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Part III of Stops and Detentions Audit:
Backseat Detentions Related to Domestic Violence
Antelope Valley Stations
Project No. 2025-6-A

Prepared By:

Audit and Accountability Bureau



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

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AUDIT REPORT

PURPOSE

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

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

The Stops and Detentions Audit was conducted in five separate audits (Part I, II, III, IV, and V) to provide timely feedback to Lancaster and Palmdale Stations (AV Stations). Each of the five audits addresses the requirements of the Agreement. This audit, designated as Part III, specifically focused on the treatment and documentation of individuals placed in a Backseat Detention (BSD)² related to Domestic Violence³ calls and the AV Stations’ compliance with paragraphs 44, 48, and 149 of the Agreement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Project Numbers, Due Dates, and Population Time Periods

Project No.	Projected Due Date	Population Time Period
2025-6-A	April 30, 2025	November 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024
2025-16-A	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).⁴ The AAB determined whether the evidence obtained was sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for the findings based on the audit objectives.

BACKGROUND

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

⁴ The GAGAS, also known as the Yellow Book, is issued by the Comptroller General of the United States through the U.S. Government Accountability Office and refers to *Government Auditing Standards*, July 2018 Revision, Technical Update April 2021.

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 AV Monitoring Team (MT) and the US-DOJ for input prior to the start of the audit.

Audit Scope and Criteria

The scope of this audit evaluated stops and detentions, with a specific focus on the treatment of individuals detained in the backseat of a patrol vehicle during calls for service related to domestic violence. In addition, the auditors evaluated body-worn camera (BWC)⁵ activations, the completeness of BWC recordings, the proper documentation of stops and detentions involving BSDs, and whether the required advisements were provided to detained subject(s) throughout the interaction. Any deficiencies or deviations were identified and documented. Furthermore, patterns of legal or policy 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 related to domestic violence calls for service

A data request was submitted to the Data Systems Bureau (DSB) for all the AV Stations' stops and detentions (vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle stops) with BSD data during the audit period. The resulting data yielded a population of 28,441 Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD)⁶ which included stops and detentions. Of these, 2,469 were potentially related to domestic violence, of which 712 were determined to be relevant to this audit, and 21 were coded as BSDs in the CAD clearance narratives.

⁵ A BWC is a video and audio recording device worn by a Department member which allows an event to be recorded and saved as a digital file.

⁶ 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 "Calls for Service," and patrol deputy-initiated "Observation" stop records. This technology enhances operational efficiency by facilitating real-time incident management and resource allocation.

AV Station	CAD Entries which include Stops and Detentions	Domestic Violence related Calls for Service
Lancaster	14,898	361
Palmdale	13,543	351
AV Total	28,441	712

The first step involved filtering specific radio codes that identified calls for service related to domestic violence within the CAD system. The selected radio codes included: family disturbances - 415F; battery - 242; rape - 261; felony spousal assault - 273.5; misdemeanor spousal assault - 243e1; and stalking - 646.9. In addition, any of the indicated radio codes accompanied by descriptors such as “JO” (just occurred), “R” (report), “P” (possible), and “N” (now) were included.

These radio codes were carefully selected to identify incidents associated with domestic violence. By focusing on these specific codes, the auditors were able to isolate domestic violence incidents likely to involve BSDs, resulting in a more accurate and relevant subset of data for analysis.

Radio codes not typically associated with domestic violence incidents, such as burglary - 459; robbery - 211; carjacking - 215; vandalism - 594; elder abuse - 368; and indecent exposure – 314, were excluded.

Additionally, the auditors filtered the CAD data using the Contact Type field, including entries with a “C” code for BSD - Calls for Service and an “A” code for Suspicious Circumstances - Family Abuse. BSDs longer than one minute were also included, as well as incidents marked with statistical codes “146” and “050,” which are associated with domestic violence. These criteria ensured relevant data were captured in the population.

The second step involved reviewing the Mobile Digital Computer (MDC)⁷ clearance narrative, specifically filtering for keywords such as “BSD” or “no crime.” Department members use this narrative field to document incident details, including whether a BSD occurred. The auditors reviewed each MDC clearance narrative within the audit period to identify domestic violence incidents related to BSDs.

By combining these steps, the auditors created a refined and comprehensive data set of incidents related to domestic violence, resulting in a total of 712 calls for service, including stops and detentions. From this dataset, the auditors extracted a combined total of 21 calls for service from the AV Stations, in which Department members documented the occurrence of a BSD.

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.

A comprehensive summary of all Sheriff's Automated Contact Reporting System (SACR)⁸ data for the stops and detentions at AV Stations was obtained and filtered to include only calls for service within the established audit period. The request focused on the Contact Narrative field and identified entries containing the specific radio codes "273" and "243," ensuring all variations of these radio codes were captured.

Additionally, a review of the filtered Contact Narratives was conducted to determine whether the incidents were related to domestic violence. Lastly, the Backseat Detention field was filtered to include only instances marked as "1," indicating a BSD had occurred. The refined search resulted in a total of 15 calls for service, including stops and detentions.

The CAD documentation was reconciled with the SACR documentation, and discrepancies between the two systems were identified and addressed in the Other Related Matters section.

Audit Population and Sample

AV Station	Total Number of Domestic Violence related Calls for Service	Backseat Detentions (BSD)
Lancaster	361	18
Palmdale	351	3
AV Total	712	21

Using a one-tailed statistical test with a 95% confidence level and a 4% error rate, the auditors selected a statistically valid random sample of incidents for the audit period. Given the minimal size of the resulting population, the auditors evaluated the entire audit population as indicated.

Of the 21 samples reviewed, a total of six samples were excluded from the testing population. Two samples were excluded after the review of the BWC recordings because they did not meet the criteria for domestic violence. These two samples were initially based on the domestic violence-related radio code used to generate the call for service and the clearance narrative, which indicated an arrest for domestic violence. However, both samples were determined to involve a mother and son, and therefore did not meet the definition of domestic violence.

⁸ The SACR application is a stand-alone system and will run independently of the 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 remaining four were excluded during review of the BWC recordings because they did not meet the criteria of a BSD related to domestic violence stop and detention as no BSD occurred. These samples were initially included in the population based on the radio code related to domestic violence used to generate the call for service, clearance narrative which indicated the occurrence of a BSD, inaccurate documentation of BSD duration, and/or incorrect contact type.

For Lancaster Station, five of the 18 samples were excluded from the testing population, resulting in a total population of 13.

For Palmdale Station, one of the three samples was excluded from the testing population, resulting in a total population of two.

Audit Procedures

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

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

The auditors reviewed the BWC recordings for each stop and detention within the audit population. This included recordings from the primary Department members involved in the application of the BSD or those having direct contact with a subject detainee (e.g., driver, passengers, or individuals present at the scene), who 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 detainee who was placed in the backseat to ensure adherence to the SA 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 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 they complied with the compliance metrics. The table below indicates the audit objectives and their corresponding compliance metrics findings:

Summary of Compliance Metrics Findings

Obj No.	Audit Objectives	Lancaster %	Palmdale %	AV Total	Compliance Metrics %
1	BACKSEAT DETENTIONS				
1(a)	<i>Explanation of Backseat Detentions to Subjects</i>	0%	0%	0%	90%
1(b)	<i>Articulation of Reasonable Suspicion</i>	100%	100%	100%	90%
1(c)	<i>Backseat Detention Documentation and Articulation</i>	31%	0%	27%	90%
1(d)	<i>Backseat Detention Duration</i>	83%	100%	86%	95%
1(e)	<i>Reasonableness of Backseat Detentions</i>	54%	0%	47%	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 as specified in the Agreement, compliance metrics and LASD policy.

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

Criteria

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

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

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

Procedures

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

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

Additionally, if the auditors observed the BSD was based on weather conditions or the subjects articulated desire for privacy or safety, the auditors verified the Department member informed the subject the detention was optional.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 15 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these, none (0%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD beyond stating it was part of an investigation.

For Lancaster Station, none (0%) of the 13 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle.

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

Specifically:

L-1⁹: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault now. The informant reported the subject was hitting her husband (victim) and was extremely intoxicated. The call was updated to indicate a description of the subject, report the subject was hitting the victim in the face and kicking him, note no weapons were seen, there was a history of domestic violence, and indicate screaming could be heard in the background.

During the investigative phase, the subject was seated in the backseat of a vehicle, appeared extremely intoxicated, and became belligerent toward both victims who were in proximity. The subject was ultimately detained and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the BSD was necessary due to the subject’s behavior.

⁹ L refers to Lancaster Station. The number represents the sample being referred to of those reviewed by Lancaster Station.

L-4: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a family disturbance. The informant indicated the subject, who was the informant's husband, was at the location damaging items belonging to her. No weapons were seen, and the informant and subject were inside a bedroom with a child.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the informant and established no domestic violence occurred. The informant stated the subject was possibly under the influence of drugs. Department members ordered the subject to step out of the bedroom, but he refused to comply numerous times. The Department members entered the bedroom to contact the subject, who appeared to be under the influence. The subject was detained and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. However, Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the BSD was necessary for officer safety, as the subject refused to follow commands and appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

L-6: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault just occurred. The informant (victim) provided a description of the subject and indicated there were two firearms at the location. Additionally, the subject hit the victim and sat on her stomach, aware of her pregnancy. The call was updated to indicate the subject fled the scene and was running down the street.

During the investigative phase, Department members initiated a crime broadcast. The information relayed provided the subject's clothing description, direction of travel, and information stating the subject was possibly armed with a firearm. An assisting Department member located the subject hiding in a dumpster area in an apparent attempt to evade apprehension. The subject was detained and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the backseat detention. The auditors determined the BSD was necessary to prevent the subject from fleeing pending a positive identification by the victim.

L-7: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault now. The call was based on secondhand information and indicated the subject was at the location in violation of a restraining order.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted a female subject who was evasive and denied allegations of spousal assault. The female subject allowed the Department members to enter the residence to investigate further.

Department members located a male subject hiding inside a closet. The subject was detained and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The female subject was subsequently detained and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide either subject with a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the BSD was necessary for the male subject, who hid in a closet to evade apprehension. However, the auditors concluded the BSD was not necessary for the female subject who was ultimately the victim of domestic violence.

L-8: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a family disturbance. The informant (victim) indicated the subject, who was an ex-partner, was throwing themselves on the ground and alleging domestic violence. An additional call was received by the subject stating they had been pushed by the victim. The call was updated to indicate the victim was at a neighbor's residence yelling, while the subject remained locked inside his residence.

During the investigative phase, assisting Department members contacted and detained both a male and female subject. Both subjects were placed in the backseat of separate patrol vehicles. Department members did not provide either subject with a reason for the BSD. The female subject was determined to be a victim of domestic violence.

L-10: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a possible spousal assault. The informant indicated two subjects were fighting inside a vehicle and the call disconnected.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted both subjects and placed the male subject in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the male subject with a reason for the BSD.

L-11: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault and suspicious circumstances involving a person screaming. The informant indicated a subject was chasing a female, who was screaming for the subject to get away.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted and detained the subject. The subject was initially cooperative but became upset upon realizing he was being placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. The subject began to yell a female's name. The Department member explained the subject was only being detained at that time, and further investigation was necessary. The subject then cooperated and sat in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The subject was ultimately released after Department members established no crime had occurred.

L-12: Department members responded to the location regarding a spousal now call for service. The call for service indicated the subject was assaulting the victim at the location. The informant provided a description of the subject and additional information indicating the subject was shoving the victim into a vehicle. The victim was kicking, screaming and trying to run away. The victim ran into a business. A call update indicated the subject was inside the business waiting for the victim to exit. The last update indicated the subject, and victim exited the business and were outside the business. During the investigative phase, Department members entered the business and located the subject.

Upon contact, the subject refused to follow commands, and a use of force incident occurred. The subject was escorted to the patrol vehicle, became belligerent and was placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the male subject with a reason for the BSD. Auditors determined the BSD was necessary for officer safety as the subject refused to follow command, a use of force incident occurred and providing the subject for a reason for the BSD was not practical. The subject was ultimately arrested.

L-13: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault. The informant indicated the subject had assaulted a female and a family member. The informant also stated the subject had a firearm in a vehicle and provided a description of the subject. The call was updated to indicate the subject was breaking items inside the residence, had hit himself in the face and was bleeding.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted a possible witness who told them the subject had assaulted the victim. Department members contacted the subject and placed him in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the male subject with a reason for the BSD. Department members contacted the female and established no domestic violence incident occurred. The subject was ultimately released after Department members established no crime had occurred.

L-14: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a possible spousal assault. The call was based on secondhand information and indicated a female (victim) had been assaulted by the subject.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject and placed him in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide the subject with a reason for the BSD. The auditors determined the BSD was unnecessary, as the subject was cooperative, and there were sufficient Department members on scene. The subject was ultimately released after Department members established no crime had occurred.

L-16: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a possible spousal assault and check the vicinity call. The call was based on secondhand information and indicated a female was assaulted by the subject and the call disconnected. The call also indicated previous calls to the residence for a female known as an “insane person swatting caller.”

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject and placed him in the backseat of the patrol vehicle while they conducted their investigation. The subject believed he was being placed under arrest and asked Department members for the charge.

Department members told the subject he was only being detained but did not provide the subject with a sufficient reason for the BSD. Although the subject was cooperative, the auditors determined the BSD was necessary for officer safety due to Department members' knowledge the subject had previously assaulted law enforcement personnel. The subject was ultimately released, after Department members established no crime had occurred.

L-17: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a possible spousal assault. The call was based on secondhand information and indicated the subject was breaking items at the residence and a female (victim) was screaming.

During the investigative phase, an assisting Department member located the subject, who had fled the scene. The subject was located, detained and placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle. Department members told the subject the reason for the BSD was due to a domestic violence investigation, however, this reason was insufficient. The auditors determined the BSD was necessary due to the subject being a flight risk. The subject had fled the scene, and assisting Department members had knowledge of the subject fleeing from previous contacts based on BWC recordings.

L-18: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal just occurred call. The informant indicated the subject had assaulted a female and provided a description of the subject. The call was updated to indicate no weapons were involved, the subject had struck the victim in the face, dragged her out of a vehicle, and took the vehicle keys.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject at the residence and spoke to him through a metal security door. Department members asked the subject to step outside so they could visually check for possible injuries. The subject refused to exit the residence and requested a supervisor. Department members requested a supervisor to respond. Prior to the arrival of the supervisor, the subject exited the residence and was subsequently placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Department members told the subject the reason was due to a domestic violence investigation; however, this reason was insufficient. The subject was ultimately released after Department members established no crime had occurred.

P-2¹⁰: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault. The informant (victim) indicated the victim had been pepper sprayed by the subject. The call was updated to indicate the subject was nude and possibly under the influence of methamphetamine, no weapons were seen, and there was a history of domestic violence. Additionally, the victim was waiting in front of the location in a vehicle.

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

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the victim and subject separately. The victim was contacted outside of the apartment complex and the subject was contacted at the residence. Both were subsequently placed in the backseat of a patrol vehicle while Department members determined whether a crime had occurred. The explanation provided to each subject was insufficient. Both subjects were ultimately arrested.

P-3: Department members responded to a call for service regarding a spousal assault. The informant indicated the subject, who was yelling and intoxicated, had assaulted her.

During the investigative phase, Department members contacted the subject, who was cooperative, at the front of the residence. Department members told the subject he was being detained and subsequently placed in the backseat of the patrol vehicle. Department members did not provide a reason for the BSD. The subject was ultimately released after Department members established no crime had occurred.

Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

Criteria

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

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

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

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

Procedures

The auditors reviewed the primary BWC recordings along with the respective MDC logs and SACR entries to determine whether the reasonable suspicion for the investigative stop and detention was properly documented.

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 15 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these 15 (100%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation in the MDC log and/or SACR entries.

For Lancaster Station, 13 (100%) of the 13 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation in the MDC log and/or SACR entry.

For Palmdale Station, both (100%) of the two stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the reasonable suspicion for the investigation in the MDC log and/or SACR entry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

Criteria

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

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

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.

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

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

Procedures

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

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 15 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these, four (27%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the reason the BSD was necessary. The remaining eleven (73%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because Department members did not document the reason the BSD was necessary. In one incident, the non-compliance was due to a lack of sufficient BSD articulation.

For Lancaster Station, four (31%) of the 13 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members accurately and sufficiently documented the reason the BSD was necessary. The remaining nine (69%) did not meet the criteria for this objective because Department members did not document the reason the BSD was necessary.

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

Specifically:

L-1: Department members documented the reason for the BSD but failed to document the reasonable suspicion for the investigation. The BWC recordings supported the necessity of the BSD and of the reasonable suspicion for the investigation, however, Department members did not document the reasonable suspicion.

L-4: Department members did not document the reason the BSD was necessary, nor did they document the reasonable suspicion for the investigation. The BWC recordings supported the necessity of the BSD and of the documented reasonable suspicion.

L-6: Department members did not sufficiently document the reason for the BSD. The documentation stated it was for a positive identification. Department members should have documented flight risk, as the subject fled the scene and hid to avoid apprehension. The BWC recordings supported both the necessity of the BSD and the documented reasonable suspicion.

L-7: Department members did not document the reason the BSD was necessary. The BWC recordings supported the necessity of the BSD for the male subject but not for the female. The BWC recordings supported the documented reasonable suspicion.

L-8, L-10, L-14, L-18: Department members did not document the reason for the BSD. The BWC recordings did not support the necessity of the BSD. The BWC recordings supported the documented reasonable suspicion.

L-16: Department members did not document a reason for the BSD, only the reasonable suspicion for the investigation. The BWC recordings supported the necessity for the BSD and the documented reasonable suspicion.

P-2, P-3: Department members did not document a reason for the BSD, only the reasonable suspicion for the investigation. The BWC recordings did not support the necessity for the BSD, however, the BWC recordings supported the documented reasonable suspicion.

Recommendations

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

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

Objective No. 1(d) – Backseat Detention Duration

Criteria

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

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

i) the length of any backseat detention

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

Procedures

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

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 14 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these 12 (86%) met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the approximate length of the BSD. The remaining two (14%) did not meet the criteria, as the BWC recordings did not support the documented duration, which was underreported.

For Lancaster Station, 10 (83%) of the 12 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because Department members documented the approximate length of the BSD. The remaining two (17%) did not meet the criteria, as the BWC recordings did not support the documented duration, which was underreported.

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

Specifically:

L-8, L-18: The approximate BSD length documented by Department members was underreported by 20 minutes based on BWC recordings.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department prioritize the procurement of a replacement CAD system that effortlessly interfaces with all current databases used by personnel to document field activities, such as Axon Evidence, SACR, and other relevant systems. This integration would minimize discrepancies across databases and support more accurate and consistent data entry.

Additionally, it is recommended that supervisors verify the documented duration of BSDs during authorized BWC reviews conducted as part of DDWS and Watch Commander Log checks. When discrepancies are identified between BWC footage and MDC entries, supervisors should ensure that corrections are made, and patterns of underreporting are addressed.

Lastly, the Department should provide recurrent briefings or training on the importance of accurately documenting BSD durations in MDC logs, particularly in dynamic or fast-moving field situations where time estimates may be more easily misjudged.

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

Criteria

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

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

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

Procedures

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

Findings

For the AV Stations combined, a total of 15 stops and detentions were reviewed. Of these, seven (47%) met the criteria for this objective. The backseat detentions were reasonable based on supported assertions of deputy safety. The remaining eight (53%) did not meet the criteria as the backseat detentions were not reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness coupled with sufficient department members on scene.

For Lancaster Station, seven (54%) of the 13 stops and detentions met the criteria for this objective because the backseat detentions were reasonable based on supported assertions of deputy safety. The remaining six (46%) did not meet the criteria for this objective, as the backseat detentions were not reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness coupled with sufficient department members on scene.

For Palmdale Station, none (0%) met the criteria for this objective, as the backseat detentions were not reasonable based on the subject(s) cooperativeness coupled with sufficient department members on scene.

Specifically:

L-8, L-10, L-11, L-13, L-14, L-18: The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable, as both subjects were cooperative and there appeared to be a sufficient number of Department members on scene and could have opted for an alternative method of detention.

P-2, P-3: The auditors determined the BSD was unreasonable, as both subjects were cooperative and there appeared to be a sufficient number of Department members on scene and could have opted for an alternative method of detention.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department members utilize other methods of detention when assisting department members are available and/or on scene to assist. Alternative methods of detention, such as seated detention or standing if preferred, allow the department member to maintain continuous visual contact with a subject.

OTHER RELATED MATTERS

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

SACR Documentation

Deputy Demographic

In four of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members selected all Ethnicity options under “Deputy Demographic.”

Action Taken (Non-Force) & Action Taken (Force)

In 10 of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members did not document actions taken, including Patrol Car Detention (BSD), the length of the BSD, and whether a search of a subject occurred. The MDC patrol log provided more accurate documentation in these instances. Additionally, one of the 14 incidents, the force action types utilized were not documented.

Reason for Contact – Suspicion Types

In two of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members did not document the reasonable suspicion in the MDC narrative. However, because the “Reason for Contact” is a mandatory field in SACR, the SACR documentation was more accurate compared to the MDC.

Result of Contact

In one of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members inaccurately selected “Verbal Warning” as the result type for penal code 273.5(a) (Corporal Injury on current or former spouse, cohabitant). Since no crime occurred, “No Action” would have been more appropriate.

MDC Documentation

Incorrect Contact Type Entered in the MDC Patrol Log

In five of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members selected the incorrect Contact Type. Because a BSD occurred, the Contact Type of “C-BSD Call for Service” should have been selected.

Search Field

In one of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members selected the incorrect authority field to conduct a search. In two of the 14 incidents, Department members failed to document the reason for the search in the narrative field.

Body-Worn Camera

In five of the 14 incidents reviewed, Department members had multiple BWC deactivations without providing a reason.

CONCLUSION

During the review, the auditors observed Department members consistently demonstrated professionalism, courtesy, and patience when interacting with the public. However, there appears to be a lack of awareness among Department members regarding adherence to the Agreement, MPP, Station Unit Orders, and FOSS Newsletters related to the detention of subjects placed in the backseat of patrol vehicles

Failure to adhere to these guidelines may expose the Department to various risks, including legal liabilities and financial losses. This could potentially jeopardize the Department's relationships with the AV community.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Objective No. 1(c) – Backseat Detention Documentation

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

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

Objective No. 1(d) – Backseat Detention Duration

It is recommended that the Department prioritize the procurement of a replacement CAD system that effortlessly interfaces with all current databases used by personnel to document field activities, such as Axon Evidence, SACR, and other relevant systems. This integration would minimize discrepancies across databases and support more accurate and consistent data entry.

Additionally, it is recommended that supervisors verify the documented duration of BSDs during authorized BWC reviews conducted as part of DDWS and Watch Commander Log checks. When discrepancies are identified between BWC footage and MDC entries, supervisors should ensure that corrections are made, and patterns of underreporting are addressed.

Lastly, the Department should provide recurrent briefings or training on the importance of accurately documenting BSD durations in MDC logs, particularly in dynamic or fast-moving field situations where time estimates may be more easily misjudged.

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

It is recommended that the Department members utilize other methods of detention when assisting department members are available and/or on scene to assist. Alternative methods of detention, such as seated detention or standing if preferred, allow the department member to maintain continuous visual contact with a subject.

FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES

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

DEPARTMENT APPLICATIONS


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

REFERENCES

- United States Department of Justice – Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement, Case Number CV 15-03174 (April 2015)
- Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement Compliance Metrics (October 2019)
- Manual of Policy and Procedures Sections:
 - 5-09/520.10 - Backseat Detentions (July 2018)
 - 5-09/520.25 – Logging Field Activities (May 2024)
- Field Operations Support Services:
 - 13-12 – New MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity – Deputy Reference Sheet – MDC Codes for Logging Field Activity (December 2016)
 - 14-19 – Seated and Backseat Investigative Detentions (September 2014)
 - 02-002 – Tracking Family Abuse Crimes (June 2012)
- Lancaster Unit Order 68

Views of Responsible Officials

On September 10, 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