

CAR MEETS AND STREET TAKEOVERS: PRE-PLANNING AND TRAINING ARE ESSENTIAL

Car meet events have become an increasing concern for law enforcement agencies. Such events can be spontaneous flash car meets, street takeovers, or even sanctioned events by property owners that can overwhelm communities and burden public safety resources. These events can also be deadly or present a significant risk of harm to participants, spectators, innocent bystanders, police officers, and other first responders.¹ Street Takeovers may also result in the use of force by law enforcement, such as the 2023 incident in Philadelphia when a fleeing vehicle struck two police officers, resulting in the use of deadly force.²

Preventing car meets and street takeovers is likely not entirely possible. However, Chiefs of Police should strive to mitigate the risks associated with these events through intelligence gathering, training their officers, developing pre-planning guides for high-risk or known locations, and educating the community and local business owners about their risks. Absent a comprehensive plan involving many stakeholders, an initial police response solely based on dispersing unsanctioned groups may exacerbate the problem by emboldening participants and overwhelming other jurisdictions, especially when participants quickly relocate utilizing various communication platforms.

Some Considerations for the Chief of Police in developing a comprehensive agency plan concerning car meets and street takeovers:

1. Develop a pre-plan for any identified location that might be at risk of having a car meet event.
2. Discuss, as appropriate, incident action plans for identified high-risk locations with fire, OEM, EMS, and other law enforcement agencies that might be part of a mutual aid response. Review the agency's mutual aid plan and policy to determine if any changes are necessary.
3. Review local ordinances and discuss the possibility of any necessary modifications or additions with the Municipal Attorney. Legislators in states such as Connecticut and California have enacted legislation to curb street takeovers.³⁻⁴
4. Establish an effective intelligence and data-gathering process:
 - Determine the feasibility of monitoring intelligence sources for such events. Although they can be spontaneous, there may be some indication of the planning of such events. In addition to social media platforms as a valuable source of information, agencies should reinforce in the training program the value of contact with business and property owners, car enthusiasts, and the general public as a vital source of information concerning car meets and street takeovers.
 - Establish and maintain contact with neighboring or county-wide police agencies and fusion centers to share and learn about possible car-related events.
 - Identify locations that might be more likely to have a car meet or street takeover. Large open parking lots, especially abandoned businesses, shopping centers, or highways that have been the site of this type of activity, can serve as key indicators.
 - Provide clear direction for personnel concerning the call for service coding so that data can be collected to help support future legislative initiatives and response planning.

- Data collection concerning incidents should include a method to track offenses and other incidents that occurred at the event, such as assaults, thefts, trespassing, traffic law violations, and motor vehicle crashes. Additional information that should be documented includes offender characteristics and demographics, spectator demographics, observed unique vehicle modifications, locations, and times.
5. Engage with the community as a united effort to raise awareness about the dangers of spontaneous car meets and street takeovers. Encourage reporting of suspicious activity and any information concerning these types of unsanctioned events. Partner with local schools, community organizations, and media outlets to educate the public on the consequences of street takeovers.
 6. Develop a strategic message campaign for citizen police academy sessions, neighborhood watch meetings, Junior Police Academies, and more.

B. Plan considerations for a planned car meet or street takeover event:

1. Establish communication with event organizers or representatives to facilitate cooperation and address any concerns or issues that may arise during the car meet. Encourage organizers to promote responsible behavior among attendees while also ensuring they understand the consequences of unlawful behavior.
2. Evaluate the feasibility of staging traffic-controlling devices such as traffic barricades, signage, and cones.
3. Contact the property owners of the car meet location. Discuss with property owners potential liability concerns and any applicable laws or ordinances that might govern car meet activity or associated disturbances.
4. Consider providing information to the community and media, as appropriate, to communicate possible road closures and prohibiting certain activities, including information from a property owner prohibiting vehicles from their premises. Include the consequences of car meets and street takeovers in the media and community awareness campaign, including possible penalties and risk of injury or death.
5. Collaborate with the New Jersey Commission of Motor Vehicles Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) to help enforce motor vehicle and equipment violations.
6. Provide an adequate police presence to deter illegal conduct.
7. Consider deploying appropriate equipment such as license plate readers, message boards, etc.
8. Discuss the feasibility of deploying officers as spotters and unmarked vehicles to identify and monitor involved vehicles.

C. Ensure the agency plan includes post-incident procedures:

1. Work closely with prosecutors to pursue appropriate charges against individuals who have violated the law. Provide thorough documentation and evidence to support prosecution efforts.
2. Conduct debriefing sessions following car meets and street takeover incidents to evaluate the effectiveness of response efforts and identify areas for improvement in control and enforcement strategies. Document lessons learned and share best practices with relevant personnel.
3. Conduct thorough follow-up investigations and document all investigative actions.

C. Develop a Training Program:

1. Ensure the agency training program includes a clear message from the Chief of Police about how the agency has prepared for such events and a clear direction concerning how such events are to be managed by agency personnel.

2. Ensure that all officers understand the desired level of agency-authorized enforcement of traffic and criminal offenses. Officer discretion is always available, but some events that resulted in citations, arrests, and vehicle forfeiture, when legally permitted, have resulted in some behavior change.⁵
3. Review the agency's current policy concerning the wearing of reflective safety vests.
4. Educate officers about motor vehicle equipment trends and laws, with particular attention to the ability to recognize unlawful motor vehicle alterations.
5. Discuss the effectiveness of road closures or traffic diversions in areas prone to street racing to prevent racing events from occurring and overwhelming other traffic routes.
6. Ensure all personnel understand how to communicate effectively, including when there is a sizeable mutual aid response from other county or state law enforcement agencies.
7. Discuss best practices for managing traffic flow and parking at meet locations to prevent congestion and ensure the safety of participants and pedestrians.
8. Maintain a visible presence to deter disorderly behavior and enforce crowd control measures as needed.
9. Discuss officer safety considerations, including wearing and utilizing specialized equipment and waiting for backup when appropriate.

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.

¹Lawsuit Filed After Teen Fatally Shot by Trooper During Street Racing Chaos on I-95. (2024, March 19). Retrieved from: [Anthony Allegrini shooting: Lawsuit filed after teen fatally shot by Pennsylvania trooper during street racing chaos on I-95 - 6abc Philadelphia](#)

²Owsinski, S. Street Takeovers and Law Enforcement Strategies. National Police Association. Retrieved from National Police Association.

³Whiting, B. (2024, April 17). *House Passes Bill to Combat Street Takeovers*. Retrieved from Inside Investigator: [House passes bill to combat street takeovers \(insideinvestigator.org\)](#)

⁴Kurzwill, T. (2024, February 21). *KTLA5*. Retrieved from Compton Approve Ordinance to Combat Street Takeovers: [Compton approves ordinance to combat street takeovers | KTLA](#)

⁵Geiger, J. C. (2022, November). Collaborative Enforcement Strategies to Address Street Racing. *Police Chief*, pp. 22-23.

Additional Resource Considerations:

[Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Problem-Specific Guides, Series No. 28, Street Racing](#)

[What To Do if Police Show Up at a Car Meet and You Don't Want a Ticket](#)

[First Car Meet: 23 Do's and Don't's](#)