

EFFECTIVE 04/07/2008

CALEA Standards: 41.1.4

CFA Standards: 17.02

I. POLICY: It is the goal of the West Palm Beach Police Department to utilize proven technologies to enhance law enforcement services provided to our community. The Bait Vehicle is a valuable tool that, when used in conjunction with other crime fighting methods can identify and subsequently combat criminal activities. This specially equipped vehicle is utilized to improve the prospects for a successful apprehension of auto theft offenders while minimizing the risk to responding officers and the public.

II. DEFINITIONS:

A. Bait Vehicle- An electronically equipped vehicle with a silent alarm, Global Positioning System (GPS), global mapping software, and audio/video equipment. This vehicle is also equipped with disablement features that permit its engine to be turned off from a remote location, and its doors locked

B. Bait Vehicle Coordinator The Bait Vehicle Coordinator (BVC) is the member assigned to oversee the program, including record-keeping and vehicle deployment. This member shall be assigned to the Auto Theft Unit.

C. 10-150: - The radio code used by the communications Operators and patrol officers to identify a bait vehicle incident. In order to protect the operational efficiency of the program, this code shall be used in all radio transmissions.

III. DEPLOYMENT:

A. The authority to deploy the bait vehicle rests with the BVC. Personnel from outside the Auto Theft Unit shall not attempt to operate or deploy the bait vehicle without specific authorization from the BVC. Personnel who desire bait vehicle deployment may direct requests through their Chain of Command.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Dispatch Operations: The following procedures will apply to Dispatch Operations:

1. The bait vehicle's GPS and alarm system status will be monitored by Dispatch Operations utilizing computer(s) and software located in the Communications Center designed for that purpose.
2. Whenever Dispatch Operations concludes that the bait vehicle alarm activation is valid, they will:
 - a. Dispatch two units to the bait vehicle's location or, if the vehicle is moving, on a path to intercept the vehicle.
 - b. Notify the appropriate Patrol Shift Supervisor.
 - c. If the vehicle leaves the city boundaries, Communications shall notify the agency having immediate jurisdiction.
 - d. Relay updates and additional information to the responding units as to the vehicle's location and/or status change.

B. Patrol: The following procedures will apply to Uniform Services:

1. The first responding officer(s) to make contact with the bait vehicle shall inform Communications of its location and state whether or not it is occupied.

a. Occupied vehicle procedures:

1. If the vehicle is occupied, the officer(s) shall assess whether activation of the vehicle's disabling device is appropriate. The officer shall determine vehicle speed, traffic conditions, weather conditions, site visibility, and any other factors that may affect officer and civilian safety. These conditions shall be considered prior to disabling the bait vehicle (causing it to lose power.)
2. If the officer concludes that an immediate disabling of the vehicle would be unsafe, the officer shall follow the vehicle at a discreet distance until such time that safe disabling can occur.
3. The primary unit shall be responsible for giving the command to disable the vehicle. When the decision is made, the officer(s) shall position their police vehicle(s) for a traffic stop and notify dispatch to commence with disabling the vehicle. The dispatcher shall then activate the vehicle's disabling mechanisms by remote control.
4. After it becomes apparent that the bait vehicle has lost power, the officer(s) shall take appropriate action and arrest the suspect(s).

b. Unoccupied vehicle procedures:

1. If the vehicle is unoccupied when the officer(s) makes initial contact, the officer(s) shall verify whether a crime has been committed or whether the alarm signal appears to have been accidental/false.
2. If the vehicle has not moved from the deployment location and appears undisturbed, the alarm may be presumed to be accidental. Communications should reset the alarm and the officer may then clear the call.
3. If the vehicle was entered or someone has attempted entry, the BVC shall be contacted as soon as practical to ensure that proper recovery procedures are followed.

c. In the unlikely event that Communications loses electronic contact with the bait vehicle and its whereabouts become unknown, a stolen vehicle report shall be written and the vehicle's information entered into NCIC/FCIC. Communications shall also periodically request a B.O.L.O. be read which will alert neighboring jurisdictions.

IV. PURSUIT:

A. Any pursuit of the Bait Vehicle shall be in strict compliance with West Palm Beach Police Department Standard Operating Procedure III-25.

V. VEHICLE RECOVERY:

A. Following each verified 10-150 of the bait vehicle, the vehicle shall be moved to the West Palm Beach Police Department for inspection and resetting of the alarm system. The vehicle may be driven by a uniformed officer if, in the opinion of the BVC or shift supervisor, doing so will not compromise program confidentiality. If the removal is likely to be observed by the public, the vehicle shall be towed. In lieu of towing, a plainclothes officer posing as a civilian owner may drive the vehicle, provided that the officer was not part of the initial police response and is otherwise unrecognizable to the public as a police officer.

VI. VIDEO TAPE EVIDENCE COLLECTION:

A. The bait vehicle is equipped with a videotaping system that videotapes suspects inside the vehicle. Except as provided below, officers responding to a 10-150 of the bait vehicle shall not disturb the videotape. The BVC or shift supervisor will retrieve the tape when the vehicle's alarm system and disabling mechanism are reset.

1. If immediate viewing of the videotape is necessary to identify suspects or clarify urgent evidentiary issues, the BVC will be contacted.

2. Shift supervisors shall consider, however, that the bait vehicle is an undercover asset and shall weigh the benefit of immediate videotape viewing against possible compromise of the vehicle's status and videotaping system

3. In addition to the videotape, any other available evidence shall be collected. Processing should occur at the police station in order not to attract undue public attention to the bait vehicle

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY: The bait vehicle program is considered an undercover operation. Accordingly, all personnel shall exercise caution in order to protect its confidentiality.

A. Personnel may discuss the bait vehicle's basic capabilities with the public, and may disclose the program as an example of the department's proactive approach to reduce auto thefts.

B. Personnel shall not reveal the vehicle's description, deployment locations, and/or other information that may compromise the vehicle's undercover status or enable a suspect to neutralize its alarm and disabling features.

C. Personnel must use special care and should not discuss the bait vehicle's capabilities with arrestees who have been arrested due to a bait vehicle operation. Except where necessary to process an arrest and initiate prosecution, disclosure of operational information to defendants and/or defense attorneys shall occur only through the formal discovery process via the State Attorneys Office.

VIII. TRAINING: Because the bait vehicle is a standard automobile with no unique driving features, special training is not required to drive the vehicle from one location to another. Any employee with a valid driver's license and authority to operate a police vehicle may drive the bait vehicle, as authorized pursuant to the Bait Vehicle Program. However, no employee may set or adjust the vehicle's equipment, sensor controls, and/or disabling mechanism, unless specifically trained and authorized to do so.

IX. REFERENCE:

- SOP # III-22 Special Purpose Vehicles.
- SOP # III-25 Vehicle Pursuit
- SOP # IV-4 Auto Theft Investigation

Delsa R. Bush, Chief of Police

Original issue: 04/07/2008
Revised: N/A
I.D. # 1070

History: N/A
Old SOP #:N/A
Revision Dates: N/A

Job Title Task Files: C.I.D. Commander, A/C Field Operations Bureau