

Vehicle Defense

We spend a lot of time in and around our vehicles. We go to work, to church, to the market, take the kids to school, to Scouting events, we go on holiday and other fun activities. The FBI crime statistics show 1/3 of all accidental deaths are from motor vehicle wrecks. A lot of our life revolves around our vehicle.

Like everything else in life, we need to have a plan for our defense in and around our vehicle. Like any other plan, we need to rehearse, review and revise the plan. How much training have you had pertaining to vehicle defense? Since you probably answered “none”, now is the time to begin planning your vehicle defense.

Your defensive shooting practice hopefully has covered concealment and cover. It is essential you understand the difference. You’ve probably also learned how to move to cover while shooting.



Picture yourself behind the wheel of your vehicle. This position is designed for you to have a 360° view of your surroundings. From the opposite viewpoint, the bad guy has the same



view of you! Most of your vital anatomy parts provide neither concealment nor cover.

Where do you carry your pistol? Probably strong side hip holster. In your vehicle, that is exactly where the seat belt tab connects to the buckle. You need to practice drawing your pistol while safely unbuckling the seat belt. Another obstacle is the steering wheel. While a great tool to maneuver your vehicle, it’s a large obstruction to safely drawing a firearm and disengaging the seat belt.

Should someone threaten you, the threat most probably will be advancing toward your left side (the driver side of the vehicle). Now you are fumbling for a possibly inaccessible pistol on your right hip, adjacent to the seat belt buckle, then bringing the muzzle across major areas of your body in dealing with this approaching threat. You are progressing from Condition III -Alert to Condition IV Alarm! Your reaction is to put your plan from alert into action. Maybe I missed one significant fact- you have yet to develop your plan! You must immediately develop you plan to keep you from being trapped without a plan.



Had you thought about this in advance and developed a plan, your first step will be to use the “4000 pound weapon located under your right foot” step on the accelerator and get away. The best way to win the fight is to avoid the fight. If you have not ensured yourself the ability to drive away, you must start a new plan: either fight from the driver seat or exit the vehicle. If fighting from driver seat, you must draw your pistol while keeping the muzzle in a safe direction *at every moment during the encounter* while freeing yourself from the seat belt. Again, where is the pistol? Is it in a strong side hip holster? Is it in an ankle holster? Is in a retention device in the vehicle

specifically planned to be accessible while behind the wheel? All these criteria should be part of the plan you devised and practiced long before the actual encounter.

You may be asking why would I leave the security of my vehicle? Let's refer to the definitions of cover and concealment. The driver seat, or the passenger seats for that matter offer neither protection. To be able to utilize either, you need to exit the vehicle towards the end of the vehicle furthest from the threat. If you didn't eliminate the threat or if the threat has multiplied, you must shoot while you are moving to cover. The engine will provide the best cover. The greater the distance you can put between you and the threat, the better. The quicker you end the encounter the better off you will be. In the real world, you must immediately identify items which provide cover and which provide only concealment. Cover is better than concealment. Remember, time and distance are your best considerations.

Seeking cover and personal mobility must be addressed in developing your plan. Vehicles have been getting smaller the last few decades. The full sized sedan/coupe has been replaced by the compact sedan/sporty coupe, offering much less girth in general. Many people have abandoned the sedan in favor of wagons (usually referred to as an SUV or crossover). Today's wagon usually sits a little higher and has more sheet metal and glass than yesterday's sedan. This means the engine compartment is larger and the wheels are larger – both items which provide decent cover. Remember, most of the vehicle is simply sheet metal which may offer concealment, but not cover.



We must also consider our own physical ability to position ourselves behind the cover. While the engine compartment may be easy to crouch behind, the wheels may not. This will depend on our physical dexterity. We must know our physical limitations before developing a plan. If we need extra time and assistance to get into these positions, they most certainly will not be good or assumable in transitioning from Condition III – Orange to Condition IV - Red.

You need to develop and plan and practice this plan. You need to adapt the plan for various circumstances which may present themselves. Your primary plan should include not getting yourself into a situation which might necessitate you abandoning your vehicle. Do not get close enough to the vehicle ahead of yours to preclude you pulling away quickly. You don't want to be sandwiched between two vehicles without a path of escape. We all have played the game that if this vehicle approaching me crosses the center line coming towards me, where would I go to evade its path to strike me. We must practice the same vigilance with our personal security. We must also include in our plan others if we are not alone in our vehicle.

Obviously we can create more distance between ourselves and a threat with our vehicle rather than on foot. Planning ahead can afford us this opportunity to effectively utilize our tools. We want to protect ourselves and our loved ones. What is your plan? When did you last practice that plan and update that plan?

Protect yourself and your family by signing up for a Personal Safety class from *Advantage*. You'll learn more tips like these, how to protect yourself and essential protection techniques. Learn more about available classes online at www.AdvantageFET.com.

