



GENERAL ORDER OPS-46 STOLEN VEHICLE RECOVERY SYSTEMS

EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 10, 2006

This General Order contains the following numbered sections:

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I. POLICY

The Howard County Department of Police (HCPD) will utilize a stolen vehicle recovery system, maintained by the Auto Theft Unit of the Special Investigations Section, in an effort to combat the theft of motor vehicles. Stolen Vehicle Tracking Computers (SVTCs) will be installed in HCPD vehicles assigned to Patrol in order to assist in the recovery of stolen vehicles and increase the likelihood of an apprehension.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Locator Message – A message sent to the Stolen Vehicle Tracking Computer, which alerts officers that a vehicle with a stolen vehicle transmitter is nearby.
- B. Locator Signal – A signal emitted by the Stolen Vehicle Transmitter that allows the responding officer to locate a stolen vehicle.
- C. Stolen Vehicle Track – A stolen vehicle is tracked using the locator signal for guidance.
- D. Stolen Vehicle Transmitter – A transmitter hidden in a recessed area of a vehicle.

III. TRAINING

Officers operating a vehicle equipped with a SVTC must receive training authorized by the Auto Theft Unit Supervisor, before using the SVTC for tracking. Officers will operate the SVTC in strict compliance with the training received. Officers who have not been trained in the use of a SVTC may operate a SVTC equipped vehicle with the computer “on”, and will alert their supervisor when a locator signal is received. The supervisor will then assign a trained operator to track the stolen vehicle.

IV. CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Stolen Vehicle Tracking Computers will be installed in vehicles and maintained by qualified service personnel as designated by the manufacturer of the SVTC. Trained officers assigned to operate vehicles equipped with SVTCs will ensure that the system is fully functional before utilizing a SVTC.

- A. Officers will not misuse a SVTC or tamper with the components of the system.
- B. All maintenance of SVTCs will be performed by authorized maintenance personnel only. Only authorized personnel are permitted to service, move, or remove any component of the system. Periodic preventative maintenance of the systems will be scheduled by the Supervisor of the Special Investigations Section, which includes the Auto Theft Unit, and performed by authorized personnel.

1. Operators who determine that a SVTC is not functioning properly will not use the unit for tracking and will submit a repair/service request. SVTC equipped vehicles will not be deadlined when only the SVTC is not functioning properly.
2. A request for repair/service will be accomplished by the officer submitting a written notification to the Supervisor of the Special Investigations Section. The officer will detail the problem, including:
 - a. Reporting officer's name and ID number
 - b. Stolen Vehicle Tracking Computer number
 - c. HCPD vehicle number
 - d. Vehicle Assignment (Northern, Southern, or CID)
 - e. The nature of the repair/service
 - f. Date and time the malfunction was detected.
3. The Supervisor of the Special Investigations Section, or his designee, will be responsible for contacting service personnel and arranging for the repair and/or service of the SVTC.
4. After repair and/or service, the members assigned to the vehicle will be notified by the Special Investigations Section Supervisor, or his designee, that the SVTC is ready.

V. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

- A. When a signal is received from an activated SVTC, the operator will first assess the identifier and ensure that the identifier is not indicative of a training unit. Once the identifier is verified as emanating from a stolen vehicle, the operator will notify the Communications Division and request verifications of the five-character identifier through the appropriate MILES query. The Communications Division will then provide the operator with a complete description of the stolen vehicle based on MILES/NCIC and stolen vehicle identifier returns.
- B. The operator will immediately notify the area patrol supervisor and nearby patrol units that a Stolen Vehicle Track (SVT) has been initiated for coordination of the track.
- C. Once the stolen vehicle is observed, all procedures governing vehicle pursuits and roadblocks will be followed.¹ If a pursuit is initiated and subsequently terminated, the vehicle may still be tracked at posted speed limits to facilitate recovery of the vehicle and apprehension of suspects.
- D. Operators conducting a SVT should advise the Communications Division of the vehicle's general location and direction of travel to facilitate coordination between districts and other jurisdictions.
- E. The Communications Division may offer an alternate channel for SVTs.
- F. Supervisors shall monitor SVTs and limit the number of tracking and assisting vehicles to those that are necessary.
- G. If a SVT leads into a neighboring jurisdiction, the Communications Division will contact that jurisdiction to advise them of the track and vehicle description.
 1. If the signal strength indicator indicates that the vehicle is nearby, the officer shall coordinate his efforts with the neighboring jurisdiction until relieved by a vehicle equipped with tracking equipment, or the vehicle is recovered.
 2. If the signal strength indicates the vehicle is not nearby, the neighboring jurisdiction will be provided with the vehicle description and the last known direction of the vehicle. The track will then be discontinued.

¹ CALEA 41.2.2 a

3. Continuation of vehicle tracks into neighboring jurisdictions will be at the discretion of the area supervisor.
- H. If a stolen vehicle signal is received and the operator determines that the vehicle is not in Howard County, the operator will request that the Communications Division notify the neighboring jurisdiction. Should an operator determine that a stolen vehicle signal indicates that a stolen vehicle is being operated on the Interstate system within Howard County, the Communications Division will notify the Maryland State Police of the vehicle description and last known direction of travel. Operators will continue the track on any vehicle operating on the Interstate system in Howard County until relieved by a Maryland State Police vehicle that is equipped with a SVTC.
- I. If another jurisdiction tracks a stolen vehicle into Howard County, the area supervisor should attempt to have a Departmental SVTC equipped vehicle assume the track. If no Departmental SVTC equipped vehicles are available and the other jurisdiction wishes to continue the track, the supervisor will assign officers to assist, if possible.
- J. Should any track of a stolen vehicle result in a pursuit, the guidelines set forth in General Order OPS-48, Vehicle Pursuit Policy, shall be followed.

VI. REPORTING PROCEDURES²

In addition to the reporting requirements outlined in General Order OPS-13, Auto Theft Investigation, officers will include the following information in any report of a stolen vehicle equipped with a Stolen Vehicle Transmitter.

- A. Note in the narrative of the incident report that the vehicle was equipped with a Stolen Vehicle Transmitter.
- B. Note in the Teletype (TTY) that is faxed to the Communications Division that the vehicle is equipped with a Stolen Vehicle Transmitter.

NOTE: IT IS CRITICAL THAT THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER FAX THE STOLEN VEHICLE INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE STOLEN VEHICLE TRANSMITTER WILL NOT BE ACTIVATED UNTIL THE VEHICLE IS ENTERED INTO MILES AS A STOLEN VEHICLE.

- C. Once a Stolen Vehicle Transmitter equipped vehicle is entered into MILES by the Communications Division, a dispatcher will broadcast a complete description of the vehicle and will include the fact that it is a Stolen Vehicle Transmitter equipped vehicle.
- D. If a vehicle is tracked and/or located through the use of a SVTC, a supplemental report will be completed by the investigating officer with a copy forwarded to the Auto Theft Unit.
- E. Once a stolen vehicle equipped with a Stolen Vehicle Transmitter is recovered, the Stolen Vehicle Transmitter will continue to emit a signal until the vehicle is removed from MILES as stolen or a locator message is sent.
- F. As soon as possible after the vehicle is recovered, the recovering officer will advise the Communications Division to send a locate message and also send the recovery teletype information to the Validations Unit. The Communications Division shall be sent a fax with the recovery Teletype information when the Validations Unit is closed. If the vehicle is being towed and is still emitting a signal, the officer should notify other on duty SVTC equipped units that the vehicle is being towed and has been recovered. In the above situation, the recovering officer should also request that the Communications Division notify the Maryland State Police Waterloo Barracks to avoid an erroneous track being initiated by the Maryland State Police.


² CALEA 82.2.2 c & 82.2.2 d

NOTE: OFFICERS WILL NOT RELEASE A RECOVERED STOLEN VEHICLE EQUIPPED WITH A STOLEN VEHICLE TRANSMITTER TO THE OWNER UNTIL THE VEHICLE HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE MILES SYSTEM AS STOLEN.

VII. CANCELLATION

This General Order cancels and replaces General Order OPS-46, Stolen Vehicle Recovery Systems, dated November 10, 1997.

AUTHORITY:



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