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LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Part I of Stops and Detentions Audit: Backseat Detentions Antelope Valley Stations Project No. 2025-14-A

Prepared By:

Audit and Accountability Bureau



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**Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Audit and Accountability Bureau**

**Part I of Stops and Detentions Audit:
Backseat Detentions
Antelope Valley Stations
Project No. 2025-14-A**

AUDIT REPORT

PURPOSE

The Audit and Accountability Bureau (AAB) conducted the Stops and Detentions Audit under the authority of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD or the Department), pursuant to the United States Department of Justice (US-DOJ) Antelope Valley (AV) Settlement Agreement (Agreement)¹ Paragraph 149, which states:

The Monitor shall... determine whether LASD has implemented and continues to comply with the material requirements of this Agreement... Where appropriate, the monitor will make use of audits conducted by the [Audit and Accountability Bureau] taking into account the importance of internal auditing capacity and independent assessment of this agreement.

This Stops and Detentions Audit was conducted in five separate audits (Part I, II, III, IV, and V) to provide timely feedback to Lancaster and Palmdale Stations (AV Stations). Each of the five audits addresses the requirements of the Agreement.

This audit, designed as Part I, specifically focused on assessing the treatment and documentation of individuals placed in a Backseat Detention (BSD)² related to the AV Stations' compliance with paragraphs 44, 48, and 149 of the Agreement.

The Stop and Detentions Audits were conducted in the following manner:

Part	Audit
I	Backseat Detentions
II	Supervisory Review of Deputy's Daily Worksheet
III	Backseat Detentions Related to Domestic Violence
IV	Initiation of Stops and Detentions Related to Consent Searches
V	Initiation of Stops and Detentions Related to Probation or Parole Searches

¹ [Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, No. CV 15-03174, United States v. Los Angeles County et al. \(D.C. Cal. April 28, 2015\)](#)

² A BSD occurs when an individual's freedom is restrained by placing that individual in the backseat of a patrol car for investigative purposes for any period of time.

This audit is scheduled to be recurring. The table below lists the project numbers, due dates, and population time periods, which are subject to change.

Project Numbers, Due Dates, and Population Time Periods

Project No.	Projected Due Date	Population Time Period
2025-4-A	April 30, 2025	November 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024
2025-14-A	September 30, 2025	May 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025

The AAB conducted this audit under the guidance of Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).³ The AAB determined whether the evidence obtained was sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for the findings based on the audit objectives.

BACKGROUND

On April 28, 2015, the County of Los Angeles, the Department, and the US-DOJ entered into the Agreement with the goal of ensuring police services are provided to the AV community in a manner which fully complies with the Constitution and the laws of the United States. The Department is responsible for implementing the mandated stipulations of the Agreement, ensuring both public and Department member safety, while fostering a renewed public trust in the LASD.

The AAB was authorized by the Sheriff of Los Angeles County, the US-DOJ, and the AV Monitoring Team (MT) to conduct audits of the Department. To improve efficiency and effectiveness, the AAB shifted its audit approach from conducting full-scale audits to limited scope audits. These limited scope audits focus on a narrow set of audit objectives and specific audit populations. The purpose of the limited scope audits was intended to provide timely feedback to the AV Stations, facilitate opportunities for operational improvements, and demonstrate an increasing commitment toward meeting the established AV Compliance Metrics (compliance metrics).

³ The GAGAS, also known as the Yellow Book, is issued by the Comptroller General of the United States through the U.S. Government Accountability Office and refers to Government Auditing Standards, July 2018 Revision, Technical Update April 2021.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The Department recognizes the importance of evaluating Department members' actions when interacting with members of the public. Department members' interactions with the AV community are essential to developing and maintaining community trust. This audit provided an opportunity to identify areas for process improvement and implement corrective actions where necessary. An audit work plan was submitted to the MT and the US-DOJ for input prior to the start of the audit.

Audit Scope

The scope of this audit evaluated stops and detentions, with a specific focus on the treatment of individuals detained in the backseat of a patrol vehicle during traffic stops. In addition, the auditors evaluated body-worn camera (BWC)⁴ activations, the completeness of BWC recordings, the proper documentation of stops involving BSDs, and whether the required advisements were provided to detained subject(s) throughout the interaction. Any deficiencies or deviations were identified and documented. Furthermore, patterns of legal or policy errors were identified and reported.

Audit Population

The selected audit period was from May 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025. The audit focused on a single population from which audit samples were extracted. This population included:

- Stops and Detentions involving BSD data.

A data request was submitted through the Data Systems Bureau (DSB), for all the AV Stations' stops and detentions (vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle stops) with BSD data during the audit period. The resulting data yielded a total population of 3,253 stops and detentions, 997 from Lancaster Station and 2256 from Palmdale Station. The search criteria "Backseat Detention" was then applied, as it met the testing criteria for this audit. This selection process resulted in a refined population of 139 stops and detentions involving a BSD, of which auditors stratified and randomly selected a sample of 58 stops and detentions involving a BSD, 30 from Lancaster and 28 from Palmdale Station.

⁴ A BWC is a video and audio recording device worn by a Department member which allows an event to be recorded and saved as a digital file.

The auditors assessed the 58 initiated stops and detentions involving a BSD to verify whether the objectives were met by reviewing each primary Department members' BWC recording, SACR⁵, and associated Deputy Daily Work Sheet (DDWS)⁶. The table below summarizes the number of stops and detentions relevant to this audit from MDC.⁷

Audit Population and Sample

AV Station	Total Number of Stops and Detentions	Backseat Detentions (BSDs)	Sampled Population
Lancaster	997	71	30
Palmdale	2256	68	28
AV Total	3253	139	58

Audit Procedures

The MT Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) published the “*Antelope Valley Monitoring Team First Stops and Bias-Free Policing Audit*,” report in 2024, which evaluated stops from the third quarter of 2021 and documented compliance metrics. During a meeting on April 2, 2025, the SMEs directed AAB to utilize those compliance metrics, noting they may differ from those used in previous AAB audit reports.

The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings for each stop and detention within the audit population. This included recordings from the primary Department members involved in the application of the BSD or those having direct contact with a subject detainee (e.g., driver, passengers, or individuals present at the scene), who were placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. When necessary, additional documentation (e.g., incident reports, arrest reports, and citations) associated with BSDs conducted by AV Department members was reviewed to assess the accuracy of their MDC log and SACR entries. Particular attention was focused on the dialogue and treatment of the detainees placed in the backseat to ensure adherence to the Agreement requirements involving BSDs.

⁵ The SACR system is a data entry system designed to collect any detention by a peace officer or a person or any peace officer interaction with a person in which the peace officer conducts a search, including consensual search, or arrest.

⁶ The DDWS is a permanent, electronic detailed record of a patrol unit's activities during a shift. DDWS is one of the functions inside the CAD system, which generates a report based on calls for service assigned to a patrol unit or observation records created by the patrol deputy.

⁷ The MDC is a computer system installed in patrol vehicles, enabling Department members to access Department databases, communicate with dispatch, and perform operational tasks in the field.

To verify the accuracy of the Department members' documentation, the auditors reviewed BWC recordings and cross-referenced them with MDC logs and SACR data entries related to BSDs conducted by the AV Department members. The intent was to use both MDC and SACR as documentation sources, recognizing that one system contained the necessary data while the other did not. In such instances, the system that held the relevant information was relied upon as the documentation source for that audit sample.

This approach reflected the reality that MDC and SACR served as complementary systems, and, at times, information appeared in one but not in the other. Relying on both systems ensured a complete and accurate review of documentation. This process did not involve evaluating the quality or usability of MDC or SACR systems themselves but acknowledged the need to rely on both systems due to their limitations.

The auditors provided recommendations or corrective actions when incorrect information related to BSDs was entered into the MDC or SACR system during any stops or detentions.

In instances where the auditors observed potential misconduct not previously identified by station management, an interim audit memorandum detailing the incident was submitted to the North Patrol Division (NPD) for their review and disposition.

Summary of Findings

This audit involved one main objective with a total of four sub-objectives. The AV Stations were evaluated separately for each sub-objective. The results were combined to assess whether, overall, AV Stations complied with the compliance metrics. The table below outlines the audit objectives and its corresponding compliance metric percentage.

Summary of Compliance Metrics Findings

Obj. No.	Audit Objectives	Lancaster %	Palmdale %	AV Total	Compliance Metrics %
1	BACKSEAT DETENTIONS				
1(a)	<i>Explanation of Backseat Detentions to Subjects</i>	36%	27%	31%	90%
1(b)	<i>Backseat Detention Documentation and Articulation</i>	73%	82%	78%	90%
1(c)	<i>Backseat Detention Duration</i>	64%	77%	71%	95%
1(d)	<i>Reasonableness of Backseat Detentions</i>	92%	100%	96%	90%

The AAB acknowledges the compliance metrics may be subject to change in the future. The auditors will adjust their methodology and criteria as necessary to align with any approved modifications agreed upon by all parties.

Detailed Findings

This report provides detailed information on the findings noted during the audit for all objectives.

Objective No. 1 – Backseat Detentions

This objective evaluated whether BSDs conducted by AV Department members complied with the Agreement, compliance metrics, and LASD policy.

Objective No.1(a) – Explanation of Backseat Detentions to Subjects

Criteria

Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, Stops, Seizures and Searches, Paragraph 48, states:

*LASD - AV deputies may not conduct backseat detentions as a matter of course during routine traffic stops or domestic violence situations. When LASD - AV deputies do conduct backseat detentions, **LASD shall continue to require deputies to explain to civilians in a professional and courteous manner why they are being detained in the backseat of patrol cars.** LASD will not permit backseat detentions based on unreasonable or factually unsupported assertions of deputy safety. Backseat detentions shall not be used except where the deputy has an objectively reasonable belief that the detained person may pose a threat or be an escape risk. In instances where the backseat detention is premised on weather conditions or the detainee's articulated desire for privacy or personal safety, the deputy will inform the individual that the detention is optional.*

The compliance metric for this objective is **90%**, as documented in MT's 'First Stops and Bias-Free Policing Audit,' published in 2024.

Procedures

The auditors reviewed the primary BWC recordings to determine whether Department members explained, in a professional and courteous manner, to the subject(s) why they were being detained in the backseat of a patrol vehicle, in accordance with the Agreement. This included determining whether the Department members had an objectively reasonable belief the detained person may pose a threat or be an escape risk. In addition, the auditors assessed whether the detention was based on legitimate safety concerns or otherwise justified circumstances.

In identifying the term “matter of course”⁸ (as used in the Agreement provision indicated above), the auditors ensured actions related to the BSD were neither conducted nor documented as a standard method of operation without legitimate justification, or justification that aligns with law, policy, and the Agreement.

Additionally, if the auditors observed the BSD was based on weather conditions or the subject’s articulated desire for privacy or personal safety, the auditors verified the Department member informed the subject the detention was optional. Auditors excluded arrests from this objective, and they were not counted toward the compliance metric.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 58 stops and detentions were reviewed. Seven of the 58 stops and detentions were excluded because the auditors determined no BSDs had occurred or the subjects were arrested prior to the BSD. Therefore, auditors evaluated 51 stops with detentions for this objective. Of the 51 stops and detentions, auditors identified 51 subjects detained in the backseat of patrol vehicles.

Sixteen (31%) BSDs met the criteria for this objective because Department members provided the subjects with a professional and courteous explanation for the BSDs. The remaining 35 (69%) BSDs did not meet the criteria because Department members did not provide the subjects a reason for the BSD consistent with the Agreement.

For Lancaster Station, nine (36%) of the 25 BSDs met the criteria for this objective because Department members provided the subjects with a professional and courteous explanation for the BSDs. The remaining 16 (64%) BSDs did not meet the criteria because Department members did not provide the subjects a reason for the BSD consistent with the Agreement.

For Palmdale Station, seven (27%) of the 26 BSDs met the criteria for this objective because Department members provided the subjects with a professional and courteous explanation for the BSDs. The remaining 19 (73%) BSDs did not meet the criteria because Department members did not provide the subjects a reason for the BSD consistent with the Agreement.

⁸ In identifying the term “matter of course,” the auditors assessed whether the actions related to BSDs were neither conducted, explained, nor documented as a standard method of operation without legitimated justification. The auditors also evaluated whether any such actions were presented to subjects as routine without providing an explanation or basis.

Specifically:

L-1⁹: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The subjects were contacted and informed of the vehicle code violation. The subject passenger was detained curbside, and the subject driver was detained in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The Department member did not provide the subject driver with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subjects were warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-3: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The three subjects were contacted and detained. The subject driver was detained in the backseat of the patrol vehicle, and the remaining two passengers were detained curbside. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subjects were warned and advised about the violation and released. Due to late BWC activation the auditors were unable to determine if the subject driver was provided with a reason for the BSD.

L-4: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver was detained in the backseat of a patrol vehicle during the investigation. The Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The investigation revealed the subject had permission to drive the vehicle and he was subsequently released.

L-5: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration and tinted windows. The subject was told to, "have a seat," as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-6: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an unsafe lane change. The subject was told to, "have a seat," as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised regarding the violation and released.

L-7: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for failure to stop at a stop sign. The subject was told to, "have a seat," as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The Department member smelled the odor of narcotics and conducted a search of the subject's vehicle. During the search, contraband was recovered, and the subject was later arrested.

⁹ L refers to Lancaster Station. The number represents the selected sample referred to the thirty samples reviewed for Lancaster Station.

L-8: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a bicycle stop for no front or rear light during the darkness, in violation of lighting requirements. The subject was told, “have a seat,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-9: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an unsafe lane change. The subject was told, “have a seat,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The Department member smelled the odor of narcotics and conducted a search of the subject’s vehicle. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-15: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an unsafe lane change. The subject was told, “I’m just going to have you take a seat,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-16: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The subject was told, “have a seat,” in the patrol vehicle as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The Department member conducted a search of the subject’s vehicle due to the odor of narcotics. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-19: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and passenger were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject driver and subject passenger were told, “come have a seat,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSDs. The subject passenger was in possession of drug paraphernalia. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subjects were cited and released.

L-20: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The subject was told, “take a seat,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-21: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for speeding. The subject was told, “have a seat in my car,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

L-27: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and passenger were detained, and BSDs were conducted on both. The Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSDs. The subject driver was eventually arrested, and the subject passenger was released.

P-5¹⁰: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and passenger were detained, and BSDs were conducted on both. The Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSDs. The subject driver was eventually arrested, and the subject passenger was released.

P-9: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration. The subject driver and passenger were detained in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject driver and passenger were told, "have a seat in there," as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subjects were warned and advised about the violation and released.

P-10: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an inoperable rear light. The vehicle had three occupants who were all detained. The subject driver was arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia. The front and rear passenger subjects were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSDs. At the conclusion of the investigation, all three subjects were ultimately arrested after the BSDs were conducted.

P-11: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a pedestrian stop regarding a narcotics sale investigation. One Department member, from custody, was a ride-along who did not have a BWC. From the vantage point of the other Department member's BWC, the recording revealed the ride-along deputy placing the subject into the backseat of the patrol vehicle. However, statements made by the ride-along deputy to the subject were not captured by the BWC. The auditors were unable to determine if Department members provided the subject with a reason for the BSD.

P-14: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration. Both subject driver and subject passenger were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The deputy who conducted the BSD of the subject driver had a late BWC activation. The auditors were unable to determine if a BSD reason was given to the subject driver. The subject passenger was offered, and accepted, the BSD due to hot weather.

¹⁰ P refers to Palmdale Station. The number represents the selected sample referred to the thirty samples reviewed for Lancaster Station.

P-15: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration. The subject driver was told, “have a seat, real quick,” as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The passenger was curbside detained. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subjects were warned and advised about the violation and released.

P-18: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a pedestrian stop for possession for sale of narcotics investigation. Four subjects were contacted, but only one subject was detained, handcuffed, and a BSD was conducted. The Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The subject was ultimately released.

P-19: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and passenger were detained, and BSDs were conducted on both. The Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject driver was arrested, and the subject passenger was released.

P-21: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The subject was searched for possessing drug paraphernalia, and a BSD was conducted. The Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

P-23: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration and a license plate that did not match the make and model of the vehicle it was affixed to. The subject was detained, searched, and a BSD was conducted. The Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

P-24: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver was arrested after a brief foot pursuit. The subject passenger was detained, handcuffed and a BSD was conducted. The Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The subject passenger was eventually released.

P-25: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration. The subject was told there was “no sidewalk,” as a BSD was conducted. However, the Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

P-26: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration. The subject driver and subject passenger were detained, and BSDs were conducted. The Department members did not provide the subjects with a reason for the BSDs. After a records check was conducted, it was revealed the subject driver and subject passenger had arrest warrants. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject driver was cited and released, and the subject passenger was arrested for a no-bail warrant.

P-28: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for illegal parking. The subject was told, "have a seat in my car," as the BSD was conducted. However, the Department member did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject was warned and advised about the violation and released.

Recommendations

It is recommended the Department implement a SACR and MDC log function requiring Department members to digitally attest they have explained to subjects the reason for placing them in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. This procedure is also stipulated in the Manual of Policy and Procedures, Section 5-09/520.10, Backseat Detentions.

It is also recommended AV Stations' management conduct immediate training followed up by quarterly, or monthly briefings to remind Department members of the necessity to strictly adhere to the BWC policy, as specified in the Manual of Policy and Procedures, section 3-06/200.13, to ensure continuous video recordings of the entire investigative and enforcement interaction with subjects, particularly regarding the explanation of BSDs to subjects. Capturing these explanations on BWC can help ensure compliance, prevent Department members from using the BSD method as routine practice, and help facilitate the subject's understanding regarding the specific reason for their backseat detention.

Furthermore, AV Stations management must brief Department members backseat detentions should only be used when necessary and fully justified, not as a matter of course. While BSD is only used in 4.3% of all stops, it is imperative the stations briefings include scenarios in which the use of BSDs would be appropriate, such as flight risk, officer safety, weather conditions, or the subject's desire for privacy or personal safety. Alternatively, the briefings should also highlight scenarios in which BSDs would be inappropriate, such as routine investigative practice without justification. Finally, it is recommended that future station training emphasize the Agreement's requirement for the Department members to clearly explain to subjects the reason they are being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The explanation must include valid, and appropriate reasons for the BSD. Discussion points must include alternative options to BSDs when they are safe and applicable, such as having individuals stand nearby, sit curbside, or remain in their vehicle.

Objective No. 1(b) – Backseat Detention Documentation and Articulation

Criteria

Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, Stops, Seizures, and Searches, Paragraph 44, states:

LASD-AV deputies shall document the following information about patrol activity in their MDC patrol logs:

f) a concise narrative articulating specifics facts and circumstances that support reasonable suspicion or probable cause for investigative stops and detentions consistent with the radio clearance code (noting a radio clearance code, or the code for the resulting citation or other result, will not be deemed sufficient articulation of legal support for the stop or search).

h) where a backseat detention was conducted, a narrative articulating a reason, consistent with LASD policy and the law, as to why each backseat detention was necessary, as well as the reasonable suspicion for the investigation.

The compliance metric for this objective is **90%**, as documented in the MT's 'First Stops and Bias-Free Policing Audit,' published in 2024.

Procedures

The auditors reviewed the primary BWC recordings, along with their respective SACR and MDC logs to determine whether the Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the reason the BSD was necessary, and the reasonable suspicion for the investigation. Additionally, the auditors determined whether the BWC recordings supported the reason articulated by the Department member for the necessity of the BSD.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 58 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these, 45 (78%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately documented the BSDs and articulated the reason the BSD was necessary in the SACR or MDC logs. The remaining 13 (22%) did not meet the criteria because Department members did not document the BSD and/or articulate the reason it was necessary.

For Lancaster Station, 22 (73%) of the 30 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately documented the BSD and articulated the reason it was necessary. The remaining eight (27%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because Department members did not accurately document the BSD and/or articulate the reason it was necessary.

For Palmdale Station, 23 (82%) of the 28 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately documented the BSD and articulated the reason it was necessary. The remaining five (18%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because Department members did not accurately document the BSD and/or articulate the reason it was necessary.

Specifically:

L-3: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. A BSD was conducted on the subject. The Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and the BSD length; however, they failed to document the reason for the BSD in the MDC narrative and the SACR.

L-5: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration and tinted windows. The Department members documented the BSD reason was due to the subject looking for “avenues of escape.” The BWC recording revealed the Department member thanking the subject for being cooperative during the traffic stop. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings and observed the subject complying with the Department members’ orders. The BWC recordings did not support the articulated BSD reason.

L-6: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an unsafe lane change. The Department member documented the BSD reason was due to the subject looking for “avenues of escape.” The BWC recording revealed the Department member was concerned about the subject’s intoxication level. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings and observed the subject complying with the Department member’s orders. The BWC recordings did not support the articulated BSD reason.

L-8: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a bicycle stop for a missing front and rear light during the hours of darkness. The Department member documented the BSD reason for the subject was due to flight risk concerns. The BWC recording revealed the subject was cooperative and complied with the Department member’s orders. The BWC recording did not support the articulated BSD reason.

L-18: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for tinted windows. The subject driver was arrested, and a BSD was conducted on the subject passenger. The Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and the subject driver’s arrest; however, failed to document the subject passenger’s BSD.

L-25: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The Department member documented the BSD reason was due to the subject looking for “avenues of escape.” The BWC recording revealed the subject was informed the reason for the BSD was because the Department member was a one-person unit. The BWC recording did not support the articulated BSD reason.

L-27: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and subject passenger were handcuffed, and BSDs were conducted. The Department members accurately documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and the subject driver’s BSD; however, they failed to document the subject passenger’s BSD.

L-30: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an assault with a deadly weapon investigation. The subject driver was detained, and a BSD was conducted. The Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and the BSD length; however, they failed to document the reason for the BSD in the narrative.

P-10: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an inoperable rear light. The vehicle had three occupants who were all detained. The subject driver was arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia. The subject front and rear passenger subjects were detained, and BSDs were conducted. The Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and the arrest; however, they failed to document the reason for the subject passengers’ BSDs in the narrative.

P-11: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a pedestrian stop for a narcotics sales investigation. The subject was searched, and a BSD was conducted. The Department members documented the BSD reason was due to, looking for “avenues of escape”. Due to late BWC activations, the auditors were unable to determine whether the BSD reason was accurate.

P-15: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration. A second unit arrived on scene to assist. The subject driver was BSD, and the subject passenger was detained curbside. The Department members documented the BSD reason was due to a “high crime area”. Although a BSD reason was documented, the reason was not in compliance with the Agreement.

P-18: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a pedestrian stop for a possession for sale of narcotics investigation. Four people were contacted, but only one subject was detained, handcuffed, and a BSD was conducted. The Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and all the subjects. However, the Department members documented the wrong person as the BSD subject.

P-19: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop of a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and passenger were detained, and BSDs were conducted on both. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject driver was arrested, and the subject passenger was released. The Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation and the subject passenger's BSD; however, they failed to document the reason for the subject driver's BSD in the narrative.

Recommendations

Given the inherent limitations of the MDC/CAD system, it is recommended the AV Stations management require the Department members to accurately document stops involving BSDs in the SACR system, to ensure all necessary BSD documentation aligns with the documentation in the MDC/CAD system.

It is also recommended the AV Stations' management implement quarterly BSD documentation training. The AV Stations' management should designate appropriate staff members to draft scenarios related to BSD detentions and incorporate them into training exercises. These exercises must include proper documentation protocols, including the correct use of contact type codes in the MDC log. The training must also emphasize that terms such as "flight risk" and "looking for avenues of escape" alone are considered boilerplate language and should be avoided. Instead, they must elaborate and provide specific details explaining why the subject posed a "flight risk" and why a BSD was necessary. Examples of acceptable narratives articulating BSD justifications must be reviewed with AV Department members during these trainings.

Furthermore, it is recommended the AV Stations' management incorporate a discussion of BSD documentation in their staff briefings for each shift to reinforce the habit of documenting the BSD reasons, BSD length, and reasonable suspicion for their investigations in the MDC narrative. This will help remind the Department members the importance of complying with the Agreement's requirements (e.g., documentation must demonstrate BSD was regarding flight risk, officer safety, weather conditions, individual privacy or safety related).

The above-mentioned training sessions and discussions must be documented in the Station / Bureau Administration Portal, Watch Commander Shift Log and/or in an Automated Personnel In-Service Class Roster (APIS).

Objective No. 1(c) – Backseat Detention Duration

Criteria

Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, Stops, Seizures, and Searches, Paragraph 44, states:

LASD-AV deputies shall document the following information about patrol activity in their MDC patrol logs:

i. the length of any backseat detention.

The compliance metric for this objective is **95%**, as documented in the MT's 'First Stops and Bias-Free Policing Audit,' published in 2024.

Procedures

The auditors reviewed the primary BWC recording along with their respective SACR and MDC logs to determine whether the Department members accurately documented the approximate length of the BSD in the logs. The auditors then verified whether the documented length reasonably aligned with the length captured in the BWC recordings.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 58 stops and detentions were reviewed. Seven of the 58 stops and detentions were excluded because the auditors determined no BSDs had occurred or the subjects were arrested prior to the BSD. Therefore, auditors evaluated 51 stops with detentions for this objective. Of the 51 stops with detentions, auditors identified 51 subjects detained in the backseat of patrol vehicles.

Thirty-six (71%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the BSD length. The remaining 15 (29%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because the Department members either did not document the length of the BSD or the documented BSD length did not reasonably align with the duration observed in the BWC recordings.

For Lancaster Station, 16 (64%) of the 25 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the BSD length. The remaining nine (36%) did not meet the criteria because Department members either did not document the length of the BSD or the documented BSD length did not reasonably align with the duration observed in the BWC recordings.

For Palmdale Station, 20 (77%) of the 26 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the BSD length. The remaining six (23%) did not meet the criteria because Department members either did not document the length of the BSD or documented a length that did not reasonably align with the duration observed in the BWC recordings.

Specifically:

L-2: This stop involved a one-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an inoperable headlight. The Department member documented a BSD length of ten minutes. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the BSD was approximately 30 minutes in length. The auditors determined the Department member did not accurately document the BSD length.

L-3: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for a missing license plate. The Department members documented a BSD length of five minutes. Due to early deactivations of BWCs, the auditors were unable to determine the BSD length.

L-4: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop of a stolen vehicle investigation. The Department members documented a BSD length of 15 minutes. Due to early deactivations of BWCs, the auditors were unable to determine the BSD length.

L-18: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for tinted windows. The BWC recordings revealed the subject driver was arrested, and a BSD was conducted on the subject passenger. The Department member did not document the BSD length for the subject passenger. The BWC recordings were deactivated prior to the subject passenger's release. The auditors were unable to determine the BSD length due to early deactivations of BWCs.

L-19: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop of stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and subject passenger were BSD'd regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The Department members documented a BSD length of 20 minutes for both subjects. The BWC recordings were deactivated prior to the subjects' release. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSDs due to early deactivations of BWCs.

L-27: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop for a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and subject passenger were BSD for the felony traffic stop. The Department members did not document the subject passenger's BSD. The subject driver was eventually arrested. The BWC recordings were deactivated prior to the subject passenger's release. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSDs due to early deactivations of the BWCs.

L-30: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop for a brandishing a firearm investigation. The BWC recordings revealed a BSD was conducted on the subject for investigatory purposes. The subject was eventually arrested. The Department member documented a BSD length of 15 minutes. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSD due to early deactivations of the BWCs.

P-10: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for an inoperable rear light. The vehicle had three occupants who were all detained. The subject driver was arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia. The front and rear passengers were placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSD due to early deactivations of the BWCs.

P-18: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a pedestrian stop for possession for sale of narcotics investigation. Four people were contacted, but only one subject was detained, handcuffed, and a BSD was conducted. The subject was ultimately released. The Department member did not document the BSD length for the detained subject.

P-19: This stop involved multiple units conducting a vehicle stop of a stolen vehicle. The subject driver and passenger were detained, and BSDs were conducted. At the conclusion of the investigation, the subject driver was arrested, and the subject passenger was released. The Department members did not document the BSD length for the subject driver.

P-24: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop of a stolen vehicle. The subject driver was arrested after a brief foot pursuit. The subject passenger was detained, handcuffed and a BSD was conducted. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSD due to early deactivations of the BWCs.

Recommendations

The AV Station supervisors should regularly conduct briefings and issue reminders to Department members emphasizing the importance of accurately documenting BSD lengths in both SACR and MDC log systems. Department members should be encouraged to take note of BSD start and end times-such as by recording them in a field notebook or other accessible method, during or immediately after each incident, to support accurate reporting. Additionally, Department members should be reminded to comply with MPP Section 3-06/200.13, which requires that BWCs continue recording until the enforcement or investigative contact has ended. If the contact resumes after the video has stopped, the BWC shall be reactivated to ensure the entire contact, this will ensure the subject's release from the BSD, is captured.

Additionally, AV Station management should conduct a weekly audit of randomly selected traffic stops to verify the accuracy and consistency of BSD length documentation in SACR and MDC logs.

Objective No. 1(d) – Reasonableness of the Backseat Detentions

Criteria

Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, Stops, Seizures, and Searches, Paragraph 48, states:

*LASD-AV deputies may not conduct backseat detentions as a matter of course during routine traffic stops or domestic violence situations. When LASD-AV deputies do conduct backseat detentions, LASD shall continue to require deputies to explain to civilians in a professional and courteous manner why they are being detained in the backseat of patrol cars. LASD will not permit backseat detentions based on unreasonable or factually unsupported assertions of deputy safety. **Backseat detentions shall not be used except where the deputy has an objectively reasonable belief that the detained person may pose a threat or be an escape risk.** In instances where the backseat detention is premised on weather conditions or the detainee’s articulated desire for privacy or personal safety, the deputy will inform the individual that the detention is optional.*

The compliance metric is **90%**, as documented in the Antelope Valley MT’s 2024 audit report, “First Stops and Bias-Free Policing Audit.”

Procedures

Auditors reviewed the primary BWC recordings to determine whether Department members conducted backseat detentions in accordance with the Agreement. This includes determining whether the Department members had an objectively reasonable belief the detained person may pose a threat, be an escape risk, or had voluntarily requested to be placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. In addition, the auditors evaluated each incident to determine whether, beyond the specified criteria, the totality of the circumstances justified the use of the BSD.

In identifying the term “matter of course” (as used in the Agreement above), auditors ensured actions related to BSD were neither conducted as a standard method of operation without an objectively reasonable belief or justification that aligns with policy and the Agreement.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 58 stops and detentions were reviewed. Seven of the 58 stops and detentions were excluded because the auditors determined no BSDs had occurred or the subjects were arrested prior to the BSD. Therefore, auditors evaluated 51 stops with detentions for this objective. Of the 51 stops with detentions, auditors identified 51 subjects detained in the backseat of patrol vehicles.

Of the 51 stops with detentions, 49 (96%) met the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances and supported assertions provided by Department members justifying the use of the BSD. The remaining three (6%) did not meet the criteria because the BSD was not objectively reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness coupled with sufficient department members on scene.

For Lancaster Station, 23 (92%) of the 25 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances and supported assertions provided by Department members justifying the use of the BSD. The remaining two (8%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were not objectively reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness coupled with sufficient department members on scene.

For Palmdale Station, 26 (100%) of the 26 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances and supported assertions provided by Department members, justifying the use of the BSD.

Specifically:

L-5: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a vehicle stop for expired registration and tinted windows. The Department members documented the BSD reason was due to the subject looking for “avenues of escape.” The BWC recording revealed the Department member thanking the subject for being cooperative during the traffic stop. The auditors determined the BSD was not necessary as the subject was cooperative and complied with the Department’s members’ orders.

L-8: This stop involved a two-person unit conducting a bicycle stop for a missing front and rear light during hours of darkness. The Department members documented the BSD reason for the subject was due to flight risk concerns. The BWC recordings revealed there were two Department members on scene, the subject was cooperative and complying with orders. The auditors determined the BSD was not necessary as the subject was cooperative and complied with the Department members’ orders.

OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Other related matters are pertinent issues discovered during the audit but were not objectives which were measurable against the Agreement or Department policies and procedures.

SACR Documentation

Action Taken (Non-Force) by deputy during contact:

In 44 of the 58 incidents, Department members did not document action taken, to include patrol vehicle Detentions (BSD), BSD length, and the BSD occurrence of a subject. The MDC provided more accurate documentation regarding BSD length and BSD occurrence than SACR.

MDC Documentation

Incorrect BSD Documentation Entered in the MDC Patrol Log

In 24 out of the 58 incidents reviewed, Department members entered a BSD occurred when the subject was either arrested or was not placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle.

Justification to Deactivate Body Worn Camera Recordings

In three of the 58 incidents reviewed, Department members had early BWC deactivations without providing any of the acceptable reasons as outlined in the MPP.

CONCLUSION

The auditors evaluated several incidents from both AV Stations, during which Department members showed positive interactions with the public despite the fact the subjects involved were detained. The Department members consistently demonstrated professionalism, courtesy, and patience while interacting with the public. However, deactivation of the BWC during enforcement or investigative contact continues to prevent the auditors from confirming the Department members' adherence to the Agreement's provisions and increases the risk of allegations, unlawful activities, and loss of valuable evidence.

Auditors also noted Department members provided explanations for the BSDs to some subjects, but the explanations did not match the reasons documented in their MDC narratives. Furthermore, auditors noted a few incidents in which some Department members did not document relevant detention information in their MDC logs, but the incidents in SACR were documented correctly. Poor documentation practices could also lead to an increased risk of allegations, unlawful activities, and loss of valuable evidence. Lastly, requiring the Department members to document stops with BSD in the SACR system will compel the Department member to document detailed BSD information, which may help ensure all necessary information is captured.

The evidence collected during this audit strongly suggests the AV Station personnel must be mindful of areas for improvement in compliance with the stipulations set forth in the Agreement, compliance metrics, and Department policies. When Department policies and procedures are not adhered to, it can result in an increased risk of noncompliance or an inability to be compliant.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this section is to provide a concise reference for all recommendations aimed at improving compliance with the AV Settlement Agreement and Department policies and procedures. The recommendations listed below are the same as those detailed in the above report.

Objective No. 1 (a) – Explanation of Backseat Detentions to Subjects

It is recommended the Department implement a SACR and MDC log function requiring Department members to digitally attest they have explained to subjects the reason for placing them in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. This procedure is also stipulated in the Manual of Policy and Procedures, Section 5-09/520.10, Backseat Detentions.

It is also recommended AV Stations' management conduct semi-annual briefings to remind Department members of the necessity to strictly adhere to the BWC policy, as specified in the Manual of Policy and Procedures, section 3-06/200.13, to ensure continuous video recordings of the entire investigative and enforcement interaction with subjects, particularly concerning the explanation of BSDs to subjects. Capturing these explanations on BWC can help ensure compliance, prevent Department members from using the BSD method as routine practice, and help facilitate an understanding to the detained subject regarding the specific reason for their backseat detention.

Furthermore, AV Stations management must brief Department members backseat detentions should only be used when necessary and fully justified, not as a matter of course. The briefings should include scenarios in which the use of BSDs would be appropriate, such as flight risk, officer safety, weather conditions, or the subject's desire for privacy or personal safety. Alternatively, the briefings should also highlight scenarios in which BSDs would be inappropriate, such as routine investigative practice without justification. Finally, it is recommended that future station training emphasize the Agreement's requirement for the Department members to clearly explain to subjects, the reason they are being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The explanation must include valid and appropriate reasons for the BSD. Discussion points must include alternative options to BSDs when it is safe and applicable, such as having individuals stand nearby, sit curb side, or remain in their vehicle.

Objective No. 1(b) - Backseat Detention Documentation and Articulation

Given the inherent design limitations with the CAD/MDC system, it is recommended the AV Stations' management to also require the Department members to accurately document stops with BSDs in the SACR system to ensure all necessary BSD documentation supports the documentation in the MDC/CAD system.

It is also recommended the AV Stations' management implement annual BSD documentation training. AV Stations' management should designate appropriate staff members to draft scenarios related to BSD detentions and incorporate them into training exercises. These exercises must include proper documentation protocols. The training must also emphasize that terms such as "flight risk" and "looking for avenues of escape" alone are considered boilerplate language and should be avoided. Instead, they must elaborate and be more descriptive as to why the subject was a "flight risk" and the need to be placed in BSD. Examples of acceptable narratives articulating BSD reasons and documentation must be reviewed with AV Department members during these training courses.

Furthermore, it is recommended the AV Stations' management must incorporate a discussion of BSD documentation in their staff briefings for each shift to reinforce the habit of documenting the BSD reasons, BSD length time, and reasonable suspicion for their investigations in the MDC narrative. This will help remind the Department members the importance of complying with the Agreement's requirements (e.g., documentation must demonstrate BSD was regarding flight risk, officer-safety, weather conditions, individual privacy or safety related).

The above-mentioned training sessions and discussions must be documented in the Station / Bureau Administration Portal, Watch Commander Shift Log and/or in an Automated Personnel In-Service Class Roster (APIS).

Objective No. 1(c)- Backseat Detention Duration

It is recommended the AV Stations' management require the Department members to accurately track BSD lengths by reviewing BWC recordings to document the length of the BSD in SACR and MDC log systems. In reviewing the BWC recordings SACR and MDC log will better support one another. Additionally, a weekly audit of randomly selected traffic stops that involved BSDs from AV Stations Department members should be conducted by AV Station management to confirm the accuracy of BSD lengths documentation.

FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES

The AAB will conduct a follow-up of the recommendations and verify if the auditee has made necessary improvements. Verification of corrective action will be assessed by examining new directives, amended unit orders, and/or relevant documentation. The AAB will work with the auditee in understanding the implementation of audit recommendations, as it may be a lengthy process and require a collaborative effort with other Department resources.

DEPARTMENT APPLICATIONS

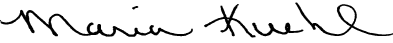
- Computer Aided Dispatch system (CAD)
- RAPSNET
- Sheriff's Automated Contact Reporting System (SACR)
- Mobile Digital Computer (MDC)
- Department's Digital Evidence Management System

REFERENCES

- United States Department of Justice – Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, Case Number CV 15-03174 (April 2015)
- Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement Compliance Metrics (October 2019)
- Stops, Seizures, and Searches Compliance Metrics:
 - Investigative Stops, Detentions and Searches, Paragraph 44
 - Back Seat Detentions, Paragraph 48
- Manual of Policy and Procedures Section:
 - Section 3-06/200.08, Body Worn Cameras – Activation, (August 2020)
 - Section 5-09/520.10, Backseat Detentions (July 2018)
- Lancaster Unit Order 68

Views of Responsible Officials

On November 7, 2025, the AAB presented the findings to the AV Stations command staff. The AAB presented the final audit report to the Division Director, Office of Constitutional Policing.

	12/31/25
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MARIA G. KUEHL	DATE
Acting Captain	
Audit and Accountability Bureau	
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department	