

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

First Responders Approach to Emergencies Involving O.C.T.A. Passenger Buses

Purpose

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to establish guidelines for officers involved in an emergency response to OCTA passenger buses. It will assist officers in determining a course of action when responding to a bus emergency and to reduce potential hazards to the public and officers.

Introduction

Buses are equipped with panic alarms, which can be activated by the driver of the bus. Officers on patrol may receive a panic alarm call or observe a crime in progress on a bus. In situations involving high-risk bus stops, use extreme caution to provide the maximum amount of protection for you, your partners, and the public. Particular care should be taken when involved in these types of incidents upon congested roadways. Bus pullovers are different from vehicle pullovers due to the size of the bus, the structure of the bus, and the possibility of numerous passengers on board.

I. Bus Information

1. The buses operating in Orange County are under the control of the Orange County Transportation Authority and patrolled by a three-person detail from the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Local law enforcement agencies are responsible for handling, investigating, and documenting all crimes on buses within their jurisdictions.
2. The Orange County Sheriff's Department bus team may respond to assist a local police agency with bus related logistics, however they are not staffed to handle individual incidents.
3. There are 15 different models of buses in service in the Orange County area.
4. All buses are equipped with silent alarms, GPS tracking devices, and audio monitors.
5. Audio monitors will automatically turn on once a panic alarm has been activated.
6. OCTA dispatchers will monitor and record the audio feed directly from the bus.

7. OCTA dispatchers will telephone the local law enforcement communications center and provide the exact location, direction of travel of the bus, and all information heard over the monitors.
8. The side windows on buses are made with reinforced Plexiglas and laminated for strength. The windows are designed to deflect fast moving projectiles and have been known to stop handgun ammunition.
9. Buses weigh between 37,000 lbs and 54,000 lbs and can reach speeds up to 65 MPH
10. Buses can travel approximately 300 to 400 miles on a full tank of fuel. Buses equipped with alternative fuels such as LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas)/CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) will not explode due to fire or weapon penetration.
11. LNG/CNG fuel tanks are located to the upper rear of the bus. LNG fuel is stored at temperatures between -230 to -260 degrees Fahrenheit and will immediately burn the skin upon contact.
12. The engine is located in the rear of the bus within the engine compartment.



13. Some engine compartments have a locking device, but can be opened/unlocked using a knife or other thin object.
14. The emergency engine shutoff switch is located within the rear engine compartment. It is a toggle type switch and needs to be moved to the "OFF" position to shut the engine off. The switch is marked and clearly visible upon opening the engine compartment.



15. The passenger entry doors on the bus are controlled by air and disabling the engine does not automatically open the doors. The door will still need to be opened manually using the door release handle.
16. The door release handle is located on the drivers control panel. The sliding window next to the driver's seat does not lock and can be slid open to gain access to the door release handle from outside the bus. Officers should only reach inside the bus when it is tactically safe to do so or in exigent circumstances.

II. Approach Procedures

Officers responding to panic alarm activations or crimes in progress on a bus should approach the situation as if it were a building that could move at anytime.

1. Use the same police vehicle positions as in any traffic stop for tactical advantages. A minimum of two officers should be utilized during the initial stop.
2. Use the police vehicle's PA system to instruct the driver to exit the bus and walk back to your position.
3. If the PA system is ineffective have our communications relay instructions to OCTA dispatch and request that the driver exit the bus and comply with directions given by officers at scene.
4. Obtain as much information as possible prior to boarding the bus.
5. For the safety of all passengers bus drivers are instructed to comply with the suspect's demands. If the bus driver does not exit the bus after officers have given instructions he/ she may have been threatened or taken hostage by the suspect.
6. If officers determine that a hostage situation exists, a supervisor shall be notified for a possible SWAT deployment.
7. If it is safe to do so, officers have the option to disable the bus by opening the rear engine compartment and switching the emergency shutoff switch to the "OFF" position. This will prevent the bus from leaving with hostages and creating a pursuit situation, which could further endanger the community.

8. A minimum of two officers should be used to approach the bus from the rear taking advantage of this blind spot. Use caution as the bus could be started and moved forward or backward until the “OFF” switch has disabled the engine.

III. Use of Firearms to Disable an OCTA Bus

1. A functional radiator is required on all buses to allow the engine to continue to operate. If the radiator is damaged and sufficient fluid is lost sensors will automatically shut the engine off. On OCTA buses the radiator is located in the lower rear corner of the bus on the driver’s side.



2. OCTA’s “ad hoc” ballistic testing has proven that shotgun and AR-15 rounds shot at the radiator compartment at a distance of 15 to 20 feet will cause sufficient damage to the radiator, thus resulting in a complete engine shutdown within approximately two minutes. Smaller caliber ammunition can be used to damage radiator, however complete engine shutdown times may vary.
3. In extreme situations where the suspect is using the bus as a deadly weapon endangering others or fleeing with hostages, and there are no other safe and viable alternatives available to disable the vehicle, firearms may be an option.
4. With supervisor approval and using extreme caution for the safety of passengers, officers have the option of shooting the radiator with the intent of draining the fluid to activate the sensors to automatically disable the engine while the bus is in motion.

See Department Orders No. 400 and No. 406 for deployment of weapons.

Summary

This Training Bulletin should be used as a guide when dealing with emergencies involving OCTA buses. Each emergency situation is individual and may require alternate means as necessary due to unpredicted suspect actions and the potential hazards to the public or officers.

Acknowledgment: This training bulletin was researched and prepared by Officer McCarthy.

Reviewed By: Ofcr. McCarthy

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