

# **Basic Course Workbook Series Student Materials**

**Learning Domain 38**

**Gang Awareness**

**Version 2.1**

**Basic Course Workbook Series  
Student Materials  
Learning Domain 38  
Gang Awareness  
Version 2.1**

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## **THE ACADEMY TRAINING MISSION**

The primary mission of basic training is to prepare students mentally, morally, and physically to advance into a field training program, assume the responsibilities, and execute the duties of a peace officer in society.



## FOREWORD

The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training sincerely appreciates the efforts of the many curriculum consultants, academy instructors, directors and coordinators who contributed to the development of this workbook. The Commission extends its thanks to California law enforcement agency executives who offered personnel to participate in the development of these training materials.

This student workbook is part of the POST Basic Course Training System. The workbook component of this system provides a self-study document for every learning domain in the Basic Course. Each workbook is intended to be a supplement to, not a substitute for, classroom instruction. The objective of the system is to improve academy student learning and information retention.

The content of each workbook is organized into sequenced learning modules to meet requirements as prescribed both by California law and the POST Training and Testing Specifications for the Basic Course.

It is our hope that the collective wisdom and experience of all who contributed to this workbook will help you, the student, to successfully complete the Basic Course and to enjoy a safe and rewarding career as a peace officer serving the communities of California.



PAUL CAPPITELLI  
Executive Director



# LD 38: Gang Awareness

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# Preface

## Introduction

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### **Student workbooks**

The student workbooks are part of the POST Basic Course Instructional System. This system is designed to provide students with a self-study document to be used in preparation for classroom training.

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### **Regular Basic Course training requirement**

Completion of the Regular Basic Course is required, prior to exercising peace officer powers, as recognized in the California Penal Code and where the POST-required standard is the POST Regular Basic Course.

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### **Student workbook elements**

The following elements are included in this workbook:

- the chapter contents, including a synopsis of key points supporting
  - supplementary material, and
  - a glossary of terms used in this workbook.
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# How to Use the Student Workbook

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## Introduction

This workbook provides an introduction to the training requirements for this Learning Domain. You may use the workbook in several ways: for initial learning, for test preparation, and for remedial training.

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## Workbook format

To use the workbook most effectively, follow the steps listed below.

Step	Action
1	Begin by reading the: Preface and How to Use the Workbook, which provide an overview of how the workbook fits into the POST training program and how it should be used.
2	Refer to the Chapter Synopsis section at the end of each chapter to review the key points that support the chapter objectives.
3	Begin reading the text.
4	Complete the workbook learning activities at the end of each chapter. These activities reinforce the material taught in the chapter.
5	Refer to the Glossary section for a definition of important terms. The terms appear throughout the text and are bolded and underlined (e.g., <b><u>term</u></b> ).

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# Chapter 1

## Gang Dynamics

### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers must know the indicators of gang involvement in order to assess and respond to gang-related criminal activity.

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**Learning objectives** The chart below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

<b>After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...</b>	<b>E.O. Code</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>state the statutory requirements for designating a group as a criminal street gang.</li></ul>	38.01.EO6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>describe safety considerations for peace officers who come in contact with known or suspected members of criminal gangs.</li></ul>	38.01.EO10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>describe indicators of gang territory and communication, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- graffiti</li><li>- violent crime</li><li>- active gang members</li><li>- tattoos</li><li>- neighborhoods</li></ul></li></ul>	38.01.EO4

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## Overview, Continued

**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on gang culture and dynamics. Refer to the chart below for specific topics.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>See Page</b>
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# Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications

[38.01.EO4]

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## Introduction

The California Department of Justice reports the number of street gang members is on the rise. Gangs are recruiting new members at a younger age. Their weapons arsenals are expanding to include high-powered, large-caliber handguns, shotguns, automatic and semiautomatic rifles. All of this has created a growing challenge for peace officers, schools, and communities.

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## Definition

A **criminal street gang** is a group of three or more persons who:

- have a common name, identifying sign, or symbol,
- have members who individually or collectively engage in a pattern of criminal gang activity, and
- have, as one of its primary activities, committed one or more specified criminal acts. (*Penal Code Section 186.22(f)*)

Criminal street gangs also commonly claim a turf, territory, or neighborhood. Their criminal activities in certain neighborhoods often contribute to the deterioration of the community.

NOTE: Additional information regarding gang-related criminal activities is presented in a later portion of this chapter.

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## Leadership

Dealing with gangs can require equal measures of strong enforcement and creative solutions to the problems kids face that make gangs attractive to them. There are two approaches to gangs. It is important not to confuse the two.

1. The preventive, public health approach in which the officer helps guide young, potential members into healthy alternatives.
  2. The criminal justice approach in which the officer arrests gang members for violations of the law and assists in their prosecution.
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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

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### **Ethics**

Gangs are not illegal in themselves, it is the criminal activity of gangs that must be addressed with appropriate measures. It is not safe to assume that kids who wear a certain type of clothing and hang out in certain areas are involved in criminal activity. As with all other criminal activity, peace officers may never resort to illegal measures in the name of crime fighting. The harm to the officer, agency, and community coming from broken trust is far greater than the harm that will come from missed opportunities to curtail crime.

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### **Indications of membership**

In some instances a suspect will admit being a member of a gang during a field contact or in a Mirandized statement. In most instances, however, the officer's own observations and other sources of information will provide indications of gang membership.

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### **Appearance**

There are a number of ways that an individual may outwardly demonstrate an association with a particular gang. The following table identifies three possible appearance-related indicators.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Tattoos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Permanent gang specific body markings</li><li>• May be located on an individual's:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- arms</li><li>- hands/fingers</li><li>- shoulders/back, etc.</li></ul></li></ul>

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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

### Appearance (continued)

Indicator	Additional Information
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific clothing styles, colors, brands, etc.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sports attire</li> <li>- Bandanas/hats/head coverings</li> <li>- Jackets/vests/pants</li> <li>- Shoes</li> <li>- Other items of clothing</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>NOTE: Wearing certain types of clothes does not <i>necessarily</i> indicate gang membership.</p>
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal accessories               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jewelry</li> <li>- Patches</li> <li>- Hair styles/cuts, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Motor vehicles               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific vehicle makes/models</li> <li>- License plate frames</li> <li>- Stickers on a vehicle</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand signals/signs</li> <li>• <b><u>Graffiti</u></b></li> </ul>

NOTE: The culture and dynamics of gangs are constantly changing. A specific identification characteristic may change depending on the internal changes within the group or if the group splinters into different gangs

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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

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### **Gang association**

Regular association with known gang members may also indicate gang membership. Common gang-controlled locations/hangouts include, but are not limited to, specific:

- cafes,
- clubhouses,
- nightclubs,
- restaurants,
- street corners/neighborhoods, or
- member residences.

Suspected gang members may also be observed at gang functions and events such as:

- sports events,
- funerals,
- concerts,
- fairs,
- high school events,
- political events (protest marches, anti-police rallies),
- holiday events,
- court trials, or
- gang-sponsored charity events (e.g., toy run sponsored by the Hells Angels).

**NOTE:** It is important that officers develop a “beat” knowledge of what types of gangs are in their specific jurisdictions as well as the identifying characteristics and hangouts of each.

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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

### Other sources

There are a number of other resources for information accessible to peace officers that may also indicate gang association. The following table identifies examples of information sources officers may use.

Source	Additional Information
Photos/videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographs, photo albums, and video cassettes recovered through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- search warrants</li> <li>- parole/probation searches</li> <li>- vehicle searches</li> <li>- searches incident to arrest</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Written material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names noted in gang-related documents such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- address books</li> <li>- membership rosters,</li> <li>- computer files (floppy disk and hard drive), etc.</li> <li>- pager numbers, pager codes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Correspondence               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- jail/prison correspondence</li> <li>- correspondence between gang members</li> <li>- newsletters</li> <li>- gang chat rooms, websites</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Graffiti on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- walls</li> <li>- book covers</li> <li>- papers, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

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**Other sources**  
(continued)

Source	Additional Information
Informants/ reliable sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other law enforcement agencies/departments (e.g., Department of Corrections, Parole/Probation, etc.)</li> <li>• School administrators</li> <li>• Family members</li> <li>• Fellow gang members</li> <li>• Citizen informants (must be proven reliable)</li> </ul>

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**Music**

Gangster rap music can sometimes play an important role in gang culture. New terms and crime trends may appear in the lyrics of this music. Gangster rap may also influence gang members' dress, language, etc.

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**Examples**

- Example: A peace officer stopped a vehicle with two occupants to issue a traffic citation. The officer observed the tattoo "TST" on the driver's left arm and the same tattoo on the passengers neck. The officer knew that the area of the stop was known as the "Temple Street" gang's area and that the abbreviation for Temple Street is "TST." He documented his observations and later confirmed that the occupants of the vehicle were members of the "TST" gang.
- Example: Peace officers conducted a probation search of a robbery suspect's residence. During the search the officers found pictures of the suspect posing with known gang members displaying gang hand signs.
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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

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**Gang communications** There are several ways one gang member conveys information or identification to each other. Being aware of how gang members communicate will assist peace officers in monitoring gang activities.

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**Graffiti** Drawings or writings on surfaces that can be seen and read by the public.

Used to communicate:

- boundaries (territory) claimed by members
  - locations (e.g., businesses, park, residence)
  - active members in the gang
  - new members, order of member importance
  - threats or challenges toward specific person or other gangs, or
  - past or pending gang conflicts
- 

**Logos** Logos are a descriptive emblem or insignia used to identify the gang.

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**Tattoos** The most common way gangs communicate affiliation.

Tattoos used to communicate:

- members specific moniker
  - a subset or clique within a gang
  - a threat toward a rival gang or individuals
  - types of crimes member has committed (i.e., “211” indicating robbery)
  - regional affiliation
  - gang members personality or character
- 

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## Indicators of Gang Territory and Communications, Continued

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### **Other communication**

Other forms of gang communication include:

- specialized languages
    - slang
  - hand signs
  - other written correspondence
  - drawings
  - computers
  - photographs
  - cell phones/pagers
-

# Criminal Street Gangs

[38.01.EO6]

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## Introduction

An important part of a peace officer's responsibilities is determining whether a crime under investigation is gang-related.

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## Statutory requirement

*Penal Code Section 186.22(f)* states that any ongoing organized group of three or more individuals that has committed one or more of the following specified criminal acts is considered a criminal street gang.

	<b>Criminal Activity</b>
<b>Crimes against persons</b>	Assault with a deadly weapon or by means of force likely to cause great bodily harm
	Unlawful homicide or manslaughter
	Rape
	Kidnapping
	Mayhem
	Aggravated mayhem
	Torture
	Felony extortion
	Robbery
	Carjacking
	Terrorist threats

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

Statutory  
requirement  
(continued)

	<b>Criminal Activity</b>
<b>Crimes against property</b>	Burglary
	Arson
	Grand theft (when value exceeds \$10,000)
	Grand theft of any vehicle, trailer, or vessel
	Looting
	Felony vandalism
<b>Crimes against the justice system</b>	Intimidation of witnesses and victims
	Money laundering
<b>Crimes involving controlled substances</b>	Sale, possession for sale, manufacture, or transportation of controlled substances
<b>Weapons violations</b>	Shooting at an inhabited dwelling or occupied motor vehicle
	Discharging or permitting the discharge of a firearm from a motor vehicle
	Sale, delivery, or transfer of a firearm
	Possession of a pistol, revolver, or firearm capable of being concealed upon a person

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

### Other criminal activity

The following table identifies a number of other criminal activities that are often associated with organized gangs.

	<b>Additional Information</b>
<b>Drug related</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents a major factor in the expansion of gangs</li> <li>• Has led to a considerable increase in gang-related violence</li> <li>• Examples of criminal activity include the manufacture, sale, use, and/or distribution of narcotics.</li> </ul>
<b>Physical violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be caused by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- hatred of one gang for another</li> <li>- hatred of another ethnic or racial group</li> <li>- the fascination or excitement associated with violence</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Examples include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- drive-by/walk-by shootings</li> <li>- stabbings</li> <li>- one-on-one shootings</li> <li>- armed robbery</li> <li>- home-invasion robberies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Other crimes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prostitution</li> <li>- terrorist threats</li> <li>- counterfeiting</li> <li>- fraud</li> <li>- credit card theft</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

NOTE: A **home-invasion robbery** involves gang members following victims to their homes, physically restraining the victims, and stealing items from their homes. In carrying out this crime, gang members may impersonate peace officers in order to gain access to the house.

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

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### Crossing territories

Organized gangs routinely commit crimes outside their own territories and neighborhoods.

Example: Members of a Southern California gang traveled from their own territory specifically to commit a series of robberies in the Fresno area.

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### Identifying gang-related criminal activity

Some indicators that a crime may be gang-related include:

- the victim/suspect is a known gang member,
  - type of crime is one that is often gang-related (e.g. drive-by shooting),
  - number of suspects (e.g., eight suspects assaulting one victim),
  - suspect descriptions (e.g., gang-related attire),
  - location of crime (e.g., near a gang hangout, within disputed territory),
  - victim or witness opinions (e.g., recognition of gang-related slogans, hand signs).
- 

### Documentation

Known or suspected gang-related criminal activity should be accurately and thoroughly documented. Along with the specifics of the crime, officers should document their *findings*, *observations*, and *rationale* for believing that the crime was related to gang activity.

NOTE: For additional information regarding documentation of criminal activity, refer to LD 18: *Investigative Report Writing*.

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

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### Examples

Example: An officer was dispatched to a report of a battery. During the interview of the victim, the victim told the officer that he was beaten up by three males who had red bandannas in their pockets and that one of them yelled, “Norte!” during the assault. The officer obtained physical descriptions of the suspects and then contacted the gang unit. The officer showed pictures acquired from the gang unit to the victim who identified his attackers from pictures of local gang members.

Example: Two gang members were hired to set fire to one of their own member’s residences for insurance purposes. Both gang members were burned inside the residence as they were setting the fire. On being questioned by peace officers, they denied any knowledge of the owner of the residence. Two days before the fire, an officer had observed the gang members talking to the owner of the residence in a gang locale. The officer documented his observation of the two members, and the memo was used to convict both gang members as well as the owner of the residence for arson and insurance fraud. Documenting gang activities is a valuable tactic in identifying criminal gang activity.

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

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### Reducing gang activity

Rapid identification, arrest, and successful prosecution of suspects involved in violent gang-related crimes is critical to successful suppression of gang activity.

Strategy	Possible Sources/Related Information
Identification of known or suspected gang activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gang-related calls for service</li> <li>• Officers' personal knowledge of their assigned areas</li> <li>• Field contacts and interviews</li> <li>• Information from informants</li> <li>• Crime trends within assigned jurisdiction</li> </ul>
Identification of gang boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graffiti</li> <li>• Hang-outs and gathering locations</li> </ul>
Identification of individual gang members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-identification</li> <li>• Previous gang identification</li> <li>• Arrest records</li> <li>• Witness statements</li> <li>• Other gang members</li> <li>• Interceptions of gang-related communications</li> </ul>

### Law enforcement communication and networking

Sharing information among members of the same law enforcement organization and between other agencies (e.g., parole/probation officers), is also key to reducing gang-related criminal activity.

Nonconfidential information may also be obtained from, and shared with, school officials, community groups, and social welfare agencies to aid in a total effort to combat gang influences and criminal activity within a community.

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

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### Examples

Example: A mid-sized city had a problem with gang members loitering in an indoor shopping mall, intimidating shoppers and creating occasional disturbances in the mall. The law enforcement's gang unit coordinated with district uniform officers and parole/probation officers to conduct a special enforcement operation of the mall during peak hours. As a result of the sweep, several gang members were arrested on outstanding warrants such as violating the terms of probation.

Example: A peace officer who was a gang investigator learned that a murder suspect was driving a particular type and color of vehicle. The investigator provided that information to patrol officers at roll call and later that night the suspect was apprehended in that vehicle by a patrol unit. Exchange of information between units within an agency is an effective method for gang enforcement.

Example: Peace officers were investigating a drive-by shooting between rival gangs. The suspected shooter belonged to a gang in a neighboring jurisdiction. To get information, the officers met with a gang unit officer from the other jurisdiction. Based on the information received from the gang officer, the investigating officers were able to locate the suspect and make an arrest. It is important to share information with other law enforcement agencies in dealing with gang-related criminal activities.

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

### Additional laws related to criminal gang activity

The following table identifies a number of additional federal, state, and local laws peace officers may utilize when attempting to reduce gang-related activity.

	Statutes
<b>Federal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal statutes related to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- racketeering</li> <li>- carjacking</li> <li>- weapons violations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>State</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Penal Code Section 186.22: Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act ( STEP Act)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Penalty enhancements for crimes identified as gang-related (e.g., drive-by shootings)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Penal Code Section 12022.53</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Penalty enhancements for gang members who use or discharge firearms</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Asset seizure laws</li> <li>• Application of hate crimes laws when gang-related crimes are directed at specific groups</li> <li>• Automated gang tracking and information systems and networks</li> </ul>
<b>Local</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City and county ordinances related to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- civil gang abatements applied to remove gangs from specific neighborhoods</li> <li>- trespassing laws</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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## Criminal Street Gangs, Continued

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### Example

Example:

A gang member, recently released from a California Youth Authority (CYA) camp, was arrested for possession of a weapon. The arresting officer filed charges of “gang member with a gun,” an enhanced crime under *Penal Code Section 186.22*. The suspect executed a plea bargain of one year in the county jail and probation. However, if this individual is arrested again for a “gang-related crime,” as defined under *Penal Code Section 186.22*, he will receive a minimum sentence of five years and, depending on the crime, a maximum of 25 years in prison. The STEP act is a valuable tool in gang enforcement.

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# Peace Officer Safety Considerations

[38.01.EO10]

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## Introduction

Gang members have little or no regard for authority and often brazenly confront or attack peace officers. They may challenge a peace officer's authority to, receive recognition from other gang members. In some cases peace officers are targets of deliberate assaults and murders.

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## Weapons

Gang members often possess and conceal a variety of weapons. Weapons may be concealed in baggy pants, open shirts, trench coats, etc. Items of jewelry may themselves be used as weapons or to conceal weapons (e.g., crosses containing edged weapons or picks, belt buckle guns, etc.). Females and juveniles may be used by other gang members to hold weapons.

Weapons may also be concealed in vehicles operated by gang members. It is common for gang members to conceal weapons in:

- false compartments
- air bag compartments
- the glove compartment
- within air ducts
- under the seats
- in engine compartment
- under fenders, etc.

NOTE: Gang members facing a "three-strike" penalty may be desperate to avoid detention/arrest. These individuals present special dangers to peace officers.

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## Peace Officer Safety Considerations, Continued

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### **Gang tactics**

Street tactics used by gang members have become sophisticated. Scanners are used to listen to law enforcement communications. Gang surveillance vehicles can be used to track law enforcement activity. This information can be used to draw officers away from gang activity or lure them into ambush situations (e.g., prompting a pursuit and leading officers into gang-controlled areas).

Gang members often wear personal body armor and practice defensive measures to counter law enforcement arrest and control measures (e.g., gun take away maneuvers, escaping control holds, etc.).

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### **Safety considerations**

*All members* of criminal gangs, no matter the gender, age, or size, should be considered dangerous.

Officers should:

- always ask if the subject has anything dangerous (e.g., knife, needle, etc.) on their person and, if so, to remove it.
  - perform a cursory search if there are particular facts to support a suspicion that the gang member may be armed.
  - attempt to learn about gang feuds or rivalries.
  - recognize that gang recruitment practices sometimes requires a drive-by shooting or some other felony to be accepted into the gang.
  - be aware that female and juvenile gang members are now more involved in violent crimes.
- 

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## Peace Officer Safety Considerations, Continued

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### Examples

- Example: Peace officers were conducting surveillance of a residence for a wanted gang member. During the surveillance the officers discovered that gang members were conducting counter-surveillance on the officers. The gang members were using night vision goggles and police scanners to monitor the peace officers.
- Example: When committing armed robberies, a gang used lookouts in the area of the robbery to watch for police units. The gang members used a cell phone to notify gang members committing the robbery of police location and activity. The gang members were extremely violent and very dangerous for responding units.
- Example: A peace officer initiated a traffic stop of a vehicle occupied by gang members carrying weapons. Unseen by the officer, a second vehicle with members from the same gang, traveling behind the first vehicle, observed the patrol car. The second car immediately pulled around the patrol car and sped down the highway, swerving around vehicles in a reckless manner. The officer, distracted by the reckless driving, pursued the second car.
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## Chapter Synopsis

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**Learning need** Peace officers must know the indicators of gang involvement in order to assess and respond to gang-related criminal activity.

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**Indicators of gang territory and communications**  
[38.01.E04] In most instances, an officer's observations along with other information will help to identify gang membership.

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**Statutory requirements for designating criminal street gang**  
[38.01.E06] An important part of a peace officer's responsibilities is determining whether a crime under investigation is gang-related. Any ongoing organized group of three or more individuals that has committed one or more specific criminal acts is considered a criminal street gang.

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**Officer safety considerations**  
[38.01.E010] Gang members have little or no regard for authority and often brazenly confront or attack peace officers.

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## Introduction

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## Activity questions

1. You are a peace officer whose beat includes a middle school from which two rival gangs are known to recruit members. You have the opportunity to observe several of the neighborhood children as they leave school in the afternoon and have become familiar with many of them. What signs might you look for to help you determine:

Which children might be affiliated with gangs?

Which children might be most at risk for recruitment?

2. Peace officers stop a car fitting the description of one used an hour earlier in a drive-by shooting. There are five occupants in the car, two of which officers recognize as members of a local gang. Describe the precautions officers should take during the contact. Where are weapons likely to be concealed on the suspects or in the vehicle?

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## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity questions**  
(continued)

3. In the following table list at least eight types of crimes commonly associated with gangs along with a possible motivation for each.

Type of Crime	Motivation for Gang Member

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*Continued on next page*





## **Workbook Learning Activities, Continued**

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**Student notes**

## Chapter 2

### Criminal Street Gangs

#### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers must know the different types of criminal street gangs in order to effectively monitor and control criminal gang activity

---

**Learning objectives** The chart below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

<b>After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...</b>	<b>E.O. Code</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>describe identifying characteristics and crime trends associated with criminal street gangs.</li></ul>	38.02.EO1

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**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on identifying characteristics and related crime trends for different types of criminal street gangs. Refer to the chart below for specific topics.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>See Page</b>
Characteristics and Crime Trends	2-2
Chapter Synopsis	2-24
Workbook Learning Activities	2-25

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# Characteristics and Crime Trends

[38.02.EO1]

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## Introduction

Criminal street gangs in California vary by ethnicity and geographical area. They include, but are not limited to Hispanic, Black, Asian, and White street gangs. A description of each gang's characteristics and crime trends follow.

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## Hispanic street gangs

Hispanic street gangs evolved from East Los Angeles and then spread in the southern California area. Today, Hispanic street gangs can be found throughout California.

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## Background

During the 1940's, rivalries over turf disputes developed among protective groups in East Los Angeles. These led to the development of the first Hispanic street gangs in California.

Today, Hispanic street gangs may be made up of Mexican-Americans, Mexicans, Central Americans, and Puerto Ricans. As communities continue to diversify, some Hispanic gangs are recruiting non-Hispanics for memberships. Likewise, Hispanics are joining other non-Hispanic ethnic street gangs.

Unlike structured white and Asian gangs, Hispanic gangs generally have no distinctive ranks. Influence and seniority within the gang depend on a number of factors, including though not limited to:

- time in the gang,
- level of violence the individual is willing to engage in, and
- family influence.

NOTE: Additional information on the historical and current cultural composition of California is contained in LD 42: *Cultural Diversity/Discrimination*.

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*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Recognition and identification

Peace officers may be able to identify different categories of street gangs by the gang's distinctive:

- clothing,
  - tattoos,
  - hand signals,
  - language, and
  - graffiti.
- 

### Clothing

Clothing that is typical for Hispanic gang members to wear may include:

- athletic apparel and designer clothing popular with young people,
- athletic shoes,
- oversized/baggy khaki pants, which can also be cut off at the knees and worn with white socks,
- wool shirts and/or white crew neck/muscle T-shirts,
- knit caps, hairnets, or bandanas,
- cut out lettered belt buckles, and/or
- red or blue colors to identify as a member of a Northern (red) or Southern (blue) California gang.

NOTE: Colors in individual gangs may vary from the red for Northern or blue for Southern gang members.

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### Hair

Although hair styles are not a singular indicator of gang affiliation, some common styles for Hispanic gang members are:

- shaved heads, or
  - short, combed-back hair.
- 

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Tattoos

Tattoos can include “N” or “14” (the 14th letter of the alphabet) used to signify a Northern California gang, or “M” or “13” to signify a Southern California gang.

NOTE: Among Hispanic gang members, the showing of bare legs may be considered to be an indication of homosexuality.

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### Language

Hispanic gangs use a language called **Calo**, which combines English and Spanish to form new words, phrases, and sentences, to communicate among themselves without being understood by outsiders.

The table below contains examples of Calo words and phrases.

Calo	Meaning
<i>Carro, carrucha, and ramfla</i>	• Car
<i>Calcos</i>	• Shoes
<i>Placa or Jura</i>	• Police or the gang name
<i>Veterano</i>	• Senior or influential gang member
<i>Sur</i>	• South
<i>Norte</i>	• North
<i>Scraps</i>	• Derogatory term for So. Cal. gangs
<i>Busters or Farmers Chaps</i>	• Derogatory terms for No. Cal. gangs

NOTE: Distinctive hand signals may also be used within specific gang cliques.

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*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

### Crime trends

The following table identifies crime trends associated with Hispanic street gangs.

Type of Crime	Criminal Activity
Drug trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sale, possession for sale, manufacture, or distribution of controlled substances such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cocaine</li> <li>- heroin</li> <li>- PCP</li> <li>- marijuana</li> </ul> </li> <li>• methamphetamine</li> </ul>
Crimes against persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assault</li> <li>• Drive-by/walk-up shooting</li> <li>• Murder</li> <li>• Robbery</li> <li>• Gang rapes</li> <li>• Witness/victim intimidation</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Home invasion robberies</li> <li>• Terrorist threats</li> <li>• Prostitution</li> </ul>
Property crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burglary</li> <li>• Forgery (e.g., stealing checks from a business)</li> <li>• Arson (e.g., to destroy evidence, for revenge)</li> <li>• Grand theft</li> <li>• Vehicle theft</li> <li>• Receiving stolen property</li> </ul>
Rival gang violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gang members attacking rival gangs for traditional gang principles, such as turf wars</li> <li>• Drug rip-offs</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### **Border Brothers**

Border Brothers is a group of undocumented aliens from Mexico, Central America, and South America. Its members are often used by Mexican drug cartels for drug trafficking.

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### **Officer safety**

Attacks on peace officers by Hispanic gang members are increasing and officers need to be alert to the dangers of dealing with these gangs.

A primary concern is that Hispanic gangs traditionally lack respect for authority, which coupled with “machismo” raises the potential for a violent reaction to law enforcement.

In communicating with individuals associated with gangs, peace officers need to be especially cautious and sensitive in interviewing Hispanic females. Failure to do so could cause male gang members to perceive a lack of respect and a violent situation could result.

Weapons of Hispanic gangs are no longer limited to revolvers and knives. Weapons these gangs may possess include:

- assault weapons,
- AK 47's,
- MAC 10's and 11's,
- semiautomatics, and/or
- explosives.

NOTE: Gang members are often experienced in hand-to-hand fighting so that even without weapons they should be considered dangerous.

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### **Black street gangs**

The principal black gangs in California are the Crips and the Bloods. Both of these gangs were formed to provide protection from rival gangs and to achieve economic gain from criminal activity.

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### **Historical background**

The **Crips** were the first black street gang in California, founded in the 1960's in South Central Los Angeles. There are now several hundred Crip street gangs throughout the state.

The **Bloods** are a black street gang founded in 1970 to provide protection from Crip sets (i.e., gangs). One of the early Blood sets originated in Compton, named after Piru Street. There are many Blood sets, particularly in Northern California, although Crip sets substantially outnumber Bloods in Southern California.

A number of black street gangs from the Midwest are currently moving into the state. These gangs are generally very structured and tend to be politically active (e.g., participate in political rallies, protest marches, etc.). Two of these gangs are the "Folks" and the "People."

NOTE: A small percentage of black street gangs in California do not align with Crips or Bloods but do share common gang characteristics (e.g., mob gangs of northern California).

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Clothing

The color and style of clothing worn may be an indication of a member's affiliation with the Crips or the Bloods. The following table presents a number of distinctions between the two.

<b>Crips</b>	<b>Bloods</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blue clothing and accessories</li><li>• Blue bandanas (gang rags)</li><li>• Blue shoelaces and belts</li><li>• Tattoos that denote gang membership</li><li>• Professional sport team attire</li><li>• Cut out lettered belt buckles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Red clothing and accessories</li><li>• Red bandanas (gang rags)</li><li>• Red shoelaces and belts</li><li>• Rubber bands braided into corn rows</li><li>• Specific professional sport team attire</li><li>• Cut out lettered belt buckles</li></ul>

As gang members get older, the color identification may lose its significance. Also, colors in individual gangs may vary from the “blue for Crips” and “red for Bloods” rule.

Some examples of gangs wearing other colors include:

- Lincoln Park gang - green, and
- Fudgetown Mafia Crips - brown.

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*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Language

A number of slang terms have been incorporated as part of the language of black street gangs. The following table identifies some of the common slang phrases.

Crips		Bloods	
<i>BK</i>	Either has killed or wants to kill a member of the Bloods	<i>CK</i>	Either has or wants to kill a member of the Crips
<i>Cuzz</i>	Common greeting or acknowledgment of a fellow gang member or other person	<i>Blood</i>	Common greeting or acknowledgment of a fellow gang member or other person
<i>Snoop</i>	Derogatory term for a Blood	<i>Ericket</i>	Derogatory term for a Crip
		<i>Damu</i>	Swahili for blood

Common terms used by both groups include:

- **O.G.**, meaning original gangster, or a senior member of the gang, and
- **set**, meaning a black street gang.

NOTE: Fellow gang members may not know a member's real name, but will always know the gang member's moniker or street name.

NOTE: Black street gangs use hand signals and other nonverbal methods to communicate.

### Crime trends

Gang-related criminal activity that may be prevalent among black street gangs is the same as that associated with Hispanic gangs. The table identifying the crime trends is located in an earlier section of this chapter.

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Asian street gangs

Asian street gangs first began to appear in California in the early 1960's. Today, a number of different nationalities are represented under the general heading of Asian street gangs.

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### Background

There are approximately eight nationalities represented in Asian gangs. Descriptions of these gangs are contained in the following table.

Nationality	ID or name	Background Information
Chinese	Hong Kong Triads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret criminal societies (rather than traditional “street gangs”) based in Hong Kong</li> <li>• Cantonese speaking</li> <li>• Rituals and secret codes are sometimes used to note affiliations</li> <li>• Some gang members are well dressed and financed</li> <li>• Examples include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Wo Hop To” ( first to arrive in U.S. in the 1980's; formed a base in San Francisco)</li> <li>- “Sun Yee On” (largest and most powerful in Hong Kong)</li> <li>- “14K” (a large and powerful gang in Hong Kong)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Local affiliate street gangs include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wo Hop To</li> <li>- Jackson Street Boys</li> <li>- Hop Sing Boys</li> <li>- Japan Town Boys</li> <li>- Wah Ching - FOBs</li> <li>- Suey Sing Boys</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

Background  
(continued)

Nationality	ID or name	Background Information
Chinese	United Bamboo Gang or Four Seas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret criminal society based in Taiwan</li> <li>• Mandarin speaking</li> <li>• Mostly in Southern California, Monterey Park, some in Bay Area</li> <li>• Rituals and secret codes are used to note affiliations</li> <li>• Gang members are usually well dressed and financed</li> </ul>

Nationality	Background Information
Vietnamese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly street gangs; some organized rings (e.g., auto theft rings)</li> <li>• Tattoos, cigarette, and coin burns used for identification</li> <li>• Examples of tattoos include dragons, sailing ships, map of Vietnam, and gang initials</li> <li>• Examples include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Viet Ching”</li> <li>- “TL,” meaning Tenderloin Viet (based in San Francisco)</li> <li>- “Sky Dragon” (a subfaction of “TL”)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

### Background (continued)

Nationality	Background Information
Japanese (considered an organized crime group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Yakuza” refers to Japanese organized crime gangs</li> <li>• Well dressed and well financed</li> <li>• Often have tattoos all over their bodies but not beyond areas covered by clothing</li> <li>• Older gang members may have missing fingers, usually last one or two on each hand, indicating punishment for mistakes or disloyalty to the gang</li> </ul>
Cambodian/Laos/Hmong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “CKK,” meaning Cambodian Kid Killers</li> <li>• Members wear street gang clothing</li> <li>• Tattoos and cigarette burns are used for identification</li> <li>• Commonly wear traditional gang attire</li> <li>• Examples include               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Asian Boys”</li> <li>- “TRGs”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Filipino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “6th Street gang” originated in San Francisco/Daly City area</li> <li>• “Santanas” operate in Los Angeles</li> </ul>
Korean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gangs located mostly in Los Angeles area with some in the Bay Area</li> <li>• Examples include               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Korean Killers”</li> <li>- “King Cobras”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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**Clothing** In some gangs (e.g., Chinese, Japanese) leaders may be well dressed and appear similar to any business person. Other gangs (e.g., Vietnamese) tend to have a preference for more typical street gang style clothing.

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**Tattoos** Asian characters may be used on tattoos to identify gang names or initials. Other tattoo components may include dots, animals, ships, or the letters “TTTT.” Cigarette and/or coin burns, particularly on the hands, may also be used for identification purposes.

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**Language** It may be difficult for peace officers to use language as a means of identifying gang members. Gangs may use gang names and monikers expressed in Asian phonetics.

As in Hispanic gangs, distinctive hand signals may be used within specific gang cliques.

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**Crime trends** Crime trends that are specific to Asian street gangs include:

- alien smuggling
  - debt collection
  - home invasion robbery
  - drug dealing
  - high tech crimes (e.g., cell phones or computer software)
  - prostitution/massage parlors
  - gambling/loan sharking/money laundering
  - entertainment business/movies/music/nightclub
- 

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### **Territorial boundaries**

Asian street gangs tend to be more mobile than the traditional street gangs and often travel to another part of the country or state to commit crimes.

Some Asian street gangs may form temporary alliances with one another for the commission of crimes (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodians, etc. work together in committing a series of robberies.).

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### **Racial tensions**

Peace officers need to be aware of racial tensions around school sites involving Asian gangs. These tensions may break down into different patterns such as:

- Asian vs. Asian,
  - Asian vs. Hispanic, or
  - Asian vs. Black.
- 

### **White street gangs**

White street gangs may be based on racist beliefs or by traditional territorial boundaries.

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

### Background

Two types of white street gangs are based upon racist or deliberate nonracist philosophies. The following table presents background information pertaining to gangs within these categories.

	<b>Background Information</b>
<b>Racist gangs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated by hate and racial pride</li> <li>• Crimes are violent and usually target non-white, Jewish, homeless and homosexual victims.</li> <li>• Examples include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skinheads</li> <li>- Aryan Power</li> <li>- Nazi Low Riders (a prison-based gang whose members also operate on the street)</li> <li>- PENI (Public Enemy No. 1)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>NOTE: The Nazi Low Riders are very hostile to law enforcement and are particularly dangerous.</p>
<b>Nonracist gangs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SHARPs (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice)</li> <li>• Adhere to Skinhead movement but opposed to racist philosophy</li> <li>• Dress and look like Skinheads</li> <li>• Share a preference for nonconformist music</li> <li>• Advertise “No Nazis, No KKK, No Fascist USA”</li> <li>• Straight/Edge; a gang that attacks nonbelievers (e.g., people who smoke, drink, or eat meat)</li> </ul>

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### **Skinheads**

The Skinheads, currently operating in California, emerged in the United States in the 1980's with roots in England. The groups' power base came from resentment of Third World immigrants coming into Britain and was enhanced by their use of violence.

Their name came from the practice of shaving their heads to eliminate the possibility of their hair being pulled when they became involved in street fights.

Racist Skinheads have links with more traditional white supremacy groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party.

Skinheads sometimes may move into these organizations (KKK, etc), although often they are not disciplined enough to be accepted by the groups that have more structured organizations.

Subgroups of racist skinheads include:

- American Front
- Confederate Hammerskins
- WAR Skins

NOTE: Many law enforcement agencies consider Skinhead groups to be political extremists, rather than street gangs.

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

### Traditional vs nontraditional

White street gangs may or may not fall into practices associated with more traditional street gangs, not based on racism. The following table provides background information regarding these types of white street gangs.

	Background Information
<b>Traditional gangs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model themselves after the more traditional Hispanic or black gangs, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clothing styles,</li> <li>- behavior,</li> <li>- Skinhead music, and,</li> <li>- type of criminal activity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some are multi-racial, usually aligned with a black or Hispanic gang.</li> </ul>
<b>Nontraditional gangs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not emulate or associate with any particular ethnic street gangs.</li> <li>• Operate their own brand of racism on a neighborhood basis.</li> <li>• Some members have racist tendencies, but they are not Skinheads. and generally do not associate with organized hate groups.</li> <li>• Often come from middle class or affluent backgrounds.</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

### Clothing and appearance

The clothing and general appearance of the members of white street gangs can vary depending on the nature and philosophy of the group. A number of general descriptive factors are noted in the following table.

	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Hair Styles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely cropped hair styles or shaved heads</li> </ul>
<b>Clothing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Hip-hop” style of clothing</li> <li>• Air force-style flight jackets</li> <li>• Dark colored jeans</li> <li>• Suspenders or “braces”</li> <li>• Steel-toed boots or other type of work boot</li> <li>• Nazi-type emblems</li> <li>• Shoelace and/or suspender colors               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- White or red to indicate racist Skinhead</li> <li>- Black or blue to indicate nonracist Skinhead</li> <li>- Yellow or gold to indicate hatred of peace officers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Tattoos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nazi swastikas or “SS”</li> <li>• Lightning bolts</li> <li>• Iron crosses</li> <li>• Crossed hammers</li> <li>• “White Power” (as two words tattooed together or on separate parts of the body)</li> <li>• “SWP” or “Supreme White Power”</li> <li>• “WF” for “White Flesh”</li> <li>• Confederate tattoo</li> <li>• Nazi war bird</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### **Crime trends**

Although white gangs do engage in the criminal activities associated with traditional gangs, their primary reason for existence is racial hatred, not economic gain.

White hate groups commit crimes directed against minority groups, gay and lesbian, and religious organizations. The crimes are often anti-Semitic in nature. Such criminal activity includes:

- assaults,
  - bombings,
  - drug trafficking,
  - robbery, and/or
  - producing and distributing racist hate material.
- 

### **Adult racist groups**

Many Skinhead groups are under the influence of adult racist groups and do not follow normal street gang patterns of criminal behavior. Examples of groups who exert influence on racist Skinheads are:

- KKK
  - Aryan Nation
  - WAR (White Aryan Resistance)
- 

### **Additional information**

Organized groups can provide valuable information to law enforcement regarding hate crimes. Some of these groups include:

- Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
  - Southern Poverty Law Center
  - Klan Watch
  - Museum of Tolerance
- 

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Officer safety

All the general safety considerations described in the preceding chapter apply when dealing with white street gangs. Also, white street gangs have real hatred for law enforcement and *are very dangerous*.

Some safety considerations in dealing with white street gangs:

- Gang members may feign injury as an excuse to carry a walking stick that could be used as a club.
- Heavy jewelry can be used offensively - e.g., metallic ornaments used as brass knuckles.
- Gang members may “lay their braces down,” meaning their suspenders are dropped in preparation for a confrontation.
- Gang members freshly shave their heads just before a confrontation.
- Gang members conceal weapons in a specific location and then either flee to that location if pursued by peace officers or lure someone to that location.
- In some areas, female gang members may be as active in the gangs as their male counterparts.
- Non-white peace officers dealing with these groups raises the potential for violence against the officers.

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## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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### Other street gangs

A number of smaller gangs, some of them ethnically based, operate in California. Generally, these groups adhere to the traditional principles of street gangs.

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### Pacific Islanders

Some of the smaller ethnic street gangs include:

- Pacific Islanders
  - Samoans
  - Tongan Crip Gangsters
  - West Side Islanders
  - Sons of Samoa (SOS)

Some of these gangs tend to emulate and pattern themselves after black or Hispanic gangs, depending on the geographical area.

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### School-based groups

The school-based gangs are emerging as a new type of gang that forms through school contacts, sports, and neighborhood relationships.

One school-based group are the Slick 50's, a group of **taggers**, gang members who put graffiti in public areas such as

- overpasses,
- freeway signs, and
- sides of buildings.

**Tag bangers** are taggers who align with a gang or belong to a group of taggers who commit crimes, including:

- assaults,
  - robberies, and
  - vandalism.
- 

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

### Organized crime

Members of organized crime groups may not be directly involved in street gang activities, but they have extensive criminal operations and often use street gangs to commit crimes for them. The following table presents information regarding three such groups.

	Background Information
<b>Chinese Triad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very structured organization and an international network</li> <li>• Objective is economic gain</li> <li>• Use street gangs in their illegal activities</li> <li>• Criminal activities include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- heroin smuggling</li> <li>- alien smuggling</li> <li>- prostitution</li> <li>- gambling</li> <li>- money-laundering</li> </ul> </li> <li>• May also be involved in legitimate businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Russian Organized Crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate throughout California</li> <li>• Criminal activities include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cargo theft</li> <li>- gasoline theft</li> <li>- credit card fraud and counterfeiting</li> <li>- bank fraud</li> <li>- theft of I.D.'s</li> <li>- check fraud</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Often use members of the white racist gang, "Armenian Power," as enforcers</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Characteristics and Crime Trends, Continued

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**Organized  
crime**  
(continued)

	<b>Background Information</b>
<b>Japanese Organized Crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operate chiefly in southern California and Hawaii</li><li>• Work cooperatively with the Chinese Triad</li><li>• Members are usually not physically recognizable as members of an illegal gang (although some members will have a missing finger)</li></ul>
<b>Mexican Drug Cartels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operate throughout California</li><li>• Use the Border Brothers and other Hispanic street gangs to commit crimes for them</li><li>• Criminal activities include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- drug trafficking</li><li>- drug smuggling</li></ul></li></ul>

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# Chapter Synopsis

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**Learning need** Peace officers must know the different types of criminal street gangs in order to effectively monitor and control criminal gang activity.

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**Identifying characteristics and criminal trends of gangs [38.02.EO1]** The California Department of Justice reports the number of street gang members is on the rise. Gangs are recruiting new members at a younger age. Their weapons arsenals are expanding to include high-powered, large-caliber handguns, shotguns, automatic and semiautomatic rifles. All of this has created a growing challenge for peace officers, schools, and communities.

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**Hispanic street gangs** Criminal street gangs in California vary by ethnicity and geographical area. Hispanic street gangs evolved from East Los Angeles and then spread in the southern California area. Today, Hispanic street gangs can be found throughout California.

---

**Black street gangs** The principal black gangs in California are the Crips and the Bloods. Both of these gangs were formed to provide protection from rival gangs and to achieve economic gain from criminal activity.

---

**Asian street gangs** Asian street gangs first began to appear in California in the early 1960's. Today, a number of different nationalities are represented under the general heading of Asian street gang.

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**White street gangs** White street gangs may be based on racist beliefs or by more traditional territorial boundaries.

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**Other street gangs** A number of smaller gangs, some of them ethnically based, operate in California. Generally, these groups adhere to the traditional principles of street gangs.

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## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity questions**  
(continued)

4. Complete the following table contrasting general characteristics of the three gangs shown.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Crips</b>	<b>Bloods</b>	<b>Hispanic Street Gang</b>
Type of gang (racial, ethnic, other)			
Appearance (clothing, hairstyle, body markings)			
Language			
Common types of criminal activity			
Ties to “turf”			

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## Workbook Corrections

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Suggested corrections to this workbook can be made by going to the POST website at: [www.post.ca.gov](http://www.post.ca.gov)

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## **Workbook Corrections,** Continued

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**Student notes**

## Chapter 3

### Organized Crime Gangs

#### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers need a basic understanding of outlaw motorcycle gangs and prison gangs in order to effectively monitor and control criminal gang activity.

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**Learning objectives** The chart below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

<b>After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...</b>	<b>E.O. Code</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe identifying characteristics and crime trends associated with organized crime gangs, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- motorcycle gangs</li><li>- prison gangs</li></ul></li></ul>	38.03.EO1

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**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on identifying characteristics and related crime trends for different types of motorcycle gangs and prison gangs. Refer to the chart below for specific topics.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>See Page</b>
Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs	3-2
Prison Gangs	3-9
Chapter Synopsis	3-17
Workbook Learning Activities	3-18

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# Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs

[38.03.E01]

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## Introduction

Motorcycle enthusiasts, looking for excitement and camaraderie, began to form loosely associated groups in Southern California in the 1940's after World War II. Today, motorcycle gangs that engage in illegal activities present a serious threat to the public and to law enforcement.

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## Background

One of the first outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs), the “Pissed Off Bastards of Bloomington” (POBOBs), came to national attention in 1947 when they turned an American Motorcycle Association sponsored event in Hollister into a weekend brawl. Later that year thousands of bikers attended a tour in Riverside which ended in rioting, destruction, and two deaths.

During the following decades the freewheeling lifestyle, including drug usage, of the motorcycle gangs was glamorized and became a symbol of youthful rebellion.

In the 1980's and 1990's the larger outlaw gangs expanded internationally and their illegal activities became more sophisticated. They began to employ the following tactics:

- Smaller gangs were absorbed.
  - Illegal operations moved from cities to rural areas.
  - Smaller gangs and independent operators were used to insulate their criminal activities.
  - Gang members posed as legitimate businessmen and began purchasing properties to be used as fronts for money laundering.
- 

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## Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Continued

### Primary gangs

The following table lists the primary outlaw motorcycle gangs, also referred to as the “Big Five.”

Gang Name	Background Information
Hells Angels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed 1948</li> <li>• Formed by members of POBOBs</li> <li>• Name is from a WWII bomber squadron</li> <li>• Mother chapter in San Bernardino until the 1960's, when it moved to Oakland</li> </ul>
Outlaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed 1959 in Chicago, Illinois</li> </ul>
Pagans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed 1959 in Prince George’s County, Maryland</li> </ul>
Bandidos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed 1966 in Houston, Texas</li> <li>• Expanded in the Midwest, Pacific northwest, Australia, Canada, and Europe</li> </ul>
Sons of Silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed in 1968 in Commerce City, Colorado</li> <li>• Greatly expanded into the Midwest</li> </ul>

### Other gangs

Along with the “Big Five,” there are a number of other smaller outlaw motorcycle gangs with which officers should become familiar.

Gang Name	Background Information
Vagos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started in mid 60's in Los Angeles</li> <li>• Close ties to street gangs</li> </ul>
Hessians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed in the mid 60's in Orange County</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Continued

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**Other gangs**  
(continued)

Gang Name	Background Information
Mongols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started in early 60's in Los Angeles</li> <li>• Close ties to Hispanic street gangs and prison gangs</li> <li>• Recruit Hispanics</li> </ul>
Diablos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed in mid 60's in San Fernando Valley</li> <li>• Closely aligned with Hells Angels</li> </ul>
East Bay Dragons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blood gang</li> <li>• Based in Oakland</li> <li>• Closely tied to Hells Angels</li> </ul>

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**Patches**

Members can often be associated with a particular organized motorcycle gang by the patches they wear or their tattoos.

Patches usually are worn on the back of a denim or leather vest or jacket and include a top and bottom rocker (letters formed in a curve), and a center gang insignia. The office holder's patch designates his position (e.g., president).

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**Identification**

Members are allowed or may be required to have a tattoo designating the gang affiliation as well.

Gang members often have a "1%" incorporated into their patches, tattoos or other markings. This originated when an official from the American Motorcycle Association stated that 99% of U.S. motorcyclists were law-abiding. The outlaw bikers took pride in being among the remaining 1% and took that identifier.

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## Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Continued

### Gang structure

Individual chapters of OMGs generally have highly structured organizations with elected officers with specific responsibilities.

The following table describes the responsibilities of officers in OMGs.

Officer	Responsibilities
Charter/Chapter President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has final authority over all chapter business and members</li> <li>• Gained role through personal strength, leadership skills, and personality</li> <li>• Has either claimed the position or been voted in</li> <li>• The president's word is "law" within the chapter</li> <li>• Answers to international presidents</li> </ul>
Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second in command, president's right hand</li> <li>• Presides over gang affairs in president's absence</li> <li>• Hand picked by president or voted in</li> </ul>
Secretary/Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps the roster and maintains accounting system</li> <li>• Takes minutes at meetings and collects dues/fines</li> <li>• Pays bills</li> </ul>
Sergeant-at-Arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains order at all meetings, events, runs</li> <li>• Most feared or strongest member and is completely loyal to the president</li> <li>• May administer beatings for rule violations</li> <li>• Enforcer for that chapter</li> <li>• In charge of weapons on a run</li> </ul>
Road Captain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logistics and security chief for runs/outings</li> <li>• Carries chapter money and uses for bail if necessary</li> </ul>

NOTE: Members normally ride in a formal structure with the president, captain, or other senior officers in the front.

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## Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Continued

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### Membership status

There are a number of different roles or levels of involvement for members and associates of outlaw motorcycle gangs. The following table describes status levels and their roles within the gang.

Status	Description
Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admitted by unanimous vote of the chapter members</li><li>• Must attend all events including weekly meetings</li><li>• Wears the chapter's gang insignia and tattoos</li><li>• Members who retire or leave are required to have an out date added to the tattoo</li><li>• If they leave in bad standing, they must have their tattoo covered or removed</li></ul>
Prospect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal pre-membership status</li><li>• Status lasts from a few months to two or more years</li><li>• Have no voting status</li><li>• Allowed to attend most meetings and wear bottom rocker and chapter designation over heart</li><li>• Subservient to sponsor and chapter</li><li>• Are required to commit felonies</li><li>• Legal or illegal acts in support of gang will shorten prospect time.</li><li>• Tend to be the most dangerous because they are trying to prove themselves</li></ul>
Hangaround	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Groomed to become prospects</li><li>• May be allowed to ride with the gang</li><li>• Not allowed to wear insignia</li></ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Continued

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### Membership status (continued)

Status	Description
Associate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informal status</li><li>• May have a service that is beneficial to the gang</li><li>• May be professionals, celebrities, or own legitimate businesses</li></ul>

NOTE: Females cannot be members of outlaw motorcycle gangs. Females known as “old ladies” belong to a specific gang member. Other females known as “mamas” belong to the entire gang.

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### Crime trends

The major OMGs are highly structured organizations that use their gang affiliations as conduits for criminal activity. The specific criminal activities vary according to the individual gang.

The chief source of gang income is from the manufacture, importation, and distribution of drugs, including:

- cocaine,
- methamphetamine, and
- marijuana.

OMGs also derive income from pornography, prostitution, strip clubs and other criminal activities.

Some OMGs have attempted to improve their public image by engaging in community projects such as “Toys for Tots” and blood drives. The goal is to lessen citizen concern and law enforcement pressure.

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*Continued on next page*

## Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Continued

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### Tactics

Gang members often employ sophisticated counter surveillance and intelligence gathering techniques including:

- source recruitment (e.g., solicitation of inside information such as from a DMV, IRS, or law enforcement employee)
  - clubhouses which serve as fortifications and places to stockpile weaponry.
  - member/associate residences and businesses.
  - monitoring of law-enforcement radio frequencies.
  - performing extensive background checks on potential members.
- 

### Officer safety

Weapons are a primary safety concern for peace officers in dealing with OMGs. This is especially true during organized runs when outlaw bikers are most likely to be in possession of weapons because of:

- planned movement of narcotics,
- expected conflict with another club,
- protection, or
- traveling to events such as the Sturgis Run (a national gathering of Harley Davidson riders in South Dakota).

The run may be followed by enforcers and/or “crash trucks” which may:

- travel some distance behind the pack,
  - carry additional weapons and narcotics, and
  - be driven by club prospects or female associates.
-

# Prison Gangs

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## Hispanic prison gangs

Hispanic prison gangs can organize and direct illegal activity from prisons.

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## Background

Three groups are recognized by the California Department of Corrections prison system as the predominant Hispanic prison gangs. The following table presents background information for each.

	<b>Background Information</b>
<b>Mexican Mafia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Known as “EME” or “la eme” (“eme” is the Spanish pronunciation of the letter “M”)</li><li>• The number “13” is also associated with the gang (“M” is the 13th letter of the alphabet)</li><li>• Formed in 1957 in Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI) in Tracy, CA</li><li>• Comprised of incarcerated Southern California Hispanic street gang members (called “Surenos” in the prison system)</li></ul>
<b>Nuestra Familia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Known as “NF” or “ene” (“ene” is the Spanish pronunciation of the letter “N”)</li><li>• The number “14” is also associated with the gang (“N” is the 14th letter of the alphabet)</li><li>• Formed in 1965 in Soledad Prison near Salinas, CA</li><li>• Comprised of incarcerated Northern California street gang members (called “Nortenos” in the prison system)</li></ul>

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*Continued on next page*

## Prison Gangs, Continued

### Background (continued)

	<b>Background Information</b>
<b>Northern Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known as “NS”</li> <li>• Originally a subgroup of Nuestra Familia</li> <li>• Comprised of incarcerated Northern California street gang members</li> <li>• Known as a disruptive group</li> <li>• Closely allied with the Nuestra Familia</li> </ul>

### Structure and organization

The organizational principles and structure of Hispanic prison gangs can vary.

<b>Mexican Mafia</b>	<b>Nuestra Familia</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not have a hierarchy structure, although older and respected members are in control</li> <li>• Recruit must be sponsored by an active gang member</li> <li>• Sponsor becomes responsible for recruit’s actions</li> <li>• Initiation no longer based on committing a murder in or out of prison (i.e. “blood in, blood out”)</li> <li>• Often allied with the white prison gang Aryan Brotherhood</li> <li>• Only a few non-Mexican members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure that is based on military-type rankings (e.g., generals, captains, lieutenants, etc.)</li> <li>• Each institution has a “Mesa” or ruling council</li> <li>• Originally formed to protect themselves against other prison gangs</li> <li>• Often allied with the black prison gang, Black Guerilla Family</li> </ul>

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## Prison Gangs, Continued

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### Recognition and identification

The best indicator of gang affiliation for the Mexican Mafia and Nuestra Familia, as well as all other prison gangs, is the presence of tattoos on the gang member's body. The following table identifies different tattoos used by each gang.

Mexican Mafia	Neustra Familia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mexican black eagle with a serpent in its beak (serpent is forming the letter "M")</li><li>• "Mexican Mafia" or "EM"</li><li>• A blackened open hand (Mano Negro meaning "black hand") on the right side of the body</li><li>• Aztec warrior shield</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sombrero with a machete through it</li><li>• Machete with dripping blood</li><li>• "Nuestra Familia" or "NF"</li><li>• A "huelga"- a bird</li></ul>

NOTE: Members of the Mexican Mafia and Nuestra Familia and other prison gangs may be difficult to recognize as gang members once they have been released from prison. Identification may require special law enforcement expertise in many instances.

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*Continued on next page*

## Prison Gangs, Continued

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### Association with street gangs

Officials of the Mexican Mafia have worked to organize Hispanic street gangs throughout Southern California. By doing so, the EME can meet their own needs regarding the dealing of narcotics in the barrios.

The Mexican Mafia requires that:

- each Southern California Hispanic street gang pay “taxes” to the EME,
- all non-Hispanics be purged from the street gang, and
- drive-by shootings (considered by the EME a cowardly solution to a conflict) of other Hispanic gang members be stopped.

Any Southern California Hispanic street gang that does not comply with demands of the EME is given a “green light” or “in the hat” status (meaning the members can be “hit” or killed at any time.)

NOTE: The Nuestra Familia also attempts to control drug trafficking with the Northern California Hispanic street gangs, just as the Mexican Mafia does with Southern California gangs.

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### Crime trends

Gang-related criminal activity is similar for the Mexican Mafia and the Nuestra Familia prison gangs. Criminal activities may include:

- contract killings,
  - extortion,
  - narcotics trafficking,
  - robberies,
  - protection,
  - directing street gang members to commit criminal acts,
  - conducting meetings in public places involving numerous Hispanic street gangs to further criminal activities, and
  - victim/witness intimidation.
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## Prison Gangs, Continued

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### **White prison gangs**

One white prison gang in California prisons is the Aryan Brotherhood. The Aryan Brotherhood is based on racist beliefs.

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### **Aryan Brotherhood**

The Aryan Brotherhood (AB) was formed in 1968 at Soledad prison by offshoot members of a gang called the “Bluebirds.” The group has allied with the Mexican Mafia in the past.

Members of the Aryan Brotherhood are involved in sophisticated intelligence gathering activities, including keeping rosters on inmates.

NOTE: The Aryan Brotherhood is *not* an outlaw motorcycle gang as it is often mislabeled.

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### **Nazi Low Riders**

The Nazi Low Riders (NLRs) originated in the California Youth Authority during the 70's. In recent years, the NLR has become a more influential force in the prison system.

The two requirements for NLR membership are that an individual is

- a proven criminal, and
- shows loyalty to the white race.

NLR members focus their hatred of blacks, other minorities, and people involved in interracial relationships.

Some NLR members have Hispanic surnames and some members have Hispanic girlfriends or wives, but no blacks or Asians are allowed to join the NLR.

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## Prison Gangs, Continued

### Recognition and identification

The following table describes some of the identifying characteristics of two white prison gangs.

Characteristics	Aryan Brotherhood	Nazi Low Riders
Tattoos	Shamrock with the letters "AB" in or around it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters "AB" alone</li> <li>• Word "bluebird" or an image of a bluebird (more common on older members of the gang)</li> <li>• Swastika with the letters "AB" in or around it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very prominent "NLR," which must be earned by committing an assault</li> <li>• Nazi war bird (a skeleton of the bird)</li> </ul>
Crime trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racist oriented, protecting whites from minority prison gangs</li> <li>• Contract killings</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Narcotics trafficking</li> <li>• Commercial robberies (e.g., banks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attack minorities, in and out of prison</li> <li>• Production of methamphetamine</li> <li>• Threats and assaults of peace officers</li> <li>• Same type of crimes as other street gangs</li> </ul>

NOTE: Gang related criminal activity can take place both in and out of prison.

### Officer safety

The NLR's hatred of law enforcement makes them very dangerous. There have been numerous threats, assaults, and shootings of peace officers by NLR members.

*Continued on next page*

## Prison Gangs, Continued

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### **Black prison gangs**

The Black Guerilla Family (BGF) is a black prison gang based on a doctrine of revolutionary socialism.

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### **Background**

The Black Guerilla Family (BGF) was formed in 1966 in San Quentin prison. Its founder, George Jackson, was part of the “San Quentin 6,” an outgrowth of the Black Panther Party.

The structure of the BGF includes formal rules and a military system of officers (e.g., generals, captains, lieutenants, etc.). It functions as a form of self-protection from other prison gangs and is often allied with the Hispanic prison gang Nuestra Familia.

Just as with the Mexican Mafia, initiation into the gang is based on committing a crime in prison (i.e., “blood in, blood out”).

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### **Tattoos**

Tattoos worn by gang members often include the letters “WGJ,” Swahili for Black Guerilla Family.

Older gang members may have tattoos that incorporate:

- a dragon coiled around a guard tower,
  - the numbers “276” (the numerical placement of the letters “BGF” in the alphabet),
  - a raised fist, or
  - a rifle and sword crossed with the letters “BGF.”
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*Continued on next page*

## Prison Gangs, Continued

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### Language

Members of the BGF, along with a number of other black gangs, use Swahili words to communicate with one another.

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### Crime trends

Gang-related criminal activity associated with the Black Guerilla Family often involves:

- murder committed to further gang objectives (e.g., murder a witness),
- extortion and protection rackets,
- narcotics trafficking, and
- robberies (e.g., armored cars, banks, etc.).

NOTE: The BGF attempts to direct criminal activities from prison through black street gangs.

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### 415

The 415 is a prison criminal group that has not been officially recognized by the California Department of Corrections as a prison gang. It is comprised of black street gang members from Northern California now in prison.

NOTE: "415" is the area code for the San Francisco Bay area.

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## Chapter Synopsis

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**Learning need** Peace officers need a basic understanding of outlaw motorcycle gangs and prison gangs in order to effectively monitor and control criminal gang activity.

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**Characteristics and crime trends of outlaw motorcycle gangs**  
[38.03.EO1] Motorcycle gangs that engage in illegal activities present a serious threat to the public and to law enforcement.

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## **Introduction**

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## **Activity questions**

1. Officers stop a motorcyclist for failure to maintain safe driving distance and swerving in and out of traffic. As the contact officer approaches, she notices that the motorcyclist has a 1% tattooed on the upper arm. What does this indicate? How should officers alter the contact, if at all, based on this observation?

2. Why do you think a patrol officer needs to be knowledgeable about current crime trends in prison gangs?

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## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

3. In the space provided below or on a separate sheet of paper, design a tattoo that would be associated with one of the gangs discussed in this chapter. If possible, exchange drawings with another class member and try to interpret the information contained in the tattoos.

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## **Workbook Learning Activities, Continued**

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**Student notes**

# Glossary

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**Introduction**      **The following glossary terms apply only to Learning Domain 38: Gang Awareness.**

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**Bloods**              A black street gang founded in 1970 to provide protection from the Crips

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**calo**                      A combination of English and Spanish used to form new words, phrases, and sentences, used by Hispanic gangs to communicate among themselves without being understood by outsiders

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**criminal street gang**      A group of three or more persons who have a common name, identifying sign, or symbol, whose members engage in a pattern of criminal gang activity, and who have as one of its primary activities committed one or more specified criminal acts (*Penal Code Section 186.22(f)*)

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**Crips**                      The first black street gang in California, founded in the 60's in South Central Los Angeles

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**graffiti**                  Drawings or writings that are written on surfaces so that they can be seen and/or read by the public

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**home invasion robbery**      Involves gang members following victims to their homes, physically restraining the victims, and stealing items from their homes

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**logo**                      A descriptive emblem or insignia used to identify a gang; can consist of names, numbers and/or symbols

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## **Glossary, Continued**

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**moniker**

Nickname or street name of a gang member

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**O.G.**

Original gangster, or senior member of the gang; term used by black street gangs

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**set**

Individual black street gangs

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**tag  
bangers**

Taggers who align with a gang or belong to a group of taggers who commit crimes such as assaults, robberies, and vandalism

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**taggers**

Individuals, usually young people, who put graffiti in public areas such as overpasses, freeway signs, and sides of buildings

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