Objectives Traffic Stops

1. LE092.3.A. Define a **traffic stop** according to Florida Legal Guidelines.

According to the Florida Legal Guidelines, a **traffic stop** is the lawful, temporary detention of an individual in a vehicle by a law enforcement officer for an investigative purpose.

2. LE026.1.C. Identify important benefits of traffic enforcement.

Through traffic enforcement, officers can deter or detect unlawful acts or events requiring law enforcement action.

Examples include the following:

- car theft and carjacking
- wanted persons and escaped prisoners
- drivers with suspended licenses
- abused, kidnapped, and runaway children
- illegal weapons
- drug use or trafficking
- minors in possession of alcohol
- impaired drivers under the influence of alcohol or chemical or controlled substances
- criminals fleeing crime scenes
- uninsured motorists

3. LE026.1.A.2. Identify that F.S. §316 contains criminal and noncriminal traffic violations.

Florida’s Uniform Disposition of Traffic Infractions Act decriminalizes most traffic violations. Violations still treated as criminal acts are fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer; leaving the scene of a crash; driving under the influence; reckless driving; making false crash reports; willfully failing or refusing to comply with any lawful order or direction of a police officer or member of a fire department; obstructing an officer attempting to enforce vehicle weight limits; and obstructing traffic for purposes of solicitation. There are obviously other traffic-related criminal offenses, such as vehicular homicide. They are not violations of F.S. Chapter 316 but violations of other statutes.

All other violations of the F.S. Chapter 316 are deemed infractions, which are noncriminal violations that may be punished by fines, costs, driving school, and community service hours but not by incarceration. Because a traffic-infraction violator may not be jailed, he or she has no right to a trial by jury or a right to a court-appointed lawyer.

An infraction is either a moving or non-moving violation, depending on the statutory definition of the infraction. A criminal violation will be either a misdemeanor or felony.

Because a moving violation could result in a crash or injury, a violator will pay a higher fine and may have points assessed against his or her driver’s license. A non-moving violation will usually not cause a crash or injury, so the fines are reduced. Non-moving violators do not have points assessed against their licenses. Speeding is a moving violation but having an illegally noisy exhaust system is a nonmoving violation.

Florida law enforcement officers should be familiar with the traffic laws contained in Florida Statutory Chapters 316 (Uniform Traffic Control Law), 320 (Motor Vehicle Licenses and Registration) and 322 (Driver’s Licenses).

4. LE026.1.A.1. Identify the most common traffic violations.
**Moving Violations:** Violation of Traffic Control Device (e.g., Stop Sign), Ran Red Light, Careless Driving, Violation of “Move Over: Law”, Violation of Right-Of-Way Entering Intersection, Violate Right-Of-Way Making Left Turn, Unlawful Speed, Stop Sign Violation, Possession of Open Container of Alcohol by Driver, Child Restraint Requirements, Failure to Stop for School Bus, Driving at Night Without Headlights

**Non-Moving Violations:** Inoperable Tail Lamps, Equipment Violation, Tag Registration Expired Less Than Six Months, No Tag, Safety Belt (Seat Belt) Violation, Temporary Tag Expired Less Than Seven Days, Tag Light Must be White, Bicycle and Pedestrian Violations, Parking Violations, Insurance Coverage Violations

**Criminal Traffic Violations:** Driving Under the Influence, Driving Without a Valid Driver’s License, Driving in Violation of Driver’s License Restriction, Driving while License Suspended or Revoked, Unlawful Use of Driver’s License, Leaving Scene of a Crash Involving Damage to Vehicle or Property (Hit and Run), Leaving the Scene of a Crash Involving Death or Personal Injury, Reckless Driving.

5. LE012.10. Identify the need to submit the confiscated driver’s license to the appropriate driver license office.

If the driver’s license is confiscated due to suspension, mutilation, or revoked or altered data, the officer should attach it to the citation and submit it to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or place into property as evidence.

6. LE012.4.B.3. Identify formatting of the Florida Driver License.

The current version of “Over 21” licenses are formatted horizontally (wider than tall) while “Under 21” licenses are vertically formatted (taller than wide).

An officer will need to more closely inspect older formats to obtain required information including the expiration date.

7. LE012.4.B.1. Identify important components of the Florida Driver License.

**Classes of Florida Driver Licenses**

**CLASS A:** required for drivers of trucks or truck combinations weighing with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of 26,001 lbs or more, provided towed vehicle is more than 10,000 lbs.

**CLASS B:** required for drivers of straight trucks weighing 26,001 lbs. Gross Vehicle Weight Rating or more.

**CLASS C:** required for drivers of vehicles transporting hazardous materials in sufficient amounts to require placards or vehicles designed to transport more than 15 persons including the driver with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating of less than 26,001 pounds.

**CLASS E:** required for drivers of any non-commercial motor vehicle with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating less than 26,001 pounds, including passenger cars, 15-passenger (including the driver) vans, trucks or recreational vehicles, and two or three wheel motor vehicles 50 cc or less, such as mopeds or small scooters. (See below.) Farmers and drivers of authorized emergency vehicles who are exempt from obtaining a commercial driver license must obtain a Class E license.

**CLASS E-Learner:** A driver with a Class E Learner license is limited to driving motor vehicles weighing less than 8,000 pounds. In addition, such a driver must be accompanied by a licensed driver 21 years of age or older who occupies the closest seat right of the driver, and the learner may initially drive only between the hours of 6 A.M. and 7 P.M. Three months after issuance of the learner license, the driver may drive from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. A driver with a learner license may not operate a motorcycle without a motorcycle endorsement.
8. LE012.4.B.2. Identify important components of Florida Vehicle License Plates.

Florida’s Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles issues standard and specialized vehicle tags. While the majority of specialized tags are “vanity” plates displaying the owner’s nickname or commemorating a college, sports team, or cause, some have specific uses and restrictions. For example, some tags are limited to commercial or government vehicles, while others are assigned based on the owner’s status, e.g., state legislator or firefighter.

Officers should be familiar with these uses and restrictions of such tags and make SURE their use is authorized. In addition, there are specialized tags that require reporting additional prefix characters or descriptions that are not preprinted on the tag.

When querying a tag (when dealing with people, articles, vehicles, licenses/IDs, the following terms, querying, entering, running, vehicle check, records check, wants and warrants check, are all used synonymously for gathering information for law enforcement purposes), an officer must make sure to include not only the prefix but a specific description or title of the specialized tag. For example when running a tag for a wheelchair symbol plate, an officer must include the suffix "WT").


Discriminatory or bias-based profiling is the unequal treatment of any person including stopping, questioning, searching, detaining, or arresting a person solely or primarily because of the person’s race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. This behavior is illegal and will not be tolerated in law enforcement.

10. LE026.1.B. Identify protections offered by Title 18 of the United States Code and the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees every person within the U.S. equal protection under the law. In Mapp v. Ohio (1961), the Supreme Court declared that no state can limit this constitutional right; every person is entitled to be treated the same under similar circumstances.

11. LE026.1.B.2. Identify the perceptions commonly associated with discriminatory profiling.

Minority residents frequently feel unfairly treated by law enforcement officers, particularly with regard to traffic stops.

12. LE026.1.C.1. Identify how an officer’s behavior can help minimize tension and maximize the cooperation of citizens during a traffic stop.

When stopped, traffic violators typically react with embarrassment, anger, fear, and excuses. Tension can be high, but by conducting a proper and professional traffic stop, an officer can minimize negative and potentially unsafe results. This can be done by following established professional agency protocol and by officers doing the following:

• greeting the driver (and passengers) politely, introducing him- or herself and immediately explaining why the stop was made; courts have ruled that persons are entitled to know why they were stopped before any further discussion or requests are made. The officer should describe the violation in terms of what the vehicle, not the driver, was seen doing.

• maintaining a pleasant expression, a calm tone of voice, a non-confrontational interview stance, and command presence, and by using words that convey professionalism and respect
• allowing the driver to talk; law enforcement officers should remain polite and focused, conveying to the driver that he or she is being heard.

• not arguing with the violator; the officer should simply explain his or her observations and the violation, if any. Whether or not a warning or citation is issued, when the officer listens respectfully, many people calm down and accept the situation.

• not lecturing the violator but explaining the seriousness of the violation by mentioning the risk of a crash or other circumstances that heighten the importance of enforcement action

• keeping the detention time as short as possible

• ending the interaction with a “thank you” in a courteous, non-sarcastic manner (especially if the person turns out to be cleared of any wrongdoing)

• providing the citizen with complete name and badge number upon request

• eliminating racially charged stereotypes, racial jokes, and epithets from his or her speech. These increase the likelihood of insensitive behavior or the perception that the officer is biased.

13. LE026.1.C.2. Identify the characteristics of a professional traffic stop that may help overcome language and other cultural barriers.

Because language barriers can impede an officer’s communication ability, an officer making a traffic stop must determine the motorist’s ability to understand him or her. For example, many Florida motorists may not understand English. They are concerned about being stopped, what the officer is doing or expects, and what their obligations may be. An officer should consider requesting an interpreter. Hearing impaired drivers also present a challenge, though some can read lips. Writing notes back and forth may be a good communication method in this situation.

To avoid communication barriers, an officer must exhibit professionalism and remember to do the following:

• avoid talking down to anyone or being demeaning
• take his or her time when speaking
• speak clearly
• show respect
• listen carefully and explain fully what is expected and what the officer is doing
• be patient
• refer the motorist, if necessary, to an appropriate source with the department if unable to answer all questions

14. LE026.1. Identify reasons a vehicle may be stopped during an unknown risk traffic stop.

A traffic stop begins the moment an officer observes an event or reason for the stop. Although officers may stop a vehicle if reasonable suspicion exists that a crime was, is being, or is about to be committed, an observed violation provides an officer with reasonable suspicion to stop the driver and issue a citation. Other justifications for a traffic stop would be to assist a motorist who is obviously lost or whose vehicle has mechanical trouble, to investigate suspicious behavior, or to investigate a vehicle or occupant matching a BOLO description.

15. LE026.1.D. Identify traffic conditions that increase the potential for traffic violations during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Certain roadway and traffic conditions may increase the potential for particular traffic violations. These include merge areas, intersections, and acceleration lanes.
16. LE007.1.A.2. Identify conditions that would affect traffic flow during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Traffic flow is the general speed and direction of vehicle or pedestrian movement. Weather conditions, school zones, construction zones, and neighborhood activities all may affect traffic flow, slowing drivers and causing congestion.

17. LE026.1.A. Identify where to park to observe traffic flow for potential traffic violations during an unknown risk traffic stop.

If working in stationary mode, the officer should choose a safe parking place from which to watch for traffic violations. For example, when using radar or watching an intersection for traffic light violators, the officer should position the patrol vehicle where it does not obstruct traffic flow but can enter the roadway quickly and safely to make a necessary stop.

18. LE025.2. Identify where to position the patrol vehicle where it can safely reenter traffic during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Such safe places include areas with a wide shoulder off the roadway, available parking areas, and areas with an unobstructed sight of violations and oncoming traffic when entering the roadway.

19. LE026.3. Identify the need to catch up to the vehicle to be stopped during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Step 1: Maneuver the patrol vehicle through traffic until safely catching up to the violator, and determine at what point to safely make the stop.

The officer’s familiarity with area roads is critical to selecting a safe stopping location. Except in emergencies in which a stop must be immediately made, the officer should choose a location where the violator can be stopped out of the flow of traffic, where both the officer and violator can avoid the danger of passing vehicles. Passing traffic is not the only risk—stopping a violator in an area populated by their peers may create a volatile and dangerous scene. After deciding to make the stop, the officer should move the patrol vehicle into a position to pursue and catch up to the violator, initiate the stop, and maintain a safe following distance until the violator pulls over.

20. LE279.4. Identify the need to request backup as required during an unknown risk traffic stop.

An officer may have to follow a vehicle for some time before initiating the stop. If backup is needed, the officer should request another patrol vehicle to help.

21. LE026.3.A. Identify the need to maintain constant observation of vehicle suspected of violation.

To ensure the correct vehicle is being stopped, the officer should maintain constant visual observation of the vehicle from the time of the violation until the stop is made.

The officer should note the vehicle’s description, including its type, make, model, year, color, tag number, and state where the tag was issued. The driver’s description (glasses, hat, beard, etc.) and any information about passengers should be noted as well as any other vehicle descriptors, such as condition, bumper stickers or decals, dents, or the presence of a toolbox.

22. LE092.2. Identify the need to advise communications center of location and description of the vehicle, occupants, and tag number with state of issue during an unknown risk traffic stop.
Step 2: Notify dispatch of the traffic stop.

Once the decision to stop has been made, the following information must be provided to dispatch:

• the officer’s current location, such as the street, plus a cross street or a house number; this is crucial on interstate and divided highways. If the situation escalates and the officer is injured or cannot use the radio, dispatch can pinpoint the officer’s location.

• the officer’s direction of travel: north, south, east, or west

• vehicle tag number and state issued

• a description of the violator’s vehicle

• the number of occupants and descriptions if possible

Dispatch information is especially important for officer safety. It allows time for a check on the tag before the officer talks to the driver. In addition, if the officer sees the occupants acting suspiciously, he or she may immediately be able to request backup. If the final stop location changes, the officer should update dispatch immediately.

23. LE025.4.A. Identify considerations for determining how to locate a safe stopping area to make a traffic stop during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Step 3: Select a safe location to stop.

The following are major considerations when selecting the safest proper location to make the stop:

• lighting
• population
• width of road and shoulder
• traffic congestion
• level of visibility
• presence of hills and curves

The officer should check the width of the road and shoulder to ensure that both the officer and the violator are far enough off the road so other vehicles can pass. This prevents crashes, especially in a congested area where other drivers may not be able to change lanes to give the officer more room. Safe areas are out of the traffic lane. Officers should try to choose a level spot or a slight down grade. If stopping on an upgrade, a large truck could roll into the patrol vehicle. Additionally, special caution should be taken when conducting stops in areas where children are present, such as school parking lots. Officers should not make a stop on a curve, ramp, or crest of a hill, close to an exit ramp, or where road conditions could cause other vehicles to hit the patrol vehicle.

24. LE025.4.B. Identify the need to activate the emergency equipment during an unknown risk traffic stop.

To communicate the stop to the violator, the officer should signal by pulling directly behind the violator’s vehicle and, once the area is safe to make a stop, turning on the emergency equipment.

25. LE026.2.A. Identify the Florida Statutes that govern the operation of emergency vehicle lights and siren during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Emergency notification equipment includes emergency lights, siren, headlights, PA system, and horn. F.S. §316.216 explains the legal right to use lights and sirens to get the violator’s attention during a traffic stop.
26. LE026.2.B. Identify how to use the emergency lights.

Emergency lighting systems differ among agencies.

1. The **light bar** is one system

2. **Wig wags** are alternating flashes of the vehicle lights, strobe, flashers, and other lights.

3. If the stop occurs at night, the officer should use **spotlights** for additional lighting.

The patrol vehicle’s high beam, spotlight, and takedown lights conceal an officer from the violator’s view and are important for officer safety and survival.

The officer should activate the patrol vehicle’s high beams unless they interfere with oncoming traffic or reflect the violator’s rear bumper or another object, restricting the officer’s vision.

If the patrol vehicle is equipped with them, the officer should activate the takedown lights, the white lights facing forward on the light bar.

These illuminate the vehicle’s interior and prevent the operator from seeing into the patrol vehicle.

27. LE007.3.A. Identify the need to position patrol vehicle in line directly behind the suspect vehicle during an unknown risk traffic stop.

The officer will pull the patrol vehicle directly behind the vehicle at a "**safe distance**". A safe distance is far enough **behind** the violator to react to the situation at hand. The officer must use safety precautions, such as avoiding traffic lanes, watching for pedestrians, and protecting the violator.

28. LE026.7. Identify how to direct the driver on where to stop during an unknown risk traffic stop.

If uncomfortable with the stopping place, the officer should direct the violator to a **safer location using the patrol vehicle’s PA system**. The officer might say, “Driver, drive into the parking lot ahead” or “Driver, pull your vehicle farther to the right.” The officer should be firm but respectful.

29. LE026.7.A. Identify how to activate the public address system during an unknown risk traffic stop.

If the officer’s PA system does not activate automatically, it must be manually turned on. Once the system is on, the officer can press the button on the side of the microphone and speak into it. It is similar to a Citizen’s Band (CB) radio. The system’s speakers are usually in the front of the patrol car behind the grille or bumper. The officer’s commands should not be as loud as the siren. During the stop, the overhead emergency lights should be left activated to warn oncoming traffic.

30. LE012.4.A. Identify officer safety and survival techniques appropriate for the situation during an unknown risk traffic stop.

**Step 6: Position the patrol vehicle.**

After stopping the violator in a safe location, the officer should position the patrol vehicle a safe distance behind the violator’s vehicle. Continued officer safety also involves the following practices:

- ensuring the officer is a safe distance from the roadway
- maintaining a safe reactionary distance between the violator’s vehicle and the patrol vehicle
- offsetting and angling the patrol vehicle from the violator’s vehicle
- adhering to agency policy and procedure.
Because of roadway conditions, traffic, and other environmental factors, each traffic stop is unique. As a general rule, the patrol vehicle should be positioned one and a half to two car lengths behind the violator’s vehicle. If the violator stops on the right side of the road, the officer should align the center of the patrol vehicle’s hood with the left side taillight of the violator’s vehicle. The wheels should be turned outward (toward the road) so the patrol vehicle may be deflected away from the violator’s vehicle if the patrol vehicle is struck from behind.

31. LE026.8. Identify how to offset the patrol vehicle at the rear of the violator’s vehicle after the violator’s vehicle stops during an unknown risk traffic stop.

As a general rule, the patrol vehicle should be positioned one and a half to two car lengths behind the violator’s vehicle. If the violator stops on the right side of the road, the officer should align the center of the patrol vehicle’s hood with the left side taillight of the violator’s vehicle. The wheels should be turned outward (toward the road) so the patrol vehicle may be deflected away from the violator’s vehicle if the patrol vehicle is struck from behind. This offset position creates a potential safety corridor where an officer can walk when approaching the violator’s vehicle. It may also provide cover from potential skipping rounds shot from the violator’s vehicle.

32. LE025.4. Identify how the officer should prepare him- or herself to complete the stop after the officer has positioned the patrol vehicle during an unknown risk traffic stop.

After making the stop, the officer should be prepared to exit the patrol vehicle quickly. The violator’s vehicle and all occupants should be constantly observed. If the assessment of the situation includes a sense of any danger, the officer should request backup. Upon exiting the patrol vehicle, the officer should make sure his or her equipment belt is free of the seat belt and that the seat belt does not hinder his or her getting out of the vehicle. Emergency lights should be used during a day stop and all lights should be used at night.

33. LE091.8.A.1. Identify the need to determine the degree of danger involved during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Step 7: Visual assessment

Before approaching the violator’s vehicle, an officer should assess the degree of danger. If any subject attempts to exit the violator’s vehicle without being directed to do so by the officer, the officer should immediately order the subject(s) back into the vehicle.

One clue to possible danger is if the occupants are nervously watching the officer. Some activity should be expected as the driver retrieves driver’s license, registration, and insurance information from a wallet or glove compartment. Suspicious movements such as moving towards the floorboard or backseat, excessive motion that seems beyond natural curiosity or rigid, wooden posture (which may indicate occupants who are frightened or poised for action) may all suggest danger. The officer must maintain constant observation.

The officer should check the trunk lock, trunk lid alignment, and, when possible, weight distribution for anything that might suggest the vehicle is stolen.

The following are indications that the license plate may not belong to the vehicle:

- the way the plate is attached (bolts, wire) may suggest the license plate was removed from another vehicle
- age of attachment relative to the plate (i.e., Are there shiny, new bolts on a dirty plate?)
- expired expiration sticker or sticker that looks like it was removed from another plate
- overspray paint on the license plate
- the presence of dead insects on the tag, suggesting it was the front plate of another vehicle
Officers should also check for a popped trunk lock. This indicates that someone hammered out the keyhole, allowing entry into the trunk without a key. An officer might see a hole in the trunk where the lock should be, which is a common sign of a stolen vehicle. Officers should also note if the trunk lid is fully closed. A subject could hide inside the trunk and surprise an officer. If the trunk lid is unlatched, the officer should push it down when he or she approaches the vehicle. Doing so will lock in anyone hiding inside the trunk.

If the vehicle appears to be heavily weighed down in the rear, the officer should discuss this with the driver. The vehicle could be carrying stolen merchandise, drugs, tools, a person, or a corpse.

34. LE026.9. Identify how to make contact with the vehicle occupants using proper tactics as demanded by the situation during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Step 9: Approaching the Violator’s Vehicle

The officer must decide whether to approach the violator’s vehicle or call the driver back to the patrol vehicle (called the no approach tactic) to acquire information.

In both situations, the officer should exit the patrol vehicle and use available cover from either vehicle. The officer should approach the violator’s vehicle cautiously, using ALL senses to assess the situation.

The officer should not fix his or her full attention on any one part of the scene but should scan the vehicle and occupants for suspicious movements and continue to observe both the vehicle and the occupants throughout the stop.

If a situation seems dangerous, an officer should request backup and wait for arrival before taking any further action.

35. LE026.8.B. Identify how to make a safe approach to the violator’s vehicle during an unknown risk traffic stop.

If the officer decides to approach the violator’s vehicle on the passenger side, he or she should begin by walking behind the patrol vehicle to avoid crossing in front of the headlights and betraying his or her location.

Approaching on the passenger’s side gives the officer extra time to look and listen. The occupants will likely expect the officer to approach on the driver’s side, and therefore will not know his or her location.

At night, the officer’s flashlight should be kept OFF while approaching the vehicle until contact is made with the driver and other occupants.

36. LE026.9.A. Identify the number of additional occupants in the vehicle during an unknown risk traffic stop.

An observant officer can see if the driver is concealing something on his or her right side, including a popped ignition, keys in the ignition, a weapon, an alcoholic beverage container, or narcotics. The officer will also notice how many other occupants may be in the vehicle.

If the preliminary visual check reveals a potential threat, the officer should call for backup and assess the situation. If nobody occupies the backseat, the officer should remain behind the front passenger’s doorpost for cover, assuming an interview stance to protect his or her firearm side. If passengers occupy the backseat, the officer should stand at the rear of the backseat windows.
37. LE026.8.C. Identify officer safety techniques in getting the violator to exit vehicle during an unknown risk traffic stop.

“No Approach”: Calling the Driver Back to the Officer’s Patrol Vehicle

If the decision is made to call the driver back to the patrol vehicle, the officer should exit the patrol vehicle and assume a safe position, such as behind either the driver’s side or passenger’s side doorpost, depending on traffic conditions. When moving to a position behind the passenger-side doorpost, the officer should walk behind the vehicle while constantly observing the driver and any passengers. The officer should also keep an eye on passing traffic to avoid being struck by a vehicle. To avoid being silhouetted against the emergency lights, the officer should not walk between the patrol vehicle and the violator’s vehicle. The driver may be verbally directed back to the patrol vehicle by using a commanding voice or a PA system. If the driver is looking at the driver directly or through a mirror, the officer may simply motion the driver to come back to the patrol vehicle. As the violator approaches, the officer should be observant, especially of the driver’s hands, for any signs of aggression or the presence of a weapon.

38. LE012.4.A.1. Identify the need to demonstrate dignified and commanding presence during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Step 10: Interview the driver.

A courteous but commanding presence is the key to effective communication with the vehicle driver. An officer is less likely to encounter resistance if his or her presence is dignified and commanding (LE012.4.A.1). An officer should make sure his or her expression, tone of voice, body position, gestures, and words portray professionalism and respect along with sufficient assertiveness.

39. LE026.10. Identify self as a law enforcement officer.

The first thing the officer should do when contacting the driver is identify him- or herself as a law enforcement officer, especially if not in uniform. Many agencies have a specific policy for doing this.

40. LE026.8.D. Identify the need to maintain safe distance when talking to a violator during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Observation skills, safe positioning, and safe distancing are important considerations when interviewing the driver and/or passengers. If the situation becomes dangerous or unstable, the officer must increase distance between himself and the stopped vehicle.

41. LE026.12. Identify the need to explain the reason for the traffic stop during an unknown risk traffic stop.

In accordance with agency policy, the officer should courteously explain the reason for the stop and request the required documentation.

42. LE015.3. Identify the need to describe the safety violation to the operator.

This could include the officer’s observation that the vehicle is in violation of F.S. §316.221, Inoperable Tail Lamps, for instance.

43. LE091.7. Identify the need to ask the driver for a lawful and reasonable explanation for law violation during an unknown risk traffic stop.

The officer should allow the driver to offer an explanation, such as medical difficulties or vehicle malfunctions.
44. LE012.3.B. Identify how to arrange assistance for the citizen during an unknown risk traffic stop.

If necessary, the officer should request medical assistance for the driver and, as needed, arrange for a relative or responsible person to remove the vehicle or have it towed.

45. LE012.4.B. Identify documents to request from driver during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Drivers in Florida must provide a driver’s license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance upon request per F.S. §322.15., §320.0605, and §316.646.

46. LE005.1.A. Identify the forms of identification that provide the most accurate personal information during an unknown risk traffic stop.

An officer must never accept a wallet from the driver. Instead, the driver should be asked to remove the license from the wallet. This prevents the driver from later accusing an officer of theft. The officer should take the documentation with his or her nondominant (non-gun) hand. During this process, the officer should observe the interior of the vehicle and activities of the passengers. If an officer is suspicious of a driver’s movements, the officer should ask where the driver keeps the documents. By doing this, the officer may predict where the driver’s hands will move. If the driver reaches to open the glove compartment or other inside compartment, it should be requested that he or she do so slowly. The officer should pay close attention to both of the driver’s hands. The driver could use the reaching hand to distract while going for a weapon or object with the other hand.

The driver is the only occupant compelled to provide documentation unless other occupants are suspected of a crime or violation such as not wearing a seat belt. If identification is needed from occupants, officers should request documents that provide the most accurate personal information such as the following:

- driver’s license or state-issued identification card (with picture)
- residence card for non-citizens (green card)
- military ID
- school picture identification
- Social Security number (according to agency policy and procedure)

47. LE026.5.A. Identify how to compare a vehicle’s registration information to the vehicle’s VIN for a match during an unknown risk traffic stop.

The officer should verify that the information on the license is current and valid. The information on the registration should be compared to the VIN, make, type, and year of the vehicle.

48. LE279.3.A. Identify where the driver and occupants should wait during an unknown risk traffic stop.

In addition, the officer should confirm the insurance card is current and applicable to that vehicle. The driver and any occupants should be asked to stay in the violator’s vehicle or in a designated place within the officer’s sight, which makes it more difficult to attack from behind.

49. LE005.5. Identify the need to match information received from dispatch with information recorded during an unknown risk traffic stop.

After obtaining the required documentation, the officer will safely return to the patrol vehicle and complete FCIC/NCIC Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle checks. Safely returning to the patrol vehicle means never losing sight of the stopped vehicle and the occupants even while running FCIC/NCIC checks.
50. LE079.10.C.3. Identify how to determine whether a vehicle is reported stolen through a check of FCIC/NCIC during an unknown risk traffic stop.

FCIC/NCIC information can provide an officer with assistance during traffic stops. It can also give useful additional information about the person or vehicle stopped, including wanted persons (entire U.S.), drivers’ licenses and vehicle registration (entire U.S. and Canada), missing persons, and juvenile and adult stolen property (entire U.S.).

If a hit is confirmed during the check, the officer may arrest the violator and/or impound the vehicle as circumstances and agency policy dictate.

51. LE091.7.B. Identify undercover law enforcement officers in the execution of their duties during an unknown risk traffic stop.

On occasion, when an undercover officer has been stopped for a traffic violation, he or she may or may not present law enforcement identification to the officer who pulled him over. If he or she does offer identification, dispatch can verify his employment and official status. In an undercover situation where the officer has no identification or depending on the nature of his assignment, it may be unlikely that the officer will reveal his or her identity to avoid a ticket. Agency policy and procedures should be followed in these situations.

52. LE026.14. Identify that an officer may issue a citation, warning, or make an arrest as appropriate during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Officers often use discretion and flexibility in judgment. In the case of traffic violations, officers may issue a warning, citation, or make an arrest as appropriate. The law, agency policy, and the violation’s circumstances affect the decision. This discretion applies only to traffic violations and misdemeanor offenses, with some exceptions for misdemeanor offenses. Some agencies do not permit officers to issue written warnings. Others do not allow verbal warnings.

53. LE025.5.A. Identify how an officer decides whether to issue a citation or a warning during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Individual officers must weigh the offense’s seriousness, the road, weather, traffic conditions and the driver’s driving record. It is advisable to document each stop with appropriate, recorded enforcement action, whether it is a citation, a warning, or an arrest.

An officer should write a citation when there is a clear violation which is not satisfactorily excused or justified by the situation, when agency policy supports the writing of the citation, and if the violation affected others (i.e., making drivers swerve or brake suddenly).

54. LE091.8.A. Determine the nature of the offense during an unknown risk traffic stop.

An officer should write a citation when there is a clear violation which is not satisfactorily excused or justified by the situation, when agency policy supports the writing of the citation, and if the violation affected others (i.e., making drivers swerve or brake suddenly).

Florida law states that all felonies are arrestable offenses. If an officer has probable cause for a felony arrest, he or she must make the arrest. Agency policy dictates proper paperwork that should accompany the arrest.

55. LE026.14.A.1. Identify appropriate report forms used during an unknown risk traffic stop.

The Florida Uniform Traffic Citation is designed in four carbon paper parts that are color coded for ease of use and distribution. Each part serves different purposes.
1. White copies are submitted to the local clerk of the county court
2. Blue copy to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
3. Yellow copy for the violator
4. Pink copy for officer’s agency and the issuing officer may add notes to the pink copy to document details of the stop.

56. LE026.14.A.2. Identify a Uniform Traffic Citation (UTC).

The Uniform Traffic Citation is also used for certain non-traffic felony and misdemeanors which can result in suspension or revocation of the offender’s driver license. Pursuant to §316.650(10), F.S., a citation must be issued upon the conviction of any offense that requires mandatory revocation of the driver license.

Officers are assigned Uniform Traffic Citation books with local jurisdiction court information on the front. Each Uniform Traffic Citation has a preprinted number, and officers must account for each Uniform Traffic Citation assigned to them. If a Uniform Traffic Citation is destroyed or lost before being issued to a violator, the officer to whom that Uniform Traffic Citation was issued must document the circumstances of the destruction or loss. Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles tracks all Uniform Traffic Citation numbers to ensure integrity in citation issuance. It is illegal to “tear up” a citation after it has been issued. F.S. §316.650(8) states “it is unlawful and an act of official misconduct for any traffic enforcement officer or other officer or public employee to dispose of a traffic citation or copies thereof or of the record of the issuance of the same in a manner other than as required.”

In addition to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle’s responsibility to keep accurate records regarding Uniform Traffic Citations, each law enforcement agency must keep records of and account for all citations supplied to them. Each Uniform Traffic Citation book contains two receipts that are used for assigning the book to an officer. Agencies may develop their own procedures for assigning citation books to individual officers and may use these receipts to assist with internal control and record keeping.

Upon receipt of each book, the officer should inspect it to ensure that citations are in correct numeric sequence and that each book contains 25 four-part citations. Sequential numbers assigned to each book should also be inspected to ensure that the numbers on the book are the same as the numbers of the citations contained in the book and listed on the officer’s receipt.

Under no circumstances is it permissible for one law enforcement agency to transfer citations to another law enforcement agency. Each Uniform Traffic Citation is recorded in the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles inventory files as being distributed to a particular agency. When a Uniform Traffic Citation is issued to a violator, the third (blue) copy is sent to Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles where it is compared to the master inventory record. When an officer leaves employment with an agency, his or her Uniform Traffic Citation book(s) shall be turned over to his/her immediate supervisor. Periodically, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles conducts audits of Uniform Traffic Citation books for accountability purposes pursuant to F.S. §316.650(3)(4)(8).

57. LE091.6. Identify the need to explain the nature of the offense during an unknown risk traffic stop.

The violator must understand the citation and the violation. The issuing officer must understand Florida traffic violations sufficiently to explain the nature of the offense to someone unfamiliar with the law.

58. LE091.10.A. Identify the need to give options for handling the citation during an unknown risk traffic stop.
The officer should explain the violator’s five options for responding to the citation, which are listed and explained in detail on the back of the violator’s (yellow) copy. These options are to pay a civil penalty, elect (request) a hearing in traffic court, or elect to attend and complete a Driver Improvement Course.

59. LE092.6. Identify the need to explain the violator’s responsibility to adhere to traffic laws and local ordinances during an unknown risk traffic stop.

The violator may elect to enter a plea of nolo contendere (no contest), present a valid driver license, tag, registration, or proper proof of insurance to the Clerk of Court, and pay court costs if charged with any of the following:

- Driver license expired for 4 months or less
- Tag or registration expired for 6 months or less
- Failure to display a valid driver license
- Failure to possess a valid registration
- Failure to maintain proof of insurance

If charged with operating a motor vehicle that is in an unsafe condition or not properly equipped, the violator may elect to provide certified proof of correction of the condition or equipment problem. Finally, the officer should encourage awareness of the violator’s responsibility to obey traffic laws and local ordinances. By explaining safety issues and the importance of preventing violations, the officer helps the driver understand the law. The driver’s documents should be returned with a copy of the warning or citation and any public information pamphlets the department may provide.

60. LE091.9.C.1. Identify the need to explain that the violator needs to sign the citation during an unknown risk traffic stop.

On the citation, the officer should point to the section where he or she checked the violation and wrote specifics. The officer should instruct the violator to sign the Uniform Traffic Citation and explain that signing is not an admission of guilt.

61. LE091.9.E. Identify the violation for refusal to sign the citation during an unknown risk traffic stop.

According to F.S. §318.14(3), refusal to sign a Uniform Traffic Citation is a criminal violation that may result in arrest. When confronted with a violator who refuses to sign the Uniform Traffic Citation, the officer has an opportunity to use good communication skills to gain compliance from the violator. The officer should tell the violator that refusal to accept and sign the citation might result in arrest. The officer can stress that signing the Uniform Traffic Citation is not an admission of guilt or waiver of rights. If the violator still refuses to sign, the officer should place him or her under arrest and issue another Uniform Traffic Citation for refusal to sign a citation.

62. LE091.10. Identify how to close the interview with the violator during an unknown risk traffic stop.

Throughout the traffic stop, the officer should maintain a professional and courteous manner with the driver and passengers. Completing contact with a violator is easiest if the officer clearly explains options for handling the citation. The officer should not argue the merits of the citation with the violator or tell the driver to “Have a nice day,” since this could be interpreted as offensive or derogative.

If the driver expresses a desire to make a complaint against the officer, the officer should politely explain the process for doing so and notify his or her supervisor before the officer’s shift ends. A driver who is upset should be allowed time to calm down before resuming driving. Professional courtesy by the officer will help reduce the tension. When the driver is ready to leave, the officer should make sure the driver is able to safely reenter the traffic stream. The officer should then return to his or her vehicle and clear the stop with the communications center.
63. LE025.5.B. Identify whether or not to make an arrest during an unknown risk traffic stop.

During the course of a traffic stop, an officer might be able to develop probable cause if required to justify an arrest of the driver or a passenger. Whether to make a physical arrest or take some other action will depend on the nature of the offense, the severity of the circumstances, and agency policies and procedures. The officer’s actions may include the following:

- issuing a criminal Uniform Traffic Citation with mandatory court appearance date
- issuing a Notice to Appear (used for non-traffic offenses)
- arresting for a county or municipal ordinance violation
- arresting for misdemeanor offense (With some exceptions, misdemeanors must be committed in the officer’s presence to justify physical arrest.)
- arresting for felony offense (Physical arrest is mandatory for all felonies.)

Once an arrest decision has been made, the officer should call for backup. When the backup officer arrives, the proper method to approach and affect the arrest can be decided. Based on arrest procedures, the officer should handcuff the suspect and place him or her in the patrol vehicle.

64. LE027.1. Explain how to identify a suspect vehicle using a BOLO during a high risk traffic stop.

To identify the suspect vehicle, the officer must be able to recall its description from a BOLO. This description requires matching identification points, including the observed vehicle’s make, model, year, color, and tag number as well as any damage or special markings (unusual features like neon lights, writing on the windows, or bumper stickers) to help confirm the identification. Identifying information also includes driver description, number of occupants in the vehicle, and the vehicle’s direction and speed.

65. LE027.1.A. Identify matching identification points of the observed vehicle with the suspect vehicle description during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer should look, point by point, at each part of the BOLO to compare his or her observations to the BOLO information. If they match, the officer should then notify dispatch that the vehicle or suspect has been located and request backup.

66. LE278.3.A. Identify additional information to give the dispatcher during a high risk traffic stop.

As an officer begins the high risk traffic stop process, he or she will give dispatch his or her location, the vehicle’s location and travel direction, the vehicle’s description (make, model, color, and special identifiers, such as vehicle damage or bumper stickers), the number and description of occupants, the tag number and state, and suspected crimes and weapons.

67. LE027.5. Identify how to maintain surveillance until backup arrives during a high risk traffic stop.

If the information the officer gives dispatch is confirmed, there is probable cause to initiate the stop. The officer should follow the suspect vehicle until backup arrives and a safe stopping location is identified. Until backup arrives, the officer should maintain visual surveillance with the suspect vehicle.

68. LE027.5.A. Identify how to follow the suspect vehicle at a safe distance without activating the emergency equipment during a high risk traffic stop.

As in an unknown risk traffic stop, the officer should maintain a safe distance from the suspect vehicle. This distance varies based on the speed of travel. While doing this the officer should operate the patrol vehicle without activating the emergency equipment.
69. LE278.5. Identify how to request back up or assistance from other agencies during a high risk traffic stop.

If backup is unavailable from the agency, the officer should request assistance from other agencies. A high risk stop should only be conducted alone if the suspect’s actions force it (for instance, if the suspect stops against the officer’s wish).

70. LE027.6. Identify how to maintain radio contact with responding units during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer must not only request and wait for backup before acting but also maintain radio contact with dispatch and with responding units.

71. LE027.6.A. Identify what information to give to responding backup units during a high risk traffic stop.

As circumstances change, backup and dispatch must be updated on the suspect vehicle’s movement and route, suspect activity, and weapon or contraband information. This is an important role of the primary officer in a traffic stop.

72. LE027.4. Identify how to continually update the communications center of the travel route of the vehicle during a high risk traffic stop.

Throughout the surveillance of the suspect vehicle, the officer should maintain communication with dispatch so the officer’s backup knows the primary officer’s location.

73. LE027.6.B. Identify what information to request from responding backup units during a high risk traffic stop.

Without regular updates to dispatch, backup might arrive at a location that was vacated. This not only leaves the officer without backup but also leaves the areas they were patrolling without law enforcement presence. Periodically, the primary officer should request the location and estimated time of arrival (ETA) of the backup units to keep from waiting in vain. An accurate ETA allows for planning the best stopping location.

74. LE027.7. Identify the need to locate a safe stopping site during a high risk traffic stop.

The key to safely conducting a high risk traffic stop is an officer’s knowledge of his or her work zone. A safe location protects an officer and the public. It is impossible to predict an exact stopping location, but officers should use common sense. Every effort should be made not to conduct a high risk stop on active school grounds, at a ball field, or at a busy shopping center. When backup is near, the primary officer should locate a safe stopping place.

75. LE027.7.B. List the characteristics of a safe stopping site during a high risk traffic stop.

Safety is crucial for the primary officer, the backup officers, and nearby citizens. A safe stopping site is visible to officers and oncoming traffic, away from heavy pedestrian traffic, away from heavy vehicle traffic, and large enough to accommodate backup units, or is a straight road (versus a curved road), a rural area (versus a business area), and has light traffic.

76. LE027.7.E. Identify a stopping site that has a line of unobstructed sight during a high risk traffic stop.

A visible stopping site has an unobstructed view between the suspect vehicle, the patrol units, and oncoming traffic.
77. LE027.7.D. Identify a stopping site that has adequate roadway width to accommodate two patrol vehicles during a high risk traffic stop.

If the primary officer must make the stop in an area with heavy traffic or two-way traffic, he or she may position an additional patrol vehicle well in front of the traffic stop to block oncoming traffic. For safety, this vehicle should approach from the opposite direction. The primary officer should also choose a site with enough roadway width to accommodate two or more patrol vehicles. If possible, an attempt should be made to stop all vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

78. LE027.7.A. Identify how to coordinate the stopping site with backup units regarding their arrival time during a high risk traffic stop.

The primary officer will coordinate a stopping site based on the backup units’ ETA.

79. LE027.9.B. Identify that the primary officer should direct other units into position as they arrive at the scene during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer should pick a location that gives all units a chance to reach the officer before the stop is initiated. The primary officer will direct the responding units to positions of backup or control and know what is expected of each position so he or she can communicate that to the responding units and provide directions for the group to work safely and effectively as a team.

80. LE027.9.B.1. Identify how to use the public address system microphone during a high risk traffic stop.

The primary officer should also set up the PA system and radio so they can be used after the stop is made. PA systems vary by model and installation, so an officer should be familiar with his or her vehicle’s equipment.

81. LE278.2. List the safety emergency equipment which can be used during a high risk traffic stop.

After selecting the stopping location and communicating with dispatch and backup, the primary officer should activate emergency red/blue lights and the siren to initiate the stop.

82. LE027.8. Identify the need to signal the suspect vehicle to pull over to the curb during a high risk traffic stop.

The suspect vehicle should be signaled to pull over to the curb.

83. LE027.8.D.1. Ensure that emergency lights remain activated during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer should keep the emergency lights activated throughout the entire stop.

84. LE027.8.F. Identify the advantage to the officer to use blinding light, day or night, during a high risk traffic stop.

They may help protect the officer from potential attack by the suspect. Using blinding light for safety is effective day or night. An officer should use the patrol vehicle’s takedown lights, high beams, and spotlight during a night stop to illuminate a suspect vehicle’s interior.

85. LE027.8.C. Identify the proper distance between the primary patrol vehicle and the suspect’s vehicle for the stop during a high risk traffic stop.

In accordance with agency policies and procedures, once the violator’s vehicle stops, the primary officer should place the patrol vehicle so the suspect’s door can be seen in case it is necessary for the officer to
facilitate a quick getaway. The officer should park at a safe stopping distance behind the violator’s
vehicle. When conducting a high risk traffic stop, the distance behind the violator’s vehicle should be
increased to provide the officer with more protection. The situation and agency policy will dictate this safe
distance.

86. LE027.8.D. Identify the proper position for the primary patrol vehicle and suspect vehicle
during a high risk traffic stop.

The primary patrol vehicle should be offset to the left or right of the violator’s vehicle. Agency policy and
the situation (terrain, type of intersection, whether it is a highway or street, officer safety) help the officer
determine which offset to use. The patrol vehicle should be centered on the suspect vehicle’s taillight (left
or right) and slightly angled to provide protection. For example, if offset to the left, the patrol vehicle
should be centered on the left taillight of the suspect’s vehicle and if to the right, the patrol vehicle
should be centered on the right taillight.

87. LE027.8.E. Identify the proper positioning of the backup patrol vehicle in relation to the
primary patrol vehicle and suspect vehicle during a high risk traffic stop.

Some heavily populated areas of the state use a variation of “the wedge.” In this position, the front of the
secondary vehicle is angled closer to the primary vehicle than the rear, creating a “V” shape with the two
patrol vehicles. This formation is used when the stop involves two or more backup officers. The primary
officer’s employing agency might use other variations.

A third vehicle (or fourth) should be positioned to the left, right, or rear of the primary vehicle at a slight
angle. During a night stop, the control vehicle’s takedown lights, high beams, and spotlight should be
focused on the suspect vehicle. If other vehicles are available, these officers should assist with securing
the occupants, traffic control, interviews, and crowd control.

All arriving officers should refrain from leaving their area of cover and approaching the suspect vehicle.
The officers should resist the inclination to leave cover and rush up to the vehicle.

88. LE027.9.A. Identify how to take cover using the patrol vehicles during a high risk traffic stop.

After the suspect vehicle is stopped and all officers’ vehicles are properly positioned, the officers must
use available cover to increase their safety. The patrol vehicle is the most effective and readily available
cover.

89. LE027.9.A.1. Identify how to take cover from within the vehicle during a high risk traffic stop,
and 90. LE027.9.A.2. Identify how to take cover from behind the vehicle during a high risk traffic
stop.

The officers can remain seated in the vehicle, exit the vehicle, or crouch behind the vehicles’ door
according to agency policy and procedures. The officers’ position is also dictated by the situation at hand.
Events are fluid, so flexibility is required.

91. LE278.1. Determine whether or not the pursuit is legal, feasible, necessary, and meets
departmental criteria during a high risk traffic stop.

Once the officers have established proper position, they should draw their firearms and point them at the
suspect vehicle with their fingers outside the trigger guard. No officer should ever be in a crossfire
situation. If the driver pulls away after the stop is initiated, officers should make a second attempt to pull
the vehicle over. If the suspect does not stop, an officer must decide whether or not the situation is legal,
feasible, and necessary and meets the agency’s criteria for pursuit. If the officer’s supervisor advises
against pursuing or advises the officer to terminate the pursuit at any time, the officer must comply.
92. LE027.9. Identify that the primary officer should assume command of the situation during a high risk traffic stop.

The primary officer assumes command of the high risk traffic stop.

93. LE279.2. Identify that the primary officer will control the suspect and occupants of the vehicle.

The primary officer will use verbal control over all the vehicle’s occupants to direct their movements and direct the arriving backup officers.

94. LE279.2.A.3. Identify the importance of maintaining verbal control of all occupants throughout the stop during a high risk traffic stop.

Verbal control provides order and keeps the suspects from gaining an advantage.

95. LE027.10. Identify self and agency to suspect during a high risk traffic stop.

Using the PA system, an officer should identify him- or herself as a law enforcement officer, stating name and agency name to the vehicle occupants.

96. LE027.11.A. Identify the need to maintain verbal control of suspects using the public address system of the patrol vehicle during a high risk traffic stop.

When giving voice commands, all attempts should be made to only use the PA system and stay within the cover of the patrol vehicle.

97. LE027.11. Identify how to command the suspect(s) to keep their hands visible during a high risk traffic stop.

All occupants should be instructed to put their hands up so they are clearly visible. If the vehicle’s windows are heavily tinted and the officers cannot see the passengers, the occupants should be told to put their hands outside the window where the officer can see them.

98. LE027.12.F. Identify the need to direct the suspect to raise his or her hands and keep them in a visible position.

Specifically the driver should be then be commanded to “Roll down the window slowly with your left hand and then raise your hands again where I can see them”.

99. LE027.12.D. Identify the need to direct the suspect to open the driver’s door with his or her left hand, using the external door handle during a high risk traffic stop, and 100. LE027.12.C. Identify the need to direct the suspect to place ignition keys on top of the vehicle during a high risk traffic stop.

Next, the driver should be told, “Use your left hand and turn off your engine. Remove and place your keys outside on the roof of your vehicle, open your door from the outside with that same hand, and return your hand above your head”.

101. LE027.12.E. Identify the need to direct the suspect to exit the vehicle facing away from the law enforcement officers during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer will then direct the driver only to exit on the driver’s side, keeping hands visible and extended above the head while facing away from the officer.

102. LE027.12.G.1. Identify the need to direct the suspect to walk backward towards the sound of the officer’s voice during a high risk traffic stop.
Once outside of the vehicle, the driver should be told to step away from the vehicle, stand on the balls of his or her feet, extend arms above head, lift the back of the shirt by the collar, and slowly turn in a complete circle so the officer can see any weapons or obvious bulges from possible weapons. The driver should then be told to stop, facing away from the officer, and listen to commands. If a weapon is seen, the driver must be advised that any movement towards the weapon will be met with appropriate force. The weapon and person will be safely secured according to agency policy and procedures.

Next, the officer should command the driver to slowly step backward toward the sound of the officer’s voice. The driver should be told to stop when he or she reaches the rear of the suspect vehicle. If the vehicle is a van or SUV, the driver should be asked if the back doors are locked. If they are, the driver should be instructed to take the keys from the roof with the left hand.

103. LE027.12.G. Identify the need to direct the suspect to walk back to a predetermined point for safe securing during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer then commands the driver to sidestep to the center of his or her vehicle and open the back doors. The primary officer should command the driver to continue backing up until he or she reaches the front of the patrol vehicle(s) or whichever designated point agency policy dictates.

104. LE027.12.I. Identify that the primary officer should instruct the backup unit to secure the suspect during a high risk traffic stop.

Then a backup officer takes over directing the suspect. When the driver moves just past the front of the patrol vehicle(s), he or she should be stopped. The arrest team, located at the rear of the arrest vehicle, should begin commanding the driver’s movements to search and secure the driver.

105. LE027.12.H. Identify the need to direct the suspect to assume a position of disadvantage during a high risk traffic stop.

The backup officer should tell the driver to kneel/prone (position of disadvantage) when the driver reaches the front tires of the backup vehicle. The backup officer should then holster his or her weapon and approach and handcuff the driver.

106. LE027.12.I.2. Identify the need to retreat to cover with the suspect during a high risk traffic stop.

The officer will conduct a cursory pat-down for weapons, secure any weapons, and walk the driver back behind the cover of the backup vehicle to secure, completely search, and interview him- or her about occupants and weapons. To gather intelligence for officer safety, the interview should concentrate on the presence of any weapons and number of occupants in the vehicle.

107. LE279.2.A.2. Identify the importance of maintaining visual contact with all occupants while conversing with the suspect during a high risk traffic stop.

Where the driver and occupants are handcuffed may vary. Some agencies handcuff all suspects at the front tires of the backup vehicle, leaving the back of the primary vehicle as a “safe zone,” while others take all suspects to the back of the backup vehicle to search and secure. The secured driver should be placed into a patrol vehicle. Once secured, the backup officer should return to position with his or her weapon drawn until the remaining passengers are removed and the vehicle is checked. Officers not involved in the arrest team should stay focused and must continually observe the remaining vehicle occupants.

108. LE027.13. Identify the need to instruct all occupants to exit the vehicle one at a time during a high risk traffic stop.
No occupants should be removed from the vehicle until the driver is secured. All occupants will be removed from the vehicle one by one after each is secured. The officer should use the same procedures to remove and secure the occupants as the driver. The last occupant exiting the vehicle should leave the door open.

109. LE265.1. Identify the conveyance to be searched during a high risk traffic stop.

After the suspects and any occupants are out of the vehicle, the vehicle must be checked for hidden occupants. If there is no response to a bluff, the backup officers should approach the vehicle. While the primary officer continues giving commands to the vehicle, backup officers (if available) should move to the right and left side at the same time using a tactical approach and with their weapons pointed at the vehicle at all times. They should use caution not to bump into the vehicle and alert hidden occupants of their presence.

110. LE027.13.1. Identify how to search a vehicle during a high risk traffic stop.

Maintaining a tactical position, the officer should check the vehicle’s interior for occupants. A systematic visual search of the vehicle must be made. After the interior is clear, the officer should retrieve the keys from the roof in order to open the trunk.

111. LE280.5. Identify the need to request backup when searching the vehicle during a high risk traffic stop.

If necessary and available, backup officers should be present while conducting a vehicle search.

112. LE027.14. Identify the need to inform suspects that they are under arrest during a high risk traffic stop.

When the scene is secured and all is safe, the primary officer should notify dispatch to clear or open the channel and discontinue emergency radio traffic. After the investigation, the suspects are either informed of the charges, arrested, and transported to the agency or jail, or released if he or she is not the suspect.

113. LE027.17. Identify how to accurately complete the appropriate report(s) during a high risk traffic stop.

The appropriate form(s) will be dictated by agency policies and procedure. Reasons for proper documentation include the following:

• Property in the vehicle may be evidence of a crime or personal property that will later be returned to the suspect.
• An officer must maintain a proper chain of evidence as items are secured
• Correctly documenting property protects the officer from accusations of theft or improper actions.
• Identification of stolen property can help solve other cases.
• Correctly labeling evidence and placing items into the evidence system ensures the chain of evidence is preserved and the successful admission of evidence in trial.
• All property with a serial number must be checked in the FCIC/NCIC database. This ensures that stolen property is identified and seized for safekeeping and/or evidence.

Proper documentation of the incident—from information at roll call to locating a possible suspect, confirming a warrant, contacting and then arresting the suspect, and seizing evidence—helps lead to a conviction on all charges.