



Date: June 17th, 2019
To: All Sworn Personnel
From: Officer Jake Sansenbach
Subject: Plain Clothes / Off-duty Safety Points

When taking law enforcement action out of uniform, whether off-duty or in a plain clothes capacity, a number of factors increase the chances of mistakes among each other and other law enforcement organizations.

Listed below are some basic guidelines to follow when working in a plain clothes capacity, whether on or off-duty.

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- Responding officers likely will not be aware of your law enforcement status and may mistake you for a suspect.
- Be prepared to clearly identify yourself, follow the instructions of responding officers, and know that it may take some time for them to verify your law enforcement status.
- If taking enforcement action off-duty, have a plan to contact and notify local law enforcement as soon safe to do so if they have not yet arrived.
- If no life threatening situations present themselves, it is always better to be the best possible witness and refrain from getting involved altogether.
- Have a rehearsed and well discussed plan for family that may be with you.
- For on-duty actions, avoid bright clothing or noticeable and unique imagery unless needed for security reasons such as being visible to partners in a crowd.

ON-DUTY PLAIN CLOTHES CONSIDERATIONS:

- During surveillance consider how you, your clothing, and your vehicle may or may not fit into an area
- How is your equipment stored in your vehicle?
 - When the time comes for enforcement action, do you need to exit your vehicle and access the trunk to don your gear, or can it be done from within the vehicle? What are the pros and cons of both?
- What “POLICE” indicators do you have to identify yourself while donning or removing your gear?

- Local law enforcement, though notified, may not realize you are police as you remove firearms and armor from the vehicle
- Local citizens may call in armed suspects in the area unaware of the law enforcement activity
- Where are you preparing your gear? Be aware of lookouts, people making phone calls, etc.
- If leaving vehicles behind to use fewer vehicles, who is providing scene security for vehicles left behind?

OFF-DUTY SPECIFIC ACTIONS:

- Be aware of your surroundings and what kind of message you are sending by your body language
 - Is your wallet a black “flat badge police” wallet?
 - Are you adjusting clothing based on where you may have a firearm?
 - Do you park far away from entrances and crowds?
 - All of these are normal police behavior, but may stand out to those watching for it
- Avoid wearing law enforcement specific clothing
 - Thin blue line apparel
 - Stickers/embroidery (i.e. the current “Punisher” sticker fad)
 - LE moral patches
 - Law Enforcement branded clothing such as “Side Action Apparel” and others

GEAR AND PLACEMENT CHOICES

- Decide what gear you may or may not want to have within policy.
 - Carrying Tasers, batons, pepper spray, or a full size handgun may not be reasonable for plain clothes operations, and not practical for off-duty applications. Consider how this may limit enforcement actions
- Consider Police Badge placement when in plainclothes.
 - Studies show the closer an officer’s badge is to their gun, the less chance a blue-on-blue shooting will occur.
 - **Badges worn near the waistband often result in a greater likelihood of blue-on-blue shootings than those worn around the neck/chest area**
- Have secure locations to store firearms inside your home or vehicle per current California law

CONCLUSION

All possible actions cannot be covered in this bulletin. However, following these simple guidelines while trying being the best possible witness without getting involved, can allow you to avoid the vast majority of unnecessary enforcement action in a plain clothes capacity.