

NCLM “Slower Is Faster” Police Driver Safety Seminar

Critical Safe Driving Tactics & Stress Inoculation Training Drill

GoPro Motorplex, Mooresville, NC - April 23, 2015 from **6:45 – 9:00 p.m.**

Purposes

There are three main purposes of this drill: 1) practice critical tactics, 2) stress inoculation training, and 3) expose officers to an innovative and affordable driver safety training option to supplement your existing program. All “Slower is Faster” drills are intended to emphasize the importance of being conservative, cautious, and proactive when operating a patrol vehicle, regardless of the situation!

Practice critical tactics that are essential, yet difficult to learn, through repetition via lapping in the karts. Experience mistakes and learn to avoid future errors that contribute to frequent collisions, lawsuits, injuries, and deaths - civilian and law enforcement. Tactics include but are not limited to the following five skills:

- ✓ **Vision-up – “Scan & Plan”** – looking down the road to identify threats/potential threats as early as possible. Avoiding surprises is an officer’s best defense and early-warning system in the patrol car. Learn the differences, dangers, and advantages between “zoom” lens v. “wide angle” lens vision. Vision-up and scanning also combat some of the performance-robbing effects of stress/adrenaline. “Peeking” ahead through corners or other features is a critical habit in avoiding surprises and assists in properly judging braking distances.
- ✓ **Brake early** – applying the brakes early helps the vehicle enter any corner, curve, intersection, hill crest, or danger zone under control. This is a critical skill as entering the aforementioned features too fast is a leading cause of collisions, injuries, and fatalities in law enforcement.
- ✓ **Spacing** – maintain sufficient distance between other vehicles. Following another vehicle too closely during a response or pursuit is unnecessary, limits an officer’s vision and escape options, decreases reaction time, is dangerous, and increases the likelihood of a collision.
- ✓ **Smooth inputs** – with the hands and feet to the steering, brake, and throttle increase the driver’s control and consistency. This includes making inputs sufficiently early so as to not create various skid conditions, such as under steer. Abrupt and late driver inputs are common culprits in causing loss of control and crashes.
- ✓ **Breathe & relax** – combat breathing tactics (or other similar techniques) help manage stress, make proper judgments,

and retain key motor skills. Combat breathing also helps stave off tunnel vision, auditory exclusion, and impairment of forebrain functions. Breathing helps the body reduce tension and function more effectively when driving. For example, gripping the steering wheel tightly (“death grip”) makes it harder to feel and control the vehicle.

Stress inoculation training improves officer resilience, awareness, and ability to manage naturally occurring stress (physiologically and psychologically) during vehicle operations. Exposing officers to stress with the opportunity to practice critical tactics increases the likelihood of operating their patrol vehicle in a safe and disciplined manner during an emergency response. It further allows them to learn from mistakes in a relatively safe environment. The goal is to help officers arrive on the scene relatively composed and capable of responding appropriately. This same concept is used in some forms of firearms training (e.g., Simunition).

Alternative driver safety training approach: limited access to facilities is a major barrier to police driver safety training. This is especially true for small to medium sized communities that simply cannot afford to construct a driver training facility. These facilities are often full or reserved for the agency that owns the site. Access to tracks can be prohibitive due to expensive, distance, and configurations not favorable to law enforcement training use. Even parking lots that are large enough to use, with minimal obstructions like light poles and islands, are difficult to find.

Why karts? There are currently five rental karting tracks (3 indoor and 2 outdoor) in the North Carolina area, thus providing the potential to augment training for agencies that may be close to one of these facilities. Karts are modern versions of the old go-kart. They are low horsepower (6.5 to 13 hp) depending on tracks. They have a short wheelbase and are sensitive to inputs and thus quick to show drivers when they make mistakes (e.g., skid or spin due to braking too late, not looking ahead, etc.). Drivers can get a lot of repetitions in a short period of time to learn and practice critical tactics. The use of helmet, neck collars, and seat belts provide added protection for drivers, yet there is still enough danger or risk of injury that karting facilities require drivers to sign waivers.

Methodology

The drills will be conducted at the GoPro Motorplex karting facility in Mooresville. Speeds on track will likely range from 15 – 55 MPH. Officers will run laps in karts over three 12-minute sessions that emphasize repetitions to practice the five (5) critical tactics while experiencing moderate levels of stress.

Stress will be derived from the pressure of 1) driving a vehicle that is new and unique to the officer (the kart) on an unfamiliar course, 2) wearing protective gear such as a helmet and neck protector, 3) driving and navigating the course in traffic in close proximity to other karts, 4) working to avoid noticeable mistakes, such as losing control and spinning, and 5) inherent pressure for informal competition. In addition, officers will be instructed to monitor their performance in each of the five critical areas. Increasing self-awareness in training improves the likelihood officers will monitor, coach themselves and other officers, and employ these key skills during actual vehicle operations on the job.

Course Schedule/Outline

1. **Arrival: No later than 6:45 please!** Arrive, register, find a helmet & neck collar if you did not bring your own.
2. **Safety briefing and course review:** Using a course map to discuss the proper driving lines, brake zones, and issues/challenges officers are likely to encounter during the various drills. Example, demonstrate when, where, and how officers should “peek” ahead through corners to assist with a safe entry and exit.
3. **Drill #1** – 12 minutes of lapping to orient to the track. Karts spaced out to provide plenty of room on track. Debriefing/coaching session - discuss officers’ observations, talk driving and stress management, and identify key points to focus on in the next drills. Change karts since each kart handles differently, this is another stressor and exposes officers to the importance of caution/adaptation when driving different vehicles.
4. **Drill #2** – 12 minutes of lapping. Staff will hold up signs on course reminding officers to practice critical traits (vision-up, brake early, breathe, relax, smooth, & spacing). Karts are still spaced out to allow focus on the critical traits. Debriefing, coaching, and focus points for the final drill.
5. **Drill #3** – 12 minute race. Cars grouped together to maximize distractions, increase stress, and test application of critical tactics.
6. **Final debriefing**, summary of key lessons, and their application in the police driving world. Include warning and caution about not taking race habits to real world.

7. **Month later debrief:** We will send an email to all officers about a month after the seminar to get your input on how lessons learned from the karting drills and the entire “Slower is Faster” seminar have impacted your thoughts, decision-making, awareness, and stress management during patrol driving, especially during emergency responses.

This is NOT a Racing School!!!

Just as with the in-car drills with the patrol vehicles, the seminar implores officers always use the “Slower is Faster” approach. Overconfidence is dangerous and proven to increase collision rates when officers feel they can push the limits of vehicle and driver. The result is less margin for error and less ability to avoid the unexpected. *Hence, this is the reason “Remember: Complacency Kills” and “WIN – What’s Important Now?” are two of the five Below 100 tenants.* The goal is to develop officers as great decision-makers, not great drivers. The unpredictable, distraction filled, multi-tasking and stress-laden world of police driving makes it unrealistic and too expensive to transform most officers into great drivers for extreme situations in which they are placed.

Other Information

- **Location:** Go Pro Motorplex, 130 Motorplex Drive, Mooresville, NC 28115. 704-696-2926.
- **<http://www.gopromotorplex.com/>**
- **Feel free to bring your own helmet (full face), neck collar, and/or gloves if you’d like.** They provide loaner helmets and neck collars. Gloves aren’t necessary but can help if they have a tacky surface.
- **Clothing:** closed toe shoes. Long pants and sleeves are optional, yet provide more protection from debris on track.
- **Video of track:** In case you’d like to get a sneak peak or get more familiar with the 11-turn track, here’s a random video link from YouTube search on GoPro Motorplex Rental karts **<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPTRELSYJuQ>**
- **Size & weight limitations:** some tracks have a 300 pound limit for karts, but GoPro does not have a limit, it’s simply based on whether you can fit in the kart. For instance, Charles Barkley recently ran the karts out there and managed OK.
- **GoPro cameras:** karts and loaner helmets have attachments for a GoPro. They also rent cameras and sell SD cards to record your sessions.