



Santa Rosa Police Department Sideshow Response

Public Safety Subcommittee Meeting
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Sideshow Definition

- A sideshow is an informal exhibition of automotive stunts often held in vacant lots, and public intersections.
- Common activities at sideshows include spinning doughnuts, which are exhibitions of speed in combination with loss of tire traction, as well as other reckless driving maneuvers.
- Often crowds of spectators are in close proximity of the reckless driving exhibitions.

Sideshow Definition cont.

- Violent incidents, including fights and shootings, often occur at the events.
- Suspects and spectators involved in these events frequently flee the scene, resulting in high-speed vehicle pursuits.
- Side show exhibitions have impeded law enforcement's ability to intervene in an active incident.

Tactical Challenges

- Sideshows present similar challenges to that of a riot.
- In addition to riotous behavior participants are in vehicles which can be used as weapons and makes them mobile.
- Sideshow participants attempt to take over locations with an overwhelming amount of people and vehicles in order to impede law enforcement from intervening.
- Participants are commonly armed with firearms and shoot them in the air.

Strategies

Enforcement:

- Traffic citations.
 - Officers cite participants that do not rise to the level of an arrest for vehicle code infractions.
- Increased patrols and enforcement campaigns.
- Overtime operations.
- Collaboration with allied agencies.
- Intel to detect upcoming events for resource planning.
- Training staff on enforcement codes and techniques.
- Using technology as a force-multiplier.

Strategies

Impounds:

- The vehicle code allows the impounding of vehicles without the need to identify the driver. Officers attempt to identify license plate numbers and follow-up in the days following sideshows to tow vehicles with a court order.
- Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD) has towed over 60 vehicles associated with illegal sideshows.

Strategies

Traffic Engineering and Botts Dots:

- Police worked with Traffic and Engineering to identify approximately 30 intersections impacted by sideshows to install Botts Dots devices.
- Botts Dots dissuade, but do not prevent sideshows.
- Relatively inexpensive compared to other controls such as roundabouts.

Strategies

Education and Engagement:

- Working with our Community Engagement Team.
- Education campaigns with our Public Information Officer to promote dangers of sideshows as well as successes in managing sideshow incidents.
- Working with local car clubs who denounce sideshow activities.
- Working with local businesses to install deterrents in parking lots.
- Beat lieutenants are being assigned projects when sideshows impact their areas.

Strategies

Statutes and Legislation:

- California Assembly Bill 3 is upcoming legislation which would suspend licenses of drivers participating in a sideshow (2025).
- SRPD is drafting a sideshow spectator ordinance scheduled to go before City Council on October 11, 2022

Sideshow Spectator Ordinance

- State law provides inadequate tools to address the problem, several cities have enacted “sideshow” ordinances.
- Creation of a “Reckless Driving Exhibition Ordinance” similar to San Jose’s city ordinance and adapted by Vallejo and Fairfield.
- Code 10-26.030 - Spectators Prohibited at Street Races and Reckless Driving Exhibitions.
- Unlawful for a person to be knowingly present as a spectator (i.e. within 200’) at a sideshow or preparations for a sideshow.
- Unlawful to encourage or promote a sideshow (this includes social media postings). Violation is punishable with a fine of up to \$1000 and/or six months in jail.

Strategies

Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chiefs Association:

- SRPD is taking the lead in Sonoma County to get all police agencies on the same page when addressing dangerous sideshow activity.
- SRPD has developed well organized techniques and tactics to resolve sideshow incidents with maximum safety and efficiency, and to create universal procedures that enable consistent responses to sideshows county-wide.
- The protocol has already been implemented verbally between agencies. All Sonoma County agencies are participating. The written agreement was presented on August 4, 2022.

Questions?