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LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Part I of Stops and Detentions Audit: Backseat Detentions Antelope Valley Stations Project No. 2025-4-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. 2025-4-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	December 31, 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, which are referred to by the AAB as “mini” audits. The purpose of the mini 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 and Sampling

The selected audit period was from November 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024. 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 Sheriffs Automated Contact Reporting (SACR)⁵ system, 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 population of 4,065 stops and detentions. 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 141 stops and detentions, of which auditors randomly selected a sample of 60 stops and detentions, 30 from Lancaster and 30 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.

⁵ 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.

The auditors assessed the 60 initiated stops and detentions to verify whether the objectives were met by reviewing each primary Department member BWC recording, SACR, and associated Deputy Daily Work Sheet (DDWS).⁶ The table below summarizes the number of stops and detentions relevant to this audit from SACR.

Audit Population and Sample

AV Station	Total Number of Stops and Detentions	Backseat Detentions (BSDs)
Lancaster	1815	30
Palmdale	2250	30
AV Total	4065	60

In addition, the Data Systems Bureau (DSB) provided data from the Mobile Digital Computer (MDC)⁷, resulting in a population of 3070 stops and detentions. The Contact Type code “B” (Backseat Detention: Vehicle, Pedestrian, Bicycle Stops) was then applied, as it met the testing criteria for this audit. The auditors reviewed each MDC clearance narrative to identify any indications BSDs that were not properly coded in the MDC clearance code field but should still be included in the audit population. This selection process resulted in a refined population of 80 stops and detentions, 66 from Lancaster and 14 from Palmdale.

SACR and MDD Comparison Populations

AV Station	SACR	MDC
Lancaster	87	66
Palmdale	54	14
AV Total	141	80

The SACR population was reconciled with the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD)⁸/MDC systems and BWC recordings to identify differences which are addressed in the Other Related Matters section..

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.

⁸ The CAD system is a multi-faceted computerized platform the Department utilizes to log, track, and document patrol-related incidents. It maintains electronic records of patrol activities, including dispatch-generated 911 calls, general “Call for Service,” and patrol deputy-initiated ‘Observation’ stop records. This technology enhances operational efficiency by facilitating rea-time incident management and resource allocation.

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 was 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.

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 log 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 consisted of 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>	12%	16%	14%	90%
1(b)	<i>Backseat Detention Documentation and Articulation</i>	53%	57%	55%	90%
1(c)	<i>Backseat Detention Duration</i>	74%	59%	67%	95%
1(d)	<i>Reasonableness of Backseat Detentions</i>	83%	90%	87%	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 justified circumstances.

In identifying the term “matter of course”⁹ (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 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 60 stops and detentions were reviewed. Six of the 60 stops and detentions were excluded because the auditors determined no BSDs had occurred. The subjects were arrested prior to the BSD. Therefore, auditors evaluated 54 stops with detentions for this objective. Of the 54 stops and detentions, auditors identified 65 subjects detained in the backseat of patrol vehicles. Of these, nine (14%) BSD subjects met the criteria for this objective because Department members provided an acceptable, professional and courteous explanation for the BSD. However, the remaining 56 (86%) BSD subjects did not meet the criteria because Department members did not provide an acceptable reason for placing the subject in the backseat of a patrol vehicle as defined by the Agreement.

For Lancaster Station, four (12%) of the 34 BSD subjects met the criteria for this objective because Department members provided an acceptable, professional and courteous explanation for the BSDs. The remaining 30 (88%) did not meet the criteria because Department members did not provide an acceptable reason for placing the subject in the backseat of a patrol vehicle as defined by the Agreement.

For Palmdale Station, five (16%) of the 31 BSD subjects met the criteria for this objective because Department members provided the subject an acceptable, professional and courteous explanation for the BSDs. The remaining 26 (84%) did not meet the criteria, as the Department members did not provide an acceptable reason for placing the subject in the backseat of a patrol vehicle.

⁹ 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-1¹⁰: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit assisted by several additional units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject was detained, placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and informed he was BSD due to a stolen vehicle investigation. Although an explanation was provided, the auditors determined it was not sufficient under the requirements of the Agreement.

L-2: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit assisted by several units. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordering the subject driver to have a seat as she was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. In addition, the Department members informed the subject passenger she was being detained momentarily as she was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject driver was subsequently arrested; however, it was not evident an arrest was made prior to the BSD. The auditors determined Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-3: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member ordering the subject to sit down in the backseat of the patrol vehicle; however, the subject was not provided a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject at the end of a vehicle pursuit with the assistance of several units. A review of the BWC recording depicted the Department member placing the subject front passenger and the subject rear passenger in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject passengers were not provided with a reason for the BSD. The subject driver was arrested. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the agreement.

L-8: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failure to make a complete stop at a red light. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordering the subject to exit his vehicle, after which, he was escorted to the backseat of the patrol vehicle without being given an explanation. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

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

L-10: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit with assistance from several other units. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member informing the subject driver he was being detained due to a possible stolen vehicle investigation, and he was then escorted to the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The front passenger remained in the subject's vehicle, and the rear passenger was detained at the front of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide the subject driver an acceptable reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-12: This traffic stop consisted of a single-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a speeding violation. The subject informed the Department member he was on parole. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject was ordered to exit his vehicle and was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle; however, the subject was not provided a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-13: This traffic stop consisted of a single-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a vehicle with a lost/stolen license plate affixed. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member conducting a BSD without providing an explanation to the subject. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-14: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding an unsafe turn. The Department members escorted the subject driver and subject passenger to the patrol vehicle and ordered them to take a seat in the backseat. The auditors did not identify any BWC recordings depicting the Department members explaining the reason for detaining the subjects in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-15: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordering the subject driver and the subject rear passenger to take a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors did not identify any BWC recordings depicting the Department members explaining the reason for the BSDs. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-16: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for a license plate violation. The Department member activated the BWC late, causing the auditors to miss the initial dialogue with the subject. The subject was informed he was being detained in the backseat due to his probation status. The auditors did not identify any BWC recordings depicting the Department member providing a sufficient reason under the requirements of the Agreement, for detaining the subject in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-17: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failing to make a complete stop at a stop sign. The subject admitted driving with a suspended driver's license. The subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle without a reason provided. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-18: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with assistance from several units. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver was handcuffed, told to have a seat, and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The subject passenger was informed she was being detained as she was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Although the Department members informed the subject passenger she was being detained as the BSD reason, it was not sufficient under the requirements of the Agreement. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-19: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding driving on the wrong side of the road. The Department members directed the subject from the vehicle and escorted her to the patrol vehicle. A BSD was conducted, and the subject was told to "hang tight." No BSD reason was provided to the subject at any time during the traffic stop. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-20: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject driver to take a seat as the BSD was conducted. In addition, the BWC recording depicted the Department member placing the subject passenger in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and informing him they had to figure things out. The third passenger was a juvenile who was detained curbside. No BSD reasons were provided for either subject at any time during the traffic stop. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-21: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for driving a vehicle without headlights on during darkness. The BWC recording depicted the Department member conducting a BSD on the subject, as he was told to take a seat. The subject questioned the reason for the BSD, and the Department member replied, "We do this on all traffic stops." Although a reason was provided to the subject, it appeared to be a matter of course. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-22: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding the vehicle missing a license plate. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members conducting a BSD of the subjects without a reason being provided. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-23: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. The Department members conducted a BSD of the subject however, they deactivated their BWCs early, causing missed dialogue with the subjects. The auditors were unable to determine if the Department members provided a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-24: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding lost or stolen license plates attached to the vehicle. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject quickly exiting the vehicle and attempting to walk away at the onset of the traffic stop. The subject was detained, and a BSD was conducted. Although the BSD was necessary due to a flight risk, the Department members did not provide the BSD reason to the subject. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-25: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a speeding violation and informed the subject he was going to have him take a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. A BSD explanation was not provided to the subject at any time during the traffic stop. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-26: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member informed the subject driver he was "going to stick" him in the backseat of the patrol vehicle, and the subject passenger complaining of feeling ill and requesting to remain in her vehicle due to the cold weather. The Department members denied her request and placed her in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Neither subject was provided a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

L-27: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with assistance from several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members informing the subject to “take a seat” while being placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

L-29: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a speeding violation. A review of the BWC recording depicted the subject informed the Department member he was on probation. The Department member directed the subject to exit the vehicle, conducted a pat down, and placed the subject in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject was informed to, “take a seat” during the BSD. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-2¹¹: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with assistance from several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The BWC recording depicted Department members ordering the subject to, “have a seat,” however, the subject was not provided a BSD reason. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-3: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a parking violation. The subject driver was handcuffed and placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. A review of the BWC recordings depicted Department members informing the subject driver, “I’m going to have you sit in my partner’s backseat.” In addition, the subject passenger was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and informed, “I’m detaining you for a theft investigation.” The Department members deactivated their BWCs multiple times, which created missed dialogue with both subjects. Although a BSD reason was provided, the auditors determined it was not sufficient under the requirements of the Agreement.

P-4: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding an illegal turn. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject driver to exit his vehicle and escorting him to the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The Department member ordered the subject driver to “have a seat in my car” during the BSD. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

¹¹ P refers to Palmdale Station. The number represents the selected sample referred to the thirty samples reviewed for Lancaster Station.

P-5: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordering the subject to “have a seat” while placing him in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject to take a seat while placing him in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department member did provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-9: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding an inoperable license plate light. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject driver to exit the vehicle for not being in possession of a driver's license. The Department member ordered the subject to, “come have a seat,” as he was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-10: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. The BWC recording captured an open alcoholic beverage container inside the subject's vehicle and Department members mentioned a narcotics bag in plain view. The Department members ordered the subject driver to exit the vehicle and escorted him to the patrol vehicle. The subject driver was told to have a seat as the BSD was conducted. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-11: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject to take a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The vehicle was an embezzled vehicle from a rental car company. The named suspect in the embezzled vehicle report arrived on scene (no BSD) and was cited and released. The subject driver, who was not named in the embezzled vehicle report, was not provided a BSD reason. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-12: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for failing to stop at a red light. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member ordering the subject to, “let's go,” as he was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and was not provided a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-13: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding an unsafe lane change. The subject driver admitted to being on probation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member ordering the subject driver to exit his vehicle and was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle without being given a reason for the BSD. Although the subject was on probation, a BSD reason was required per the Agreement. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-14: This pedestrian stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a narcotics investigation. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject to have a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle without providing an explanation. The subject was released after the investigation. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-15: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The subject admitted to being on parole. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordering the subject to take a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle, without providing an explanation. Despite the subject's parole status, a BSD reason was required per the Agreement.

P-17: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The subject admitted being an unlicensed driver. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject to have a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle, without providing an explanation. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-18: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects for failing to make a complete stop. The subject passenger gave the Department member a false name and was in possession of a knife. The BWC recording depicted the Department member removing the subject passenger from the vehicle. The subject passenger was escorted to the backseat of the patrol vehicle and told to have a seat. Although the subject passenger was in possession of a weapon, a BSD reason was still required to be given. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-20: This pedestrian stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a trespassing investigation. The subject was located inside an electrical room on a business property. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject being detained at the patrol vehicle before being escorted to the backseat. The subject was ordered to have a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle, without being provided an explanation for the BSD. The auditors could not identify any BWC recordings of the subject's release or a BSD explanation because of early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-21: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding an unsafe turn. The subject admitted to being on probation during the contact. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject to hang out in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject was not provided with a BSD reason. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-22: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding an expired vehicle registration. The subject driver admitted to not having a valid driver's license and an expired vehicle registration. The subject was asked to exit the vehicle, but refused by stating, "No I'm not stepping out the car!" The subject driver eventually exited his vehicle, and a BSD occurred. Although the subject was uncooperative during the contact, a BSD reason was required. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-23: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects for failing to make a complete stop. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject driver exiting the vehicle. The Department member escorted the subject driver to the backseat of the patrol vehicle and ordered him to take a seat without being provided an explanation for the BSD. The auditors could not identify any BWC recordings of the BSD of the subject passenger due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-25: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding the vehicle's defective windshield. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering both subjects to have a seat as they were escorted to the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department member did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

P-26: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding a theft investigation. The BWC recording depicted the Department member placing the subject driver in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and telling him he was being detained pending a theft investigation. The passenger was directed from the subject vehicle but was not placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The subject driver was subsequently arrested after the BSD was conducted. While a BSD reason was provided, the auditors determined it was not sufficient under the requirements of the Agreement.

P-27: This pedestrian stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding an obstruction of a public officer investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject asking the Department member if he was in trouble as he was directed to sit in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The Department member responded, "you are just being detained right now; I'll let you know in a bit." The Department members then deactivated their BWCs, until the subject was released from BSD and issued a citation. Due to the BWCs deactivation, the auditors were unable to determine if a reason for the BSD was provided in accordance with the Agreement.

P-28: This bicycle stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a bicycle violation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordering the subject to "grab a seat" as they placed him in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a sufficient reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-29: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects for not having a license plate affixed to the vehicle. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department member placing the subject front passenger in the backseat of the patrol vehicle after he admitted to being on probation. The subject rear passenger was also placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and was later arrested for an outstanding warrant after the BSD occurred. The subject driver was detained curbside. None of the subjects were provided with a BSD reason during the traffic stop. The auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSDs in accordance with the Agreement.

P-30: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. When Department members approached the vehicle, the subject passenger quickly exited the vehicle and ran. The subject passenger was later located hiding in an alley. He was detained and a BSD was conducted. Although, the BSD was necessary due to flight risk, the auditors determined the Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

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 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 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 in the MDC narrative. Additionally, the auditors determined whether the BWC recordings supported the articulated reason for the necessity of the BSD as articulated by the Department member.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 60 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of the 60 stops with detentions, 33 (55%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately documented the BSD and articulated the reason it was necessary in the SACR or MDC logs. The remaining 27 (45%) did not meet the criteria because Department members did not accurately document the BSD and/or articulate the reason it was necessary.

For Lancaster Station, 16 (53%) 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 14 (47%) 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, 17 (57%) 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 13 (43%) 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 traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for having a vehicle with reported lost or stolen license plates. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was arrested for driving a stolen vehicle. Per BWC recordings, the arrest occurred after the BSD, which required a documented justification. The Department member did not articulate a reason for the BSD, in the MDC narrative, as required by the Agreement.

L-4: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding the misuse of registration tabs on the license plate. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for flight risk concerns. The auditors reviewed the BWC recording and it revealed the Department member asked the subject if he wanted to sit in the backseat of the patrol vehicle due to the weather. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

L-5: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a search warrant for a murder suspect. The MDC indicated the subject was BSD. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the auditors determined the subject was not BSD but arrested. The auditors determined the BSD documentation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

L-6: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject at the end of a vehicle pursuit. Upon contact, the subject appeared to be intoxicated. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the auditors determined the subject was not BSD but arrested. The auditors determined the BSD documentation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

L-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject at the end of a vehicle pursuit with the assistance of several units. The MDC narrative indicated the “suspect” was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject driver was documented as a BSD in the MDC log A review of BWC recordings depicted the subject front and rear passengers were also placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the Department members did not document a narrative articulating the BSD and reason of the subject passengers in accordance with the Agreement.

L-8: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject after he failed to stop at a red light. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle due to flight risk and reaching under the seat. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings, and determined the subject was cooperative and did not display a flight risk. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

L-9: This traffic stop consisted of a motorcycle unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding a stolen vehicle investigation with the assistance of other units. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the auditors determined the subject was not BSD but arrested. Furthermore, the subject passenger was not documented in the MDC log or the SACR report. The auditors determined the BSD documentation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

L-16: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a missing license plate. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle because of flight risk and avenue of escape concerns. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings, and determined the subject did not display the flight risk behavior. The Department member contacted the subject, retrieved his identification, then walked back to his patrol vehicle to run the subject. Subsequently, the Department member discovered the subject was on probation, and BSD the subject. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recording.

L-18: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The subject driver and subject passenger were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The subject driver was arrested at the conclusion of the investigation. The Department members did not document a narrative articulating the BSD reason for the subject passenger in the MDC.

L-23: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. The MDC narrative indicated the subject driver was BSD because of a high crime area. The subject passenger was arrested. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings and observed the Department member telling the subject driver he was BSD for a stolen vehicle investigation. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

L-25: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for speeding. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle because of flight risk concerns. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings, and determined the subject did not display flight risk concerns as articulated in the MDC narrative. The subject provided his identification and complied with all orders from the Department member without delay. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recording.

L-26: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects for not having a registration tab affixed to the vehicle's license plate. The subjects (driver and subject passenger) were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The BWC recordings confirmed both subjects were BSD. Although the subject driver's BSD reason was documented in the MDC narrative, the Department members did not document the subject passenger's BSD reason.

L-27: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was detained pending a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject being placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Although the Department member provided a reason for the BSD, it did not comply with the Agreement.

L-29: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a speeding violation. The MDC clearance narrative documented the subject was nervous, wearing baggy clothing, and in a high-crime area, however, it did not document a BSD occurred, nor did they articulate the reason it was necessary in the MDC narrative.

P-1: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired registration. The MDC narrative indicated the subject driver and subject front passenger were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle due to dark roads and no sidewalk. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings and observed the Department member told the subject driver to have a seat in the back of the patrol vehicle because, "there are three of you and only two of us." The auditors determined the MDC articulation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

P-2: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person motorcycle unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The MDC log indicated the length of the BSD. However, the Department members did not document a BSD occurred nor did they articulate the reason in the MDC. The auditors determined the Department members did not articulate the BSD and a reason in accordance with the Agreement.

P-3: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a parking violation. The MDC narrative indicated the BSD reason was due to an under the influence investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the Department members ordered the subject driver to sit in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Although a BSD reason was provided, the auditors determined it was not in compliance with the Agreement..

P-4: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding an unsafe turn. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was cited and released for a warrant. A review of the BWC recordings depicted a BSD occurred during the stop. The Department member documented a citation was given but did not document the BSD reason in the MDC narrative. The auditors determined the Department members did not document a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The MDC narrative indicated the subject had a suspended license. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The Department member did not document the BSD nor the reason in the MDC narrative in accordance with the Agreement.

P-8: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a carjacking investigation. The SACR indicated a BSD occurred. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the auditors determined the subject was not BSD but arrested. The auditors determined the BSD documentation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

P-9: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for an inoperable license plate light. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle to confirm a warrant and because he was "looking around." The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings, and it did not reveal the subject looking around as articulated for the BSD reason in the MDC narrative. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recording.

P-11: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering the subject driver to take a seat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The vehicle was an embezzled vehicle from a rental car company. The named person in the embezzled vehicle report arrived on scene (no BSD) and was later cited and released. The Department member did not document the subject driver's BSD nor a reason in the MDC narrative. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD and a reason for the BSD in accordance with the Agreement.

P-16: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. During the search, drug paraphernalia was recovered. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was BSD due to flight risk. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the auditors determined the subject was not BSD but arrested. The auditors determined the BSD documentation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

P-17: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The MDC narrative indicated the BSD was due to consent to a vehicle inventory. Although the BSD and a reason was documented in the MDC narrative, the auditors determined the reason provided did not sufficiently articulate why the BSD was necessary or establish reasonable suspicion in accordance with the Agreement.

P-21: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit, with assistance from an additional two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failure to signal prior to making a turn. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle because she was reaching towards the center console and was uncooperative. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings, and it did not support what was observed as the backseat detention was not reasonable based on the subject cooperativeness coupled with sufficient department members on scene. The auditors determined the BSD articulation was not consistent with the BWC recordings..

P-24: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a shoplifting investigation. The MDC narrative documented a BSD length of 45 minutes. However, upon review of BWC recordings, the auditors determined the subject was not BSD but arrested. The auditors determined the BSD documentation was not consistent with the BWC recordings.

P-25: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding the vehicle's defective windshield. There was no MDC log generated for the incident. The SACR report documented one subject that was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. A review of the BWC recording depicted the Department member ordering two subjects "to have a seat" as they were escorted to the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors determined the SACR report contained insufficient documentation regarding the BSDs which was not consistent with the BWC recording.

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 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, 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 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

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 60 stops and detentions were reviewed. Six of the 60 stops and detentions were excluded because the auditors determined no BSDs had occurred. The subjects were arrested prior to the BSD. Therefore, auditors evaluated 54 stops with detentions for this objective. Of the 54 stops with detentions, auditors identified 65 subjects detained in the backseat of patrol vehicles.

Thirty-six (67%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the BSD length. Eighteen (33%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because the 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.

For Lancaster Station, 20 (74%) of the 27 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the BSD length. The remaining seven (26%) 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.

For Palmdale Station, 16 (59%) of the 27 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the BSD length. The remaining 11 (41%) 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-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects at the end of a vehicle pursuit with the assistance of several units. The BWC recording depicted the Department member arrest the driver. The subject front and rear passengers were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The SACR and MDC log did not document the two subject passengers BSDs or length. The auditors determined the Department members did not document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

L-15: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding expired vehicle registration. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject driver and the subject passenger being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The MDC log indicated the BSD length was ten minutes, however, as observed on the BWC recordings, the BSDs were approximately 30 minutes in length. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

L-17: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failing to make a complete stop at a stop sign. The SACR and MDC log indicated a BSD length of 15 minutes. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the traffic stop was approximately 50 minutes in length and depicted the subject in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for the entire BWC recording. The auditors were unable to determine the exact BSD length due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

L-18: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with assistance from several units. The Department members contacted the subjects regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The MDC log documentation did not indicate the length of the subjects' BSDs. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject driver and the subject passenger being placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The auditors could not estimate the BSD length due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

L-19: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for driving on the wrong side of the road. The MDC log indicated the BSD length was five minutes. The auditors were unable to verify whether the BSD length was accurate, as the Department members deactivated their BWC to debrief while the subject was still in the backseat of the patrol vehicle and did not reactivate it to record the subjects release from the BSD.

L-26: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject passenger being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The Department members did not document the BSD length for the subject passenger in the MDC log. The auditors determined the Department members did not document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

L-29: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a speeding violation. The BWC recording depicted the subject being placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for approximately 26 minutes; however, the Department members documented the BSD length as eight minutes in the MDC log. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-2: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. The MDC log indicated a BSD length of 60 minutes however, a review of the BWC recording revealed the Department member notified the subject he was under arrest 23 minutes after the BSD occurred. The auditors determined the BSD was 23 minutes and not 60 minutes as indicated in the MDC log. Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-3: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a parking violation. The MDC log indicated a BSD length of 60 minutes for the subject driver and 30 minutes for the subject passenger. The auditors were unable to confirm the BSD length due to multiple BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-4: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. SACR indicated a BSD length of 20 minutes for the subject driver. The auditors were unable to confirm the BSD length due to multiple BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The BWC recording depicted the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The MDC log indicated a BSD length of 17 minutes. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSD due to an early BWC deactivation by the Department member. The auditors determined the Department member did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-11: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit with the assistance of several units. The Department members contacted the subject regarding a stolen vehicle investigation. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the suspect being placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. The MDC log indicated a BSD length of 20 minutes. The auditors were unable to confirm the length of the BSD due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-20: This pedestrian stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for trespassing on private property. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for 5 minutes. The auditors were unable to determine the length of the BSD because of early deactivations of the Department members' BWC. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-21: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failing to signal before an unsafe turn. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for a length of ten minutes. Per BWC recordings, the subject remained in the backseat of the patrol vehicle beyond 20 minutes. The auditors were unable to determine the BSD total length due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-23: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failing to make a complete stop. The MDC log indicated the subject driver and subject front passenger were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for a length of five minutes. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subjects in the backseat of the patrol vehicle beyond 30 minutes. The auditors were unable to determine the total length of the BSD due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-25: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subjects regarding the vehicle's defective windshield. The MDC log indicated the subject driver, and the subject passenger were placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for ten minutes. The auditors were unable to estimate the BSD length due to early BWC deactivations. The auditors determined the Department members did not accurately document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-29: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for not having a license plate affixed to the vehicle. The MDC narrative indicated a BSD was conducted of the subject front passenger. The subject rear passenger was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle, but the Department member failed to document the BSD length for both subjects. The auditors determined the Department members did not document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

P-30: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subjects for expired vehicle registration. The MDC indicated the subject passenger was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for officer safety concerns. The Department members did not document the length of the BSD in the MDC log. The auditors determined the Department members did not document the BSD length in accordance with the Agreement.

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 60 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of the 60 stops with detentions, 52 (87%) 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 8(13%) did not meet the criteria because the BSD was not objectively reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances and supported assertions provided by Department members, justifying the use of the BSD.

For Lancaster Station, 25 (83%) of the 30 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 five (17%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were not objectively reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances and supported assertions provided by Department members, justifying the use of the BSD.

For Palmdale Station, 27 (90%) of the 30 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 three (10%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were not objectively reasonable based on the totality of the circumstances and supported assertions provided by Department members, justifying the use of the BSD.

Specifically:

L-8: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for failing to stop at a red light. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for officer safety concerns. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject was cooperative during the contact. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat.

L-16: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for a missing license plate. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle because of flight risk and avenue of escape concerns. The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings, and determined the subject did not display the flight risk behavior. during the contact. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat.

L-23: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for expired vehicle registration. The MDC narrative indicated the subject driver was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle for flight risk concerns. The subject passenger was arrested for a warrant. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject driver as cooperative during the traffic stop and the Department member telling the subject he “appreciated” his cooperation. The auditors determined the BSD of the subject driver was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat .

L-25: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for speeding. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle because of flight risk concerns. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject driver was cooperative during the traffic stop. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat.

L-29: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding a speeding violation. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backset of the patrol vehicle because of the high crime area. The BWC recording depicted the subject was cooperative as he stated he was on probation. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat.

P-7: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject regarding expired vehicle registration. The MDC log indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle however a reason for the BSD was not documented. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject was cooperative. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat.

P-17: This traffic stop consisted of a one-person unit. The Department member contacted the subject for expired registration. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle during a search of the subject’s vehicle. A review of the BWC recordings depicted the subject was searched, instructed to stand in front of the patrol vehicle, and was cooperative throughout the entire contact. Once the Department member requested a vehicle tow, he placed the subject in the backseat solely for the purposes of conducting an inventory search. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the reason for the BSD was not reasonable; the Department member could have requested another unit or had the subject remain curbside during the inventory search.

P-21: This traffic stop consisted of a two-person unit. The Department members contacted the subject for expired registration. The MDC narrative indicated the subject was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle because she was uncooperative and reached toward the center console. The BWC depicted the subject was cooperative and several additional units were on scene. The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable because the subject was cooperative and did not present a flight risk or an officer safety threat, and sufficient additional personnel were on scene..

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department members consider alternative methods of detention when additional units are at the scene. Alternative methods of detention, such as seated detention or standing if preferred, allow the Department member to maintain continuous visual contact with the subject while completing the investigation. Additionally, when a Department member is alone and/or in a remote location, and the subject is cooperative, deputies should consider requesting a backup unit rather than placing the subject in the backseat solely to conduct a vehicle search.

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)

In 27 of the 60 incidents, Department members did not document action taken, to include patrol vehicle Detention (BSD), BSD length of time, and the BSD occurrence of a subject. The MDC provided more accurate documentation regarding BSD length of time and BSD occurrence than SACR.

MDC Documentation

Incorrect BSD Documentation Entered in the MDC Patrol Log

In twenty-nine out of the 60 incidents reviewed, Department members entered that 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 seven of the 60 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 curbside, 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 trainings.

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.

Objective No. 1(d)- Reasonableness of Backseat Detention

It is recommended that the Department members utilize other methods of detention when assisting Department members are at the 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 the subject while completing the investigation.

Additionally, when Department members are alone and in a remote location, and the subject is cooperative, Department members should consider requesting a backup unit rather than placing the subject in the backseat solely to conduct a vehicle search.

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 APPLICATONS

- 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 May 13, 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.



12/15/2025

GEOFFREY N. CHADWICK DATE

Captain

Audit and Accountability Bureau

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department