

THE PATROL STANDARD

THEME: OBSERVE. SEQUENCE. SUPPORT.

DATE	ISSUE	READING TIME
September 4, 2026	Vol. 1, No. 7	5-7 Minutes

PURPOSE: Prepare officers for elevated Labor Day traffic and impaired-driving enforcement by reinforcing roadside protection, disciplined investigation, and Texas DWI reports that connect each conclusion to observable facts.

1. OFFICER SAFETY BULLETIN

The Shoulder Is a Work Zone, Not a Safe Zone

Holiday traffic increases speed differences, impaired drivers, distracted motorists, and secondary-crash risk. Emergency lights make a patrol unit visible, but they do not create a protected workspace. Before approaching a stopped vehicle or working a crash, assess traffic flow, lane position, lighting, escape routes, road geometry, and the possibility that another driver will enter the scene.

Use the patrol unit, available distance, and additional units deliberately. Avoid turning a single enforcement contact into several officers standing between vehicles or beside an exposed traffic lane. When conditions are unsafe, communicate the problem and move the work to a safer location when law, policy, and circumstances allow.

Today's Officer Safety Focus

- Angle and position the patrol unit to improve visibility and provide a measure of protection without blocking an escape path.
- Approach on the side that best reduces exposure to moving traffic and preserves observation of the occupants.
- Keep equipment, paperwork, and conversations out of active lanes. Do not allow convenience to determine where officers stand.
- Assign an arriving officer to watch traffic, occupants, or both; do not let every officer focus on the same task.
- Request fire, EMS, highway, or traffic-control resources early when the scene is larger than patrol units can safely protect.
- End the contact deliberately. Confirm officers, motorists, and disabled vehicles can re-enter or clear traffic safely.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARD: A roadside contact is not controlled until officers account for both the person being investigated and the traffic moving around them.

2. TACTICAL REMINDER

Protect the Investigation While It Develops

An impaired-driving investigation requires attention to the driver, the roadway, communications, standardized procedures, and evidence. Divide responsibilities when staffing permits. The contact officer should not have to choose between watching the driver and watching traffic while another officer stands nearby without an assigned role.

During an impaired-driving contact:

- State the reason for the stop and preserve the driving facts before the investigation shifts to intoxication.

- Control the driver's hands and movement before concentrating on documents, odors, containers, or divided-attention tasks.
- Select a reasonably safe, suitable test location and describe relevant surface, lighting, weather, footwear, and medical concerns.
- Use standardized instructions and observations consistent with training. Record performance details, not only a clue total or the word 'failed.'
- Preserve video, dispatch information, witness identity, refusal or consent, and the timing of each investigative step under policy.

REMEMBER: A strong DWI case begins before field sobriety testing. Driving behavior, contact observations, timing, safety decisions, and exact instructions all belong in the chronology.

3. NATIONAL & TEXAS LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATES

Official-Sources Briefing

Texas DPS - Operation CARE Begins Today

Official agency development: On September 2, 2026, in Austin, Texas DPS announced increased Labor Day enforcement, including Operation Crash Awareness Reduction Effort from September 4 through September 7. DPS said troopers will focus on speeding, impaired driving, Move Over or Slow Down violations, and other offenses. The agency reported more than 13,215 Move Over or Slow Down violations so far in 2026. During the prior Labor Day campaign, troopers made 211 DWI arrests and issued more than 63,000 citations and warnings.

Patrol application: Expect more disabled vehicles, enforcement contacts, and emergency activity near travel lanes. Choose positions deliberately, request traffic control early, and document the conduct supporting each enforcement action rather than relying on the holiday campaign label.

[Texas Department of Public Safety | Release: September 2, 2026](#)

NHTSA - National Impaired-Driving Campaign Continues

Official agency development: On August 18, 2026, in Washington, D.C., NHTSA launched the national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign. Increased patrols began August 19 and continue through Labor Day, with national messaging through September 7. NHTSA reported that alcohol-impaired drivers were involved in 30 percent of U.S. traffic fatalities in 2024, resulting in 11,904 deaths, and that fatal crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver occurred at three times the daytime rate at night.

Patrol application: High-visibility enforcement does not reduce the need for individualized facts. Explain the observed violation, the driver's condition, the sequence of testing, and the basis for arrest. Statistics describe the public-safety problem; they do not prove an individual case.

[National Highway Traffic Safety Administration | Release: August 18, 2026](#)

4. LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER

Take the Task That Lets Your Partner Think

Servant-motivated leadership is often quiet. On a roadside investigation, it may mean watching traffic, handling radio traffic, locating a safer test area, identifying a witness, or recording times so the primary officer can concentrate on the driver. These tasks are not secondary to the investigation; they make disciplined work possible.

Experienced officers also serve the shift by correcting shortcuts before they become habits. A professional question such as, 'What did you actually observe on the walk-and-turn?' helps a less-experienced officer replace a conclusion with facts while the event is still fresh.

Today's leadership challenge:

- Assign yourself a useful safety or evidence task instead of merely watching the contact officer work.

- Correct exposed roadside positioning immediately and explain the safer alternative.
- Help a partner preserve exact times and observations without supplying facts the partner did not perceive.
- Review the report for missing links between driving, intoxication evidence, and the arrest decision.

SERVANT-MOTIVATED LEADERSHIP: Service means reducing a partner's workload without taking ownership of the partner's observations. Protect the scene, preserve the evidence, and help the officer produce an honest account.

5. ROLL CALL DISCUSSION

The Driver Looks Impaired - What Proves the Case?

Hypothetical training scenario: At 0038 hours, an officer observes a pickup traveling 48 mph in a posted 35-mph zone. Over approximately six blocks, the pickup's right tires cross the fog line three times and the vehicle nearly strikes a curb while turning into a public parking lot. The officer stops the pickup in the lot.

The driver keeps both hands visible but produces an insurance card twice before locating his license. From the open window, the officer smells a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage and sees that the driver's eyes are red and watery. The driver says he drank 'two beers' and finished the last one about ten minutes earlier. On a level, dry surface, the officer gives standardized instructions and observes six HGN clues, five walk-and-turn clues, and three one-leg-stand clues. The driver refuses a breath test. The officer arrests him for DWI. A partner says the report can simply state that the driver 'failed SFSTs.'

Discuss

- Which facts establish the initial stop, and which facts developed only after contact?
- Which observations relate to operation, public place, and intoxication?
- What environmental or medical information should be documented before relying on test performance?
- Why is 'failed SFSTs' weaker than describing instructions, performance, and specific observations?
- What facts supported probable cause at the moment of arrest, before any later laboratory result?
- How can the assisting officer help without adopting observations the contact officer alone made?

6. LEGAL WRITING & COURTROOM READINESS

Build the Texas DWI Narrative in Three Proof Lanes

Texas Penal Code Section 49.04 requires proof that a person was intoxicated while operating a motor vehicle in a public place. Section 49.01 defines intoxication through either loss of normal mental or physical faculties because of alcohol, a drug, a dangerous drug, a combination, or another substance, or an alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more. A report should make each element visible instead of compressing the entire investigation into 'driver was intoxicated.'

Probable cause is evaluated from the facts known when the arrest was made. A later breath or blood result may become important evidence, but it cannot replace the driving, contact, testing, timing, and observations that supported the roadside decision.

[Texas Legislature | Penal Code Sections 49.01 and 49.04](#)

Write the Elements, Then the Inference

OPERATION AND PUBLIC PLACE	INTOXICATION AND TIMING
• Identify the operator and how that fact was established. • Describe the roadway or other public place. • State the traffic violation or other lawful basis for detention. • Record route, distance, speed, lane movement, collision facts, and any witness's basis of knowledge.	• Describe speech, eyes, odor, balance, divided attention, coordination, and behavior. • Record material admissions and exact words. • Identify test conditions, injuries, and medical concerns. • Describe instructions and performance, and tie observations to the time of operation and arrest.

Weak articulation:

"I stopped the truck for bad driving. The driver smelled like alcohol, failed SFSTs, refused, and was arrested for DWI."

Stronger articulation:

"At 0038 hours, I observed the pickup traveling 48 mph in a posted 35-mph zone, cross the fog line three times, and nearly strike a curb while entering a public parking lot. After the stop, the driver produced an insurance card twice before locating his license. From the open window, I smelled a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage and observed red, watery eyes. He said he drank two beers and finished the last one about ten minutes earlier. On a level, dry surface, I administered standardized field sobriety tests consistent with my training and observed six HGN clues, five walk-and-turn clues, and three one-leg-stand clues. Based on the driving, contact observations, admission, and test performance known to me at arrest, I believed the driver had lost normal mental or physical faculties because of alcohol while operating in a public place."

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Can the reader identify the operator, public place, lawful basis for the stop, signs of intoxication, timing, and facts supporting probable cause? Confirm that personal observations are separated from partner or witness information.

Courtroom Readiness

Testify in chronological order: driving, detention, contact, testing, arrest, and later evidence. Use training language without substituting memorized phrases for observation. If a detail is not independently remembered, say so; do not improve the facts from the witness stand.

7. THREE TAKEAWAYS**End-of-Brief Reinforcement**

1. Protect the roadside workspace. Control traffic exposure, officer roles, occupants, and the test location before concentrating on evidence.

2. Preserve the sequence. Separate the reason for the stop, the observations developed during contact, the testing, and the facts known at arrest.

3. Support every conclusion. Texas DWI articulation requires facts showing operation in a public place and intoxication, not a label or clue total alone.

Strong enforcement protects the public twice: first by stopping dangerous conduct, and again by leaving an accurate account that can withstand review.