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Part III of Stops and Detentions Audit:
Backseat Detentions Related to Domestic Violence
Antelope Valley Stations
Project No. 2025-16-A

Prepared By:

Audit and Accountability Bureau



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

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AUDIT REPORT

PURPOSE

The Audit and Accountability Bureau (AAB) conducted the Stops and Detentions Audit under the authority of the Los Angeles County Sheriff 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.

The 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, designated as Part III, specifically focused on the treatment and documentation of individuals placed in a Backseat Detention (BSD)² related to Domestic Violence³ calls and the AV Stations' compliance with paragraphs 44, 48, and 149 of the Agreement.

The Stops 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.

³ Domestic Violence means abuse committed against an adult or minor who is a spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, former cohabitant, or person with whom the suspect has had a child or is having or has had a dating or engagement relationship.

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
2025-6-A	April 30, 2025	November 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024
2025-16-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).⁴ 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).

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.

⁴ 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.

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 calls for service related to domestic violence. In addition, the auditors evaluated body-worn camera (BWC)⁵ activations, the completeness of BWC recordings, the proper documentation of stops and detentions 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 matters were identified and documented.

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 calls for service which resulted in a domestic violence related arrest or a non-criminal domestic violence report.

The data was extracted from the Los Angeles Regional Crime Information System (LARCIS)⁶. This was due to a limited population of documented BSDs observed within the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD)⁷.

The auditors reviewed the LARCIS report and conducted a query for specific input fields to include the following: the incident date range, participant type of “arrested”, and originating agency. In addition, statistical codes - 050 - assault aggravated domestic violence, 146 – assault non-aggravated domestic violence, 175 – offenses against family, and 449 – non-criminal domestic violence were used to generate the audit population of domestic violence incidents in LARCIS

By consolidating these steps, the auditors produced a refined and comprehensive dataset of incidents related to domestic violence, totaling 260 incidents. From this dataset, 49 incidents were removed. Of those, 11 were duplicate incidents and the remaining 38 incidents involving Penal Code 273.6-violation of restraining order with no detentions were removed as they did not meet the domestic violence abuse criteria. The final population resulted in 211 calls for service, each resulting in either an arrest for domestic violence or a non-criminal domestic violence report .

⁵ 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.

⁶ LARCIS is a law enforcement database used to record and manage information. LARCIS maintains summary information on crimes and incidents based on activity by type. The LARCIS record contains type of offense, date and location of incident, names of person associated with the incident, and vehicle license numbers.

⁷ The CAD system is a multi-faceted computer system the Department uses to log or document patrol-related incidents. It maintains electronic records of patrol activities, which include Dispatch-generated 911 and general “Calls for Services” and patrol deputy-initiated “Observation” stop records in the field.

However, it is important to emphasize that BSD usage within this population was extraordinarily rare. Out of the 211 qualifying incidents, only six (6) involved the use of a BSD as a form of detention. This represents just 2.8% of all domestic-violence incidents during the audit period. Consequently, although the audit population was robust, the number of cases involving BSDs was extremely limited, demonstrating that stations are overwhelmingly not using BSDs during domestic-violence investigations as a matter of course.

Using a one-tailed statistical test with a 95% confidence level and a 4% error rate, auditors selected a statistically valid random sample of 66 domestic violence stops and detentions for the audit period. Even within this statistically valid sample, only six (6) incidents, or 9.1% of the sample, contained any BSD documentation. This small proportion further highlights the infrequency of BSD usage within the field and demonstrates the inherently limited BSD dataset available for analysis.

The audit evaluated how Department members conducted their investigation and whether the use of a BSD occurred.

The associated Deputy Daily Work Sheet (DDWS)⁸ documentation was reconciled with the SACR⁹ documentation. Any discrepancies between the two systems were identified and addressed in the Other Related Matters section.

Audit Population and Sample

AV Station	LARCIS domestic violence related incidents	Sample of 66 Breakdown	
		BSD utilized during investigative phase	BSD not utilized during investigative phase
Lancaster	128	5	28
Palmdale	132	1	32
AV Total	260	6	60

⁸ 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.

⁹ The SACR system is a stand-alone system and will run independently of the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. The SACR is a data entry system designed to collect any detention by a peace officer of a person or any peace officer interaction with a person in which the peace officer conducts a search, including a consensual search, or arrest.

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 compliance metrics related to Stops, Seizures, and Searches and measured the performance of each AV Station against the established compliance metrics in the Agreement.

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 detainee who was placed in the backseat to ensure adherence to the Agreement requirements involving BSDs.

To verify the accuracy of the Department members’ documentation, the auditors reviewed BWC recordings and cross-referenced them with MDC data and SACR data entries. 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 primary 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 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.

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 consisted of one main objective with a total of five sub-objectives. The AV Stations were evaluated separately for each sub-objective. The results were combined to assess whether, overall, AV Stations met the compliance metrics.

The table below indicates the audit objectives and their corresponding compliance metrics percentages:

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>	0%	0%	0%	90%
1(b)	<i>Articulation of Reasonable Suspicion</i>	97%	97%	97%	90%
1(c)	<i>Backseat Detention Documentation and Articulation</i>	40%	0%	33%	90%
1(d)	<i>Backseat Detention Duration</i>	100%	100%	100%	95%
1(e)	<i>Reasonableness of Backseat Detentions</i>	80%	100%	83%	90%

For Objective 1(a), the sample size was focused on six incidents in which a BSD was actually used. Among the larger audit sample of 66 domestic violence related stops and detentions, BSDs were only used in these six incidents. Specifically, for Lancaster Station a BSD was used 15% of the time and for Palmdale Station a BSD was used only 3% of the time.

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 the MT's "First Stops and Bias-Free Policing Audit," published in 2024.

Procedures

The auditors reviewed 66 stops and detentions of which six (9%) were identified as involving the use of a BSD during the investigative phase. 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 justified circumstances.

In identifying the term “matter of course” (as used in the Agreement provision indicated above), the auditors ensured actions related to BSDs 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 safety, the auditors verified the Department member informed the subject the detention was optional.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, six incidents involved the utilization of a BSD. None (0%) of the six incidents met the criteria for this objective because Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD beyond stating it was part of an investigation.

For the remaining 60 incidents, Department members did not utilize a BSD during the investigative phase. Instead, they relied on assisting personnel to separately contact involved subjects to determine whether a crime had occurred. This demonstrated that Department members refrained from using a BSD as a matter of course during the investigative phase in 91% of cases.

For Lancaster Station, none (0%) of the five stops and detentions involving a BSD met the criteria for this objective because Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle.

For Palmdale Station, none (0%) of the one stop and detention involving a BSD met the criteria for this objective because Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle.

Specifically:

L-11¹⁰: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault now. The call indicated the subject was intoxicated, damaging property, and acting erratically. The call included the subjects name, clothing description and a history of domestic violence. The subject pushed the victim and fled the scene.

During the investigative phase, a Department member located the subject walking on the sidewalk, matching the description provided in the call. The subject was detained near the patrol vehicle while the detention was overseen by an additional Department member. The subject was subsequently placed in a BSD after being untruthful with Department members.

¹⁰ L refers to Lancaster Station. The number represents the sample being referred to of those reviewed by Lancaster Station.

Department members told the subject the BSD was due to a domestic violence investigation, which would appear the BSD was conducted as a matter of course. The auditors determined the BSD was necessary due to the subject fleeing the scene. The subject was ultimately arrested.

L-17: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault now. The call indicated the subject refused to leave the location and had struck the victim. A call update indicated the subject threw vehicle oil on the victim and remained on scene. The call included the subject's name and a clothing description. A second call was received by the subject who stated he never struck the victim as alleged.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject at the driveway of the residence and subsequently placed him in a BSD. Department members told the subject it was only a detention, which would appear the BSD was conducted as a matter of course. During review of BWC recordings, auditors noted dialogue indicating Department members had prior knowledge and previous interactions with the subject and victim. Auditors determined the BSD was reasonable based on the Department members history with the subject. The subject was ultimately arrested.

L-24: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a vehicle theft and spousal assault just occurred. The call indicated the subject struck the victim, fled the scene in the victim's vehicle and was in possession of a firearm. The call included the subject's name and a clothing description.

During the investigative phase, an assisting Department member contacted the victim and initiated a crime broadcast, providing the subject's clothing description, direction of travel, and information indicating the subject was possibly armed with a firearm. While Department members remained on scene gathering information, the subject returned to the location in the stolen vehicle. A felony traffic stop was conducted and the subject wanted for domestic violence and vehicle theft was placed in the patrol vehicle pending transport to the station jail.

Two additional subjects in the vehicle were initially detained curbside and subsequently placed in BSDs. The subjects were not provided with a reason for the BSD, which would appear the BSD was conducted as a matter of course. Auditors determined the BSDs were reasonable based on flight risk, the deputy to suspect ratio, and officer safety due to the involvement of a firearm. Two of the three subjects were released after the investigation determined they were not involved in any criminal activity.

L-29: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault now. The call indicated the subject struck the victim before the line disconnected. A second call received was an open phone line which captured several people arguing, and a third call received indicated the subject was assaulting a family member. Several updates indicated the subject vandalized video surveillance cameras. The call included a description of the subject and radio transmission indicated the subject was intoxicated.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject outside of the residence and subsequently placed the subject in a BSD. Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD, which would appear the BSD was conducted as a matter of course. Auditors determined the BSD was reasonable based on officer safety, the deputy to suspect ratio, and the subject being intoxicated. The subject was ultimately arrested.

L-30: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault now. The call indicated the subject struck the victim and no weapons were involved. A call update indicated the subject fled the location in an unknown vehicle to unknown location.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject outside of the residence and subsequently placed the subject in a BSD. Department members told the subject the reason for the BSD was due to a domestic violence investigation which would appear the BSD was conducted as a matter of course. The subject was ultimately released, and a non-criminal domestic violence report was documented.

Auditors determined the BSD was not reasonable, the subject was cooperative and never fled the scene. Assisting Department members could have opted to detain the subject outside of the patrol vehicle during the investigative phase.

P-13¹¹: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a battery just occurred. The call indicated a male subject struck a female subject in the face and dragged her through the residence. A call update indicated the call for service was an assault with a deadly weapon now. The informant of the call was hiding in the garage and could hear the female subject yelling for help.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted two family members outside the residence who stated the female subject was intoxicated and had been arguing with the male subject. The family members ran into the residence and yelling could be heard. Department members followed and saw the male and female subject fighting. The female subject had visible injuries to her face, was crying and appeared hysterical. The female subject was subsequently placed in a BSD. The Department member told the subject to have a seat and she would be receiving help, which would appear as the BSD was conducted as a matter of course. Auditors determined the BSD was reasonable based on officer safety, victim safety, and deputy to suspect ratio. The female and male subject were ultimately arrested.

¹¹ P refers to Palmdale Station. The number represents the sample being referred to of those reviewed by Palmdale Station.

Recommendations

It is recommended AV Station supervisors continue station training exercises, to include guidance on how to provide appropriate explanations for backseat detentions to subjects during calls for service, vehicle stops, pedestrian stops, and bicycle stops. Emphasis should be placed on conducting a backseat detention only when Department members have a reasonable belief that the detained person may pose a threat of physical harm or is an escape risk.

Training exercises should include scenarios in which the use of a BSD would be appropriate, such as cases involving flight risk, officer safety, weather conditions, or a subject's desire for privacy or personal safety.

Department members must be reminded that informing a subject the backseat detention is "due to an investigation" does not meet the explanation requirements outlined in the Agreement or Department Policy.

Supervisors must conduct recurrent briefings with Department members regarding paragraph 48 (Backseat Detentions) of the Agreement and LASD Manual Policy and Procedures (MPP), Section 5-09/520.10 – Backseat Detentions.

Objective No. 1(b) – Articulation of Reasonable Suspicion

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 specific 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.)

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 the respective MDC logs and SACR entries to determine whether the reasonable suspicion for the investigative stop and detention was properly documented.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 66 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these, two (3%) incidents lacked sufficient articulation for the reasonable suspicion. The remaining 64 (97%) incidents met the criteria because Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation in the MDC log and/or SACR entries.

For Lancaster Station, one (3%) of the 33 stops and detentions did not meet the criteria because Department members failed to document specific facts establishing reasonable suspicion for the investigative stop and detention.

For Palmdale Station, one (3%) of the 33 stops and detentions did not meet the criteria because Department members failed to document specific facts establishing reasonable suspicion for the investigative stop and detention.

Specifically:

L-32: Department members documented “domestic incident” for establishing reasonable suspicion. The documentation lacked specific facts needed for their investigation.

P-13: Department members documented “DV incident” and the results of the incident. The documentation lacked specific facts needed for their investigation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no recommendations because the AV Stations met the compliance requirements for this objective.

Objective No. 1(c) – 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 specific 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 the respective SACR entries 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 in the MDC narrative. Additionally, the auditors determined whether the BWC recordings support the articulated reason for the necessity of the BSD articulated by the Department members.

Findings

The auditors reviewed 66 stops and detentions and identified six (9%) involved the utilization of a BSD. Of these, two (33%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the reason the BSD was necessary as well as the reasonable suspicion. The remaining four (67%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because Department members documented insufficient reasoning, inaccurate reasoning or failed to document the reason the BSD was necessary.

For Lancaster Station, two (40%) of the five stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the reason the BSD was necessary. The remaining three (60%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because Department members failed to document the reason the BSD was necessary, documented inaccurate BSD reasoning, or documented insufficient justification.

For Palmdale Station, none (0%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members did not document the reason the BSD was necessary.

Specifically:

L-11: Department members did not document a reason the BSD was necessary. Department members should have documented flight risk, as the subject fled the scene and was untruthful during the investigation. The BWC recordings supported the necessity of the BSD and the documented reasonable suspicion.

L-24: Department members did not sufficiently document the reason for the BSD. Department members should have documented flight risk and officer safety, as the subject fled the scene and was in possession of a firearm. The BWC recordings supported the necessity of the BSD and the documented reasonable suspicion.

L-30: Department members inaccurately documented the reason for the BSD. The documentation stated it was for flight risk. The BWC recordings supported the reasonable suspicion but did not support the necessity of the BSD.

P-13: Department members did not document the reason the BSD was necessary. Department members should have documented officer safety or victim safety, due to deputy to suspect ratio and personal safety of the victim. The BWC recordings supported the necessity of the BSD. Additionally, Department members failed to document specific facts establishing reasonable suspicion for the investigation.

Recommendations

It is recommended AV supervisors reinforce the proper articulation of BSDs in the MDC clearance narrative, ensuring alignment with the SACR Backseat Detention Justification section. Supervisors should also conduct recurring briefings on the Agreement, specifically Paragraph 44(h), and FOSS Newsletter 13-12-New MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity-Deputy Reference Sheet-MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity to reinforce proper and complete documentation of field activities.

Additionally, it is recommended the current review process for DDWS be reassessed. Implementing a daily review process would help identify documentation errors in a timely manner and allow for immediate corrections, ensuring accurate and complete documentation of BSDs and investigative stops.

Objective No. 1(d) – 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 recordings, along with the respective MDC logs and SACR entries, to determine whether the Department members accurately documented the approximate length of the BSD in the logs. The auditors then verified the documented length reasonably aligned with the duration captured in the BWC recordings.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 66 stops and detentions were reviewed and identified six (9%) which involved the utilization of a BSD. Of these, six (100%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members utilized a BSD and documented the approximate length of the BSD accurately.

For Lancaster Station, five (100%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the approximate length of the BSD accurately.

For Palmdale Station, one (100%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the approximate length of the BSD accurately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no recommendations because the AV Stations met the compliance requirements for this objective.

Objective No. 1(e) – Reasonableness of Backseat Detention

Criteria

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

The auditors reviewed the primary BWC recordings, along with the respective MDC logs, SACR entries, and incident history for each sample to determine the reasonableness of the BSD. The reasonableness of the backseat detention was evaluated based on the initial call for service, which included call updates prior to the arrival of responding Department members, the actions and cooperativeness of the subject and the ratio of subjects to Department members.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 66 stops and detentions were reviewed and identified six (9%) involved the utilization of a BSD. Of these, five (83%) met the criteria for this objective. The backseat detentions were reasonable based on supported assertions of deputy safety. The remaining one (17%) did not meet the criteria as the backseat detention was not reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness coupled with sufficient Department members on scene.

For Lancaster Station, four (80%) of the five stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were reasonable based on supported assertions of deputy safety. The remaining one (20%) did not meet the criteria for this objective, as the backseat detentions was not reasonable based on the cooperativeness of the subject and sufficient Department members on scene.

For Palmdale Station, one (100%) met the criteria for this objective, as the backseat detention was reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness and supported assertions of deputy and victim safety.

Specifically:

L-30: The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable; the subject never fled the scene, as indicated by radio traffic communication. Upon arrival at the residence, Department members saw the subject standing outside near the front door. The subject was cooperative, and there were approximately four Department members on scene who could have overseen the subject's detention.

Recommendations

It is recommended Department members utilize alternative methods of detention when additional Department members are available on scene to assist. Alternative methods of detention, such as seated detention or standing detention if preferred, allow the Department member to maintain continuous visual contact with a subject while conducting the investigation. These alternatives should be considered, unless officer safety concerns are present, before utilizing a backseat detention.

OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Other related matters are pertinent issues identified during the audit that were not measurable objectives under the Agreement or Department policies and procedures.

SACR Documentation

SACR required

In three (5%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members did not use statistical clearance code of 94X to create a SACR report. A SACR was required based on the reporting requirements of an arrest, search, or detention.

Reason for Contact

In five (8%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members did not document the reasonable suspicion in the MDC narrative. However, since “Reason for Contact” is a mandatory field in SACR, the SACR documentation was more accurate than the MDC documentation.

Reason for Contact – Primary Suspicion Offense Code

In three (5%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members incorrectly selected Penal Code 243.4 (e) (1) (Sexual Battery) instead of a Penal Code section related to spousal assault. The MDC documentation was more accurate for the reasonable suspicion compared to the SACR.

Actions Taken Non-Force by Deputy During Contact

In four (6%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members documented curbside detention in SACR. Of these, one incident was a BSD and the remaining three incidents, the curbside was voluntary by the subject and not ordered by a Department member.

In one (2%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members documented a BSD in SACR and failed to additionally select curbside detention.

In one (2%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members inaccurately documented the duration of a BSD as 10 minutes in SACR, while the MDC did not document the BSD. The MDC documentation was more accurate.

In two (3%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members failed to document the occurrence of a BSD in SACR. The MDC documentation was more accurate.

MDC Documentation

Incorrect Contact Type Entered in the MDC Patrol Log

In all six (100%) of the incidents involving BSDs, Department members selected the incorrect Contact Type in the MDC log. Since a BSD occurred, the Contact Type “C-BSD Call for Service” should have been selected. However, the MDC log permits only one Contact Type selection, which may have contributed to this error.

Body-Worn Camera

In 17 (26%) of the 66 incidents reviewed, Department members had multiple BWC deactivations or late activations without providing a reason. In one incident, the Department member failed to activate the BWC as required by policy.

Data Patterns, Trends, and Observations

Auditors did not identify any additional data patterns, trends, or notable observations during this audit.

CONCLUSION

During the review, the auditors observed Department members consistently demonstrated professionalism, courtesy, and patience when interacting with the public. However, a significant limitation of this audit was the extremely limited number of incidents in which a BSD was utilized. Although the statistically valid sample consisted of 66 domestic violence related stops and detentions, only six (6) of these incidents (9%) involved the use of a BSD. As such, in 91% of the incidents evaluated, Department members did not utilize a BSD, demonstrating BSDs are not being used as a matter of course during domestic violence related detentions.

Continuous monitoring and dedicated oversight by Department management will be essential to ensure Department members understand the policies regarding backseat detentions. Procedures and justifications for placing individuals in the back seat must be thoroughly re-briefed to ensure Department members are fully aware of the appropriate circumstances and requirements.

Overall, the audit provides an overview of compliance among the AV Stations, highlighting areas of success and areas which require attention for further improvement.

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 AV Station supervisors continue station training exercises, to include guidance on how to provide appropriate explanations for backseat detentions to subjects during calls for service, vehicle stops, pedestrian stops, and bicycle stops. Emphasis should be placed on conducting a backseat detention only when Department members have a reasonable belief that the detained person may pose a threat of physical harm or is an escape risk.

Training exercises should include scenarios in which the use of a BSD would be appropriate, such as cases involving flight risk, officer safety, weather conditions, or a subject's desire for privacy or personal safety.

Department members must be reminded that informing a subject the backseat detention is "due to an investigation" does not meet the explanation requirements outlined in the Agreement or Department Policy.

Supervisors must conduct recurrent briefings with Department members regarding paragraph 48 (backseat detentions) of the Agreement and LASD Manual Policy and Procedures (MPP), Section 5-09/520.10 – Backseat Detentions.

Objective No. 1(b) – Articulation of Reasonable Suspicion

There are no recommendations because the AV Stations met the compliance requirements for this objective.

Objective No. 1(c) – Backseat Detention Documentation

It is recommended AV supervisors reinforce the proper articulation of BSD in the MDC clearance narrative, ensuring alignment with the SACR Backseat Detention Justification section. Supervisors should also conduct recurring briefings on the Agreement, specifically Paragraph 44(h), and FOSS Newsletter 13-12-New MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity-Deputy Reference Sheet-MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity to reinforce proper and complete documentation of field activities.

Additionally, it is recommended the current review process for DDWS be reassessed. Implementing a daily review process would help identify documentation errors in a timely manner and allow for immediate corrections, ensuring accurate and complete documentation of BSDs and investigative stops.

Objective No. 1(d) – Documentation of Backseat Detention Duration

There are no recommendations because the AV Stations met the compliance requirements for this objective.

Objective No. 1(e) – Reasonableness of Backseat Detention

It is recommended Department members utilize alternative methods of detention when additional Department members are available on scene to assist. Alternative methods of detention, such as seated detention or standing if preferred, allow the Department member to maintain continuous visual contact with a subject while conducting the investigation. These alternatives should be considered, unless officer safety concerns are present, before utilizing a backseat detention.

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

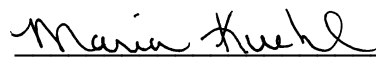
- Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD)
- RAPSNET
- Sheriff's Automated Contact Reporting System (SACR)
- Mobile Digital Computer (MDC)
- Department's Digital Evidence Management System

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)
- Manual of Policy and Procedures Sections:
 - 5-09/520.10 - Backseat Detentions (July 2018)
 - 5-09/520.25 – Logging Field Activities (May 2024)
- Field Operations Support Services:
 - 13-12 – New MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity – Deputy Reference Sheet – MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity (December 2016)
 - 14-19 – Seated and Backseat Investigative Detentions (September 2014)
 - 02-002 – Tracking Family Abuse Crimes (June 2012)
- Lancaster Unit Order 68

Views of Responsible Officials

On December 1, 2025, the AAB presented the findings to the AV Station command staff. The AAB presented the final audit report to the Division Director, Office of Constitutional Policing.



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