



NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL

CHAPTER: 1.2.3.1

TITLE: VEHICLE STOPS

EFFECTIVE: 07/28/2019

REVISED: 2/8/2026

PURPOSE

All stops, searches, and arrests are to be conducted in accordance with the rights secured or protected by the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States and the State of Louisiana. The purpose of this Chapter is to provide guidance for safely conducting vehicle stops.

DEFINITIONS

Authorized Emergency Vehicle—A properly equipped vehicle, owned and operated by or for a government agency, to protect and preserve life and property for a planned or unplanned response, in accordance with state laws regulating emergency vehicles.

Emergency Equipment—All equipment fitted to and/or carried by an authorized emergency vehicle, such as emergency flashing lights and sirens. It does not include the equipment a standard non-emergency vehicle is fitted with (such as headlights, steering wheels, and windshields).

Investigatory Stop or Stop—The temporary involuntary detention and/or questioning of a person and/or vehicle and its occupants to investigate potential criminal conduct, during which a reasonable person in the subject's position would not feel free to leave, as defined in Terry v. Ohio, 392 U.S. 1 (1968).. To conduct an investigatory stops, require an officer to have reasonable articulable suspicion the officer must have reasonable suspicion that the individual or vehicle occupant has engaged, is engaging, or is about to engage in criminal conduct.

Marked Police Vehicle—An Authorized Emergency Vehicle used primarily by uniformed police officers that is clearly painted or marked with decals indicating a police vehicle.

Uniformed or in uniform—An authorized NOPD uniform worn in accordance with NOPD policy.

Unmarked Police Vehicle—An Authorized Emergency Vehicle that is not conspicuously marked and may be of any color. It is equipped with emergency lighting and a siren.

Vehicle stop—The involuntary detention of a motor vehicle and its occupants based on reasonable suspicion or probable cause.

CONDUCTING VEHICLE STOPS

1. Vehicle stops may be conducted (1) where there is probable cause to believe that the driver has committed a traffic violation or (2) where there is reasonable suspicion that a vehicle occupant has engaged, is engaging, or is about to engage in criminal conduct.
2. Vehicle stops should be conducted with caution and consider available tactical options.
3. All Department vehicles used to conduct vehicle stops must be equipped with functional emergency equipment.
4. NOPD officers, either on-duty or off-duty, must have a functioning police radio when conducting a vehicle stop.
5. NOPD officers are not authorized to make vehicle stops outside of Orleans Parish, unless the violation would be considered a felony under state law. If a vehicle stop for a felony violation is made outside of Orleans Parish, the officer shall inform the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction as soon as possible.
6. Nothing in this Chapter shall prohibit a member from making a vehicle stop in conjunction with a vehicle pursuit which originated in Orleans Parish and crossed into an adjacent parish, as provided by **Chapter 41.5 - Vehicle Pursuits**.
7. During a vehicle stop based on a traffic violation, an officer may not detain a motorist for a period of time longer than reasonably necessary to complete the investigation of the violation and issuance of a citation for the violation, unless reasonable suspicion of another crime is developed.
8. Off-duty officers should refrain from conducting vehicle stops while operating a personal vehicle unless exigent circumstances require an officer to take action.
9. Officers in unmarked vehicles or in a vehicle without functioning emergency equipment shall not cite an individual for violation of La. R.S. 14:108.1 (flight from an officer, aggravated flight from an officer) if they refuse to stop their vehicle.
10. Non-uniformed officers conducting vehicle stops shall display their badge, credentials, or other property that clearly indicates they are police officers and identify themselves as such.
11. If an officer suspects an individual is driving under the influence, the officer should not allow the driver to move their vehicle once it has stopped.
12. When conducting a vehicle stop, officers shall advise Communication Services of his/her unit number, location, and the stopped vehicle tag number prior to approaching the subject vehicle. If the vehicle has a temporary paper tag, or no tag, the officer shall provide Communications Services with a description of the vehicle and its occupants.
13. Off-duty officers making a vehicle stop shall advise dispatch of their badge number if no permanent unit number is assigned.
14. When possible, officers will position police vehicles in such a manner to allow a “safety zone” between the officers' and the violator's vehicles.

15. The decision on whether to approach the stopped vehicle on foot or to order the driver or any passenger out of the vehicle shall be made by the officer conducting the stop. The officer should keep all tactical options available, including emergency disengagement techniques.
16. At the conclusion of the vehicle stop, the officer should remain on the scene until the stopped vehicle leaves. In situations where the vehicle becomes disabled and cannot be moved, the officer should assist the driver as provided by NOPD policy.