

FHP SERVICE BULLETIN

01-05

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VEHICLE PRISONER TRANSPORT PARTITIONS

As you are aware, the Florida Highway Patrol conducted an extensive research project into the safety of our vehicles after the death of Trooper Robert Smith and the injury of Trooper Marisa Sanders. We are still implementing the recommendations generated from this research and our discussions with Ford Motor Company. The following are Ford's recommendations concerning vehicle prisoner transport partitions.

According to Ford Motor Company, the front seats in the Crown Victoria are designed to assist in absorbing the forces placed upon an occupant's body when the vehicle is struck from the rear. The seatback is designed to give and deform rearwards to absorb the forces otherwise transmitted to the torso, head and neck. If a vehicle prisoner transport partition is installed, it may limit the ability of the seatback to perform as intended by the manufacturer. This decrease in occupant protection increases the severity of the crash. Ford has recommended that vehicles regularly used on high-speed interstate highways not be equipped with vehicle prisoner transport partitions.

- The Florida Highway Patrol has in the past, currently and for the foreseeable future installed these partitions at the option of the trooper. The partitions we purchased were originally designed to provide additional side impact and rollover protection for the trooper in addition to protecting him or her from any persons being transported in a vehicle. As vehicle designs have changed we do not know if these partitions still provide a significant increase in side impact and rollover protection, but they do continue to prove their ability during prisoner transport functions.
- We feel it is important for you to have this information concerning your safety. We also feel it is important to let you make an informed decision concerning the installation of a vehicle prisoner transport partition based on your patrol area, frequency/type of prisoners transported and other factors of which only you are aware.

- We recommend that if you choose to have a prisoner partition in your vehicle that you use extra caution (these guidelines are good to follow for your safety even without a partition installed) when stopped on high-speed roadways.
1. You should park well off the roadway and should consider moving your traffic stops to safer areas if possible.
 2. If you are stopped for observation of speed violations or other prolonged surveillance, and your vehicle is exposed to high speed traffic, you should seek protection from the possibility of being struck, such as working from behind a guardrail or other substantial barrier.
 3. When working off-duty details, you should never use your vehicle as the first warning device presented to traffic. The contractor should furnish appropriate signage and a vehicle equipped with an energy absorbing crash attenuator, if necessary for your, their worker's and the public's safety.
 4. When stopped for disabled vehicles or while working a vehicle crash, you should avoid allowing anyone to sit in a vehicle directly exposed to traffic regardless of whose vehicle it is. For example, if several vehicles were parked in a line on the shoulder, this would be the last vehicle in the line or the first vehicle exposed to traffic. If the vehicles were scattered as is likely after a crash, it would be any vehicle that does not have another vehicle between it and adjacent traffic.
 5. If a prisoner is taken into custody and placed in the back of your vehicle (behind the partition) the vehicle containing the prisoner should not be directly exposed to traffic, as described above.
- While we have tried to make this list as comprehensive as possible we can not cover every possible circumstance in advance. You must use your own good judgement at all times. You need to be aware that if you are close to moving traffic you are in danger. The closer you are to traffic and the higher the speed that traffic is moving the greater the risk of being struck and the greater the risk of serious injury/death occurring if a collision occurs.