

**Procedure**  
**12.23**

**EFFECTIVE  
DATE  
3-16-18**

**Eugene  
Police Department**



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## **Bait Car Program**

### **12.23.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

It is the policy of the Eugene Police Department to interrupt, where possible, auto thefts in progress and to apprehend those responsible for the crime.

It is also the policy of the Eugene Police Department to perform this proactive, tactical mission in a safe and professional manner. Therefore, all personnel responding to a bait vehicle incident shall exercise appropriate caution and shall comply with the provisions of this directive.

The Eugene Police Department Bait Vehicle Program provides for one or more specially equipped automobile(s) to be parked in areas with a heightened risk of vehicle theft, and to then direct officers to the vehicle when on-board sensors indicate that someone may be attempting to steal the vehicle or items from inside of it.

The purpose of this directive is to establish procedures that improve the prospects for a successful apprehension once the sensors have activated, while at the same time minimizing the risk to responding officers and the public.

### **12.23.2 DEFINITIONS**

- a. Bait Vehicle - An electronically equipped vehicle with a silent alarm, Global Positioning System, 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 the ability to lock its doors so that occupant suspects cannot escape.
- b. Bait Vehicle Coordinator -The officer assigned to coordinate the program, including record-keeping and vehicle deployment.
- c. Bait Vehicle Supervisor – The sergeant assigned to supervise the program and oversee usage, maintenance and records keeping.
- d. Activity/Location Logbook – A permanent record of the bait vehicle's history maintained by the Bait Vehicle Coordinator. This logbook is used to record the dates, times, locations, conditions and duration of all bait vehicle deployments.

- e. Global Positioning System (GPS) – An electronic tracking system that continually monitors the bait vehicle's exact geographic location, direction of travel, speed and operating condition.

### **12.23.3 DEPLOYMENT PROCEDURES**

- a. The authority to deploy the bait vehicle rests with the Bait Vehicle Supervisor. In many cases, this authority will be delegated to the Bait Vehicle Coordinator.

An officer shall be assigned as the Bait Vehicle Coordinator.

- b. Personnel shall not attempt to operate or deploy the bait vehicle without specific authorization from the Bait Vehicle Supervisor.
- c. Prior to each separate deployment, the Bait Vehicle Coordinator or Supervisor shall notify the 911 Communications Center Supervisor and Patrol Command of the vehicle's location and description. This information should also be posted in the patrol briefing area. Upon conclusion of the deployment, the Bait Vehicle Coordinator or Supervisor shall again notify the 911 Communications Center and Patrol Command of the removal of the vehicle.

### **12.23.4 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. The bait vehicle's GPS and alarm system status is routinely monitored by the 911 Communications Center using computer software designed for that purpose. Personnel are trained to interpret the alarm system data and thereby assess the validity of bait vehicle alarm activations. A written directive provides procedures for Communications personnel to follow.
- b. Whenever a system-trained dispatcher concludes that a bait vehicle alarm activation is valid, Dispatch shall identify the vehicle's geographic location and, where applicable, its speed and direction of travel. The dispatcher shall then:
  - 1. Station One will broadcast a Bait Car activation with its location and establish a Code 9 on the Operational Channel.
  - 2. Dispatch two units to the bait vehicle's location or, if the vehicle is moving, on a path to intercept the vehicle.
  - 3. Ensure the Watch Commander is aware of the activation (this is assumed if the above procedure is followed.)
  - 4. Relay updates and additional information to the responding units as the vehicle's location and/or status changes.

5. If due to in progress calls immediate dispatch is not possible the Watch Commander should be notified and the vehicle's location monitored until dispatch is possible.

## **12.23.5 PATROL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The first responding officer to make contact with the bait vehicle shall inform Dispatch of its location and state whether or not it is occupied. Generally, a code three response is not necessary.

### **12.23.5.1 Bait Vehicle Occupied by Suspects**

- a. If the vehicle is occupied, the primary officer shall assess when the activation of the vehicle's disabling devices is appropriate.
- b. Factors to be considered during this assessment include the vehicle's speed, traffic conditions, weather conditions, site visibility, and any other factors that may affect officer and civilian safety when the bait vehicle suddenly loses power.
- c. If the officer concludes that an immediate disablement of the vehicle would be unsafe, the officer shall follow the vehicle at a discreet distance until such time that safe disablement can occur.
- d. When the officer is ready to conduct a high-risk stop on the vehicle the officer shall notify the dispatcher to commence disablement. Communications Center personnel shall then activate the vehicle's disabling mechanisms by remote control.
- e. After being notified by Dispatch that the vehicle has been disabled the Officer shall activate all their emergency equipment, affect a high-risk traffic stop and arrest the suspects.
- f. Officers will follow the same procedures with the bait car as they would any other stolen vehicle including: Use of Force, Forcible Stops, and Pursuit Policy. This will remain the same even in the unlikely event there is a failure of the system and Dispatch is unable to shut the vehicle down.

### **12.23.5.2 Bait Vehicle Unoccupied**

- a. If the vehicle is not occupied when the officer makes initial contact, the officer shall attempt to verify whether a crime against the vehicle has been attempted, or whether the alarm signal appears to have been accidental. In most cases this can be accomplished with a drive-by of the vehicle.
- b. If the vehicle has not moved from its deployment location and it appears undisturbed, the alarm may be presumed to be accidental.

- c. In such case the Watch Commander shall ensure the Bait Vehicle Coordinator or Supervisor is notified of the activation. An email is sufficient in most cases.
- d. However, if it appears that the vehicle has been damaged or otherwise compromised, the bait vehicle supervisor should be notified to coordinate removal.

#### **12.23.5.3 Bait Vehicle — Lost Contact**

In the unlikely event electronic contact is lost with the bait vehicle and its whereabouts become unknown, a stolen vehicle report shall be written and the vehicle's information entered into LEADS/NCIC. The Communications Center shall broadcast an ATL to EPD personnel and notify all neighboring agencies.

#### **12.23.5.4 Bait Vehicle — Unable to Locate**

- a. The GPS signal can be lost if the vehicle is moved indoors, such as a garage. In the event the GPS signal is lost Dispatch will give officers the last known location of the bait vehicle.
- b. If it is determined the bait vehicle has been secreted on private property the officers should attempt contact and obtain consent to search for the vehicle. If consent cannot be obtained the Bait Vehicle Supervisor or Coordinator (or Property Crimes Supervisor if neither can be reached) shall be contacted to coordinate the application for a search warrant.
- c. In the event that officers at the scene of the secreted bait vehicle develop reason to believe the vehicle is being dismantled they should consider whether they have exigent circumstances to enter and secure the vehicle.

### **12.23.6 VEHICLE RECOVERY**

#### **a. Vehicle Removal**

Following each verified incident, the bait vehicle shall be removed and inspected prior to a new deployment.

#### **b. Evidence Collection**

- 1. The bait vehicle is equipped with a video system that photographs suspects inside the vehicle. Except as provided below, officers responding to a Bait Car incident shall not disturb the video. The Bait Vehicle Coordinator or Supervisor will retrieve the video when the vehicle's alarm system and disabling mechanisms are reset.
- 2. However, if immediate viewing of the video is necessary to identify suspects or

clarify urgent evidentiary issues, the Bait Vehicle Coordinator or Supervisor should be consulted for instruction.

3. As the video is considered physical evidence, chain of custody shall be maintained from the moment the video is downloaded from its video recorder. Upon completion of the evidentiary viewing of the officer will ensure the video is logged into evidence.
4. In addition to the video, any other available evidence shall be collected. Such evidence includes, but is not limited to, latent fingerprints, photographic depictions of vehicle damage, and property left in the vehicle by the suspects. Ideally, processing should occur at a city facility not in public view in order not to attract undue attention to the bait vehicle.

### **12.23.7 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- a. The bait car program is considered an undercover operation. Accordingly, all personnel shall exercise caution in order to protect its confidentiality.
- b. Personnel may discuss the bait car's basic capabilities with the public, and may advertise the program as an example of the Department's proactive approach to auto theft enforcement.
- c. However, employees shall not reveal the vehicle's description, number of vehicles, deployment locations, and/or other information that may compromise the vehicle's undercover status or enable a suspect to neutralize its alarm and disablement features.
- d. Particular care should be exercised when discussing the vehicle's capabilities with suspects who have been arrested during a Bait Vehicle incident. 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 administered by District Attorney's Office.

### **12.23.8 TRAINING**

Because the bait vehicle is a standard automobile with no unique driving features, special training is not required to transport the vehicle from one location to another. Any employee with a valid driver's license and authority to operate a basic police vehicle may drive the bait vehicle. However, no employee may set or adjust the vehicle's sensor controls and/or disabling mechanisms unless specifically trained to do so.

**David N. James**  
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