18-10 - Patrol Operations in Unmarked Vehicles

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

NEWSLETTER

Field Operations Support Services

PATROL OPERATIONS IN UNMARKED VEHICLES

Are you recognizable as a law enforcement officer while taking police action?

The Executive Force Review Committee (EFRC) has heard several cases involving deputies driving unmarked ("slick") police vehicles and taking law enforcement action which ultimately involved the individuals (suspects) fleeing on foot or shooting at deputy personnel. These police vehicles are generally not black and white in color, nor do they have the standard light bar or police markings that most recognizable police vehicles have.

Suspects often claim they did not realize they were being approached by law enforcement personnel because they did not recognize the vehicle as a police vehicle, nor did they recognize the deputies as law enforcement officers, generally due to low visibility (no street lights, headlights on, etc.). Believing they are being pursued by rival gang members, the suspects flee or shoot at deputy personnel. Whether these claims by the suspects are reality or not, the Department has been sued, and settled, based on this excuse.

The commanders of the EFRC panel would like to remind deputy personnel that when taking law enforcement action in unmarked police vehicles, they may not be readily identifiable by the suspects they are attempting to stop. When possible, and appropriate, consideration should be given to verbally identify yourself as law enforcement prior to making contact in these types of situations to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding. As always, safety is the utmost priority.

Questions regarding the content of this newsletter may be directed to Field Operations Support Services, at [REDACTED TEXT]