

► SUMMARY

While the friendly officer image of a bicycle patrol officer is great to have, no one should forget the law enforcement professional on a bicycle is first and foremost a law enforcement professional.



■ Bicycle officers must master many skills.

DEFENSIVE AND FORCE TACTICS FOR BICYCLE PATROL

**LEARN THE TRANSITIONS TO EMPTY HAND,
LESS-LETHAL AND DEADLY FORCE.**

► By Martin Day

Bicycle patrol officers should train for using force and be able to articulate the circumstances of force. An officer on a bicycle may be in a special circumstance that affects the level of force required. Trainers must develop plans that address bike officer contacts and appropriate use of force.

Officers should call out contact as early as possible and radio their location with as much detail as possible. Bike officers often end up behind buildings, or between obvious landmarks. The officer should broadcast the number of people and request backup if needed. It is usually best practice to dismount from the patrol bike when approaching a suspicious person. Face to face contact is safer if the officer has fewer distractions. Holding a handlebar or having a foot in a pedal can delay reaction time or cause a physical disadvantage in a sudden attack.

Bike officers should be well-versed in slow speed maneuvering. The logical result of slow-speed patrol is to watch suspects—hands, movements, and scanning for weapons or contraband. A simple exercise is to ride slowly in low-risk situations and watch people, watch their hands. Basic situational awareness becomes slightly harder when riding a bicycle; practice should hone the skills of the bicycle patrol officer.

Officers should disengage their right foot from pedal retention, swing the right foot onto the left side of the bicycle, place the right foot in front of the left foot (leg will be between bicycle and the left foot) and step off of the bike by placing the right foot on the ground in front of the left leg, then disengaging the left leg from the pedal. Once off of the bicycle, the officer uses a foot to engage the kickstand and can walk away from the bike.



■ Train for the emergency dismount.

While engaging the kickstand, it is best practice to hold the bike with the reactionary (non-weapon) hand. This is a lengthy and seemingly drawn-out way of stepping off of the bike, but it is a balanced method and lends itself to emergency dismounts and transitioning to using force. Limiting the method of stopping and dismounting builds a safer, more tactically sound practice that enhances reaction time.

Emergency Dismount

The Emergency Dismount begins in the same manner as the basic dismount, but the bicycle is discarded instead of keeping the bicycle upright with the kickstand. Once the right foot hits the ground, the left foot is disengaged and the officer continues moving forward on foot (either in a run, fast walk, or immediately stepping into a defensive posture or weapons stance). The patrol bicycle is left to fall, and the focus is on the 'threat.'

Master the skill of the emergency dismount before practicing at high speeds. Consider that a slow moving bicycle is generally as fast or faster than movement on foot. The purpose of practicing emergency tactics is to enhance officer safety—officers should

not ride or practice above their ability. Develop skill before speed.

The emergency dismount will likely cause some damage to the bicycle (handlebar grips and pedals hit first, light systems and gear bags may jolt loose), so the emergency dismount drills should be done on a grassy area or other forgiving surface.

Low Risk contact is practiced by having a police cyclist use a basic dismount and demonstrate proper interview stance, situational awareness, and a safe reactionary gap. Mastery of low-risk tactics lends itself to medium and high-risk tactics. Practice radio traffic, basic dismounts, command presence, and professional demeanor.

Medium or Unknown Risk contact is practiced in the same way as the low-risk contact. Instructors should cover the importance of requesting backup, keeping hands free, and the placement of the patrol bicycle relating to situational awareness.

Fleeing Suspect

The Fleeing Suspect Drill/Contact is practiced in various ways. One way is if the police cyclist is on patrol alone and the other is practiced in pairs or multiple officers. Suspects may run

as the officer approaches while riding, during the initial part of the dismount, or once the officer is fully dismounted. Scenarios should be practiced with the police cyclist as a single patrol unit or with officers in pairs/multiples.

If the suspect flees while the officer is still riding, the officer should radio the running subject and begin the chase. If there are two officers on bike, one officer should begin the chase and the other should slow down, broadcast the fleeing suspect, and then join the chase. The second officer stays in the foot chase (chasing on bike), but periodically slows to update radio traffic. The 'suspect' will flee and the officer gives chase, then uses an emergency dismount before running up and 'touching' the role player. The bicycle patrol skill is being practiced and tested at this point, not take-downs.

Multiple bike officer contact and cover tactics should use one officer as contact (voice/hand, contact/radio) while the second officer remains offset from the subject, on the bike with one foot on the ground and another foot in the 'power pedal' position. The cover officer should be in a position to quickly dismount the patrol bike or begin riding after the suspect if he/she flees on foot. When practicing cover officer tactics, the cover officer should practice scanning the subject or subjects, terrain, and surroundings for any possible threats.

With multiple bike officers, when a suspect runs, the on-bike/cover officer starts the chase and the off-bike officer will broadcast the initial direction of the chase and other information to other units and dispatch. Once the role player is caught, the cover officer will execute an emergency dismount, then run up and touch the role player. A full force take-down during the training is not



■ Transition from dismount to striking skills.

necessary, but a real offender will likely be shoved to the ground. The coordination and skills involved should be practiced at a speed that allows the officers to demonstrate proficiency before full-speed efforts are practiced.

Drills for fleeing suspects should be set up in a wide-open area, most likely not open to the public, and require a role player (fleeing suspect) and officers with patrol bikes. Red Guns, Blue Guns, or obviously inert weapons should be used and great caution should be taken to not have live weapons in the force-based scenario training.

Transition to Empty Hand Techniques

Practice drills of transitioning from a moving patrol bicycle to engaging a suspect with empty hand techniques are considered a moderate to high difficulty skill that requires more than the basic ability to ride and dismount a bicycle. A role player holding a strike pad or a quality punching bag or dummy is needed.

The bike patrol officer will ride to

a designated area, use an emergency dismount, and engage the role player with verbal commands as well as a series of weaponless strikes. The strikes can be open hand, closed hand, elbows, knees or kicks, or even simple shoves and restraint techniques. The only limit to the strikes should be based on the officer's skills and ability (as well as the instructor's ability to teach the particular strikes).

Adding radio notification or call-out should be added to the drill once the basic ability to dismount and utilize hand-to-hand skills is mastered. Ending the drill by transitioning from striking to restraint (i.e., ground stabilization) or from striking to restraint to handcuffing can be added as basic mastery is demonstrated.

Transition to Less-Lethal Weapons

The bike patrol officer will ride to a designated area, use an emergency dismount, and engage a role player with an expandable baton. The role player should have a strike pad or punching

bag. Initial body placement, baton deployment/readying should be mastered and demonstrated and forged into the foundation of baton strikes. Generally center mass strikes against an advancing offender or strikes aimed at the center mass of the offender's striking arm or leg will be practiced.

Proper body mechanics for expanding batons and pre-engagement verbal commands should be emphasized. Using padded practice batons can add an element of safety, but does not allow the transition between dismounting the patrol bike, expanding the baton, and utilizing good striking technique.

For pepper spray drills, the bike patrol officer will ride to a designated area and dismount the patrol bicycle. After disengaging from the bike, the officer will draw and aim OC Pepper Spray. Subsequently, the bike officer should demonstrate proper targeting and use of the spray if inert training aerosol is used.

Transition to Firearms

A safe and effective firearm training for bike patrol is built on the foundation of the previous citizen and offender contact training. Firearms training for bike officers can be implemented once a bike patrol officer demonstrates ability to approach, safely dismount, and engage a variety of subjects across a spectrum of risk.

The skill of drawing and aiming a handgun is needed for providing lethal cover as well as stopping a deadly threat. Bicycle patrol officers should practice and demonstrate proficiency in drawing and aiming after dismount and contact drills are mastered. Inert firearms such as red guns/blue guns are to be used when perfecting the transition from a moving bike to a stable shooting stance, position of lethal cover, or any response to resistance requiring deadly force.

The bicycle patrol officer should ride to a designated spot, conduct a basic dismount, and then draw and aim an inert handgun at a target. Alternately, the officer should demonstrate a basic dismount then move to a position of cover or tactical approach. Multiple bike officers can set up drills to practice contact/cover principles



■ Transition from dismount to deadly force.

for felony stops and other high-risk approaches.

For the emergency transition to deadly force, the bicycle patrol officer should ride and conduct an emergency dismount, then draw an inert handgun and demonstrate aiming the gun at the center mass of a target.

After basic standing shooting stance is mastered, practice transitioning from a moving bicycle to an emergency dismount then transitioning to kneeling and prone positions of fire. Live fire exercises should not be done until complete mastery of the dis-

mount to firearm deployment.

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