

SPECIAL ORDER



Title	Watch Your Car (WYC) Program	
Series / Number	SO-02-11	
Effective Date	April 10, 2002	Distribution A
Replaces / Rescinds	Special Order 92-02 (The Combat Auto Theft (CAT) Program	

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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I. Background

The Watch Your Car (WYC) Program is a national vehicle theft prevention program funded by the United States Department of Justice. WYC is a voluntary vehicle registration program designed to deter auto theft and assist in the apprehension of auto thieves. Vehicles eligible for registration under this program include private passenger vehicles and trucks. Public service vehicles (i.e., taxi cabs, buses, limousines, etc.) are not eligible for the WYC program.

To participate in the WYC Program, the vehicle owner signs an agreement stating that their vehicle is not normally used between the hours of 0100 and 0500 hours. If a police officer observes the vehicle being driven anywhere in the United States during these hours, they may stop the vehicle and verify that the vehicle owner is the operator, or a person designated by the owner.

Motor vehicles registered under the WYC Program are identified by two highly reflective and tamper-resistant decals affixed to the front and back windshield (See Attached sample). If the vehicle windows are tinted, the WYC decal must be clearly visible for participation in the program.

Currently there are 12 jurisdictions that participate in this program. The following jurisdictions are currently participating in the WYC Program: Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the state of Washington.

II. Purpose

A. Registration

1. Any owner of a vehicle registered in the District of Columbia may participate in the WYC Program. Also, non District of Columbia residents who are in the military, students and government employees and plan to be in the District of Columbia 90 days or longer may participate in the WYC Program.

2. Owners who wish to participate in the program may register with the Department of Motor Vehicles or by mailing the application to the: Auto Theft Unit, 300 Indiana Ave., N.W., room 3150, Washington D.C. 20001.
 - a. There is no registration fee for the WYC Program or any limit on the number of vehicles an owner may register.
 - b. If the vehicle is sold or otherwise disposed of, the owner is responsible for removing the WYC decal from the vehicle. an owner may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time by removing the decal from the vehicle.
 3. When a WYC Program participant's registration information or telephone number changes, the citizen shall be directed to forward a letter containing the appropriate changes and the vehicle's WYC decal number to the Auto Theft Unit, Special Investigations Division, room 3150, 300 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.
- B. Making a police stop pursuant to the WYC program
1. Members who observe a vehicle with a WYC decal (issued by MPD or any other jurisdiction) being operated between 0100 and 0500 hours may make a brief investigative stop of the vehicle to determine if it is stolen or is being used without authorization.
 2. Members who stop a vehicle displaying a WYC decal shall determine if the operator is the owner of the vehicle, or has been given permission by the owner, to operate the vehicle. Members may request a valid driver's license and registration from the operator.

Note: WYC Program registration information will automatically appear as part of the WALES vehicle status file information whenever the file is queried to verify a District of Columbia vehicle registration.
 3. If the vehicle has not been reported stolen, and the operator is unable to provide proper authorization or a reasonable explanation, the member shall request the radio dispatcher to contact the owner by telephone using the telephone number listed with the WALES WYC Program information in the vehicle registration file.
 4. When conducting a WYC stop, members shall follow the policies and procedures outlined in General Order 304.10 (Police-Citizen Contacts, Stops, and Frisks).

- a. Members should be aware the possibility exists that each vehicle which, is the subject of a WYC stop, may be a stolen vehicle and take appropriate precautions when stopping and approaching the vehicle.
 - b. Members should also keep in mind the vehicle may be operated by its lawful owner, a family member, or a friend with the owner's permission. Members shall act with as much restraint and courtesy as possible and, at some point during the stop, always, give the operator an explanation for the purpose of the WYC stop.
5. The consent given by a WYC Program participant only authorizes a member to stop the vehicle. Absent additional facts and circumstances surrounding the stop does not authorize members to search the vehicle.
 6. All WYC stops that do not result in an arrest shall be recorded on a PD Form 76 (Stop or Contact Report). The WYC decal number shall be entered on all reports concerning a WYC stop or resulting in arrest.

C. Auto Theft Unit

The Auto Theft Unit shall be responsible for maintaining WYC Program registration forms for each individual owner and shall:

1. Update WYC Program File entries when notified by a program participant that his/her registration information or telephone number has changed.
2. Pick up the WYC Program Application Forms from the Department of Motor Vehicles, which are to be approved by the Auto Theft Unit, on a daily basis.

D. Information Services Division

The Information Services Division shall maintain a WALES WYC Program File containing information for each individual WYC Program Registration Form. The information shall be accessible to Communications Division radio dispatchers, in response to field queries, during WYC stops.

E. Communications Division

When a member makes a WYC stop on a vehicle that has not been reported stolen, and cannot determine whether the operator is authorized to use the vehicle, the radio dispatcher shall:

1. Query the WALES vehicle status file and contact the owner by telephone to verify whether the vehicle is stolen or being operated with authorization, if the WYC decal is for a District of Columbia registered vehicle.
2. If the WYC decal is for an out of state registered vehicle, contact that agencies Communications Division, by telephone, in order to obtain the registrant's telephone number. After obtaining the telephone number, the dispatcher shall call the owner to verify the operator's authorization to operate the vehicle.

F. Office of Public Information of Media Productions

The Public Information Officer shall ensure the public is informed, through appropriate forums, of the WYC Program, its goals, and the registration process.

This order shall remain in effect until incorporated into the appropriate general orders.

// SIGNED //
Charles H. Ramsey
Chief of Police

CHR:NMJ:njg

Attachment