



POLICY STATEMENT

Vehicle Pursuits

SU Policy Number: 404-500.0

ORIGINATING OFFICE

Department of Public Safety

PURPOSE

To define when officers may engage in pursuits, the conditions governing pursuits, and the safety precautions necessary to reduce the inherent dangers of pursuits.

OBJECTIVE

1. Vehicle pursuits of fleeing suspects present very real and serious dangers to the lives and safety of the public in general, police officers, and offenders. An explicit policy governing vehicle pursuits is a requirement for every professional police agency. A pursuit policy should be designed to fulfill several important objectives:
 - a. To reduce the amount and severity of injuries and deaths accompanying pursuits to an absolute minimum;
 - b. To provide police officers with a clear understanding of when and how to conduct pursuits;
 - c. To fulfill the Department's responsibilities of enforcement of laws and protection of life and property; and
 - d. To minimize the Department's liability resulting from collisions which may occur as a result of pursuits.
2. The basic issue that a pursuit policy must address is the need to balance two conflicting interests: the apprehension of law violators and the safety of bystanders, officers, and offenders. A policy that provides officers with clearly defined procedures and which subjects pursuits to close supervision is most likely to successfully resolve this conflict.

DEFINITIONS

VEHICLE PURSUIT: An active attempt by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to stop and/or apprehend the operator and/or occupants of a vehicle who are attempting to elude or evade the officer by utilizing evasive tactics.

AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE: a Department vehicle that has been registered as an emergency vehicle with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDot). All Department vehicles with emergency lights or a siren installed will be registered with the Penndot as an emergency vehicle.

PRIMARY UNIT: The police unit which initiates a pursuit or any unit which assumes a safe position/distance immediately behind the fleeing vehicle.

SECONDARY UNIT: Any emergency vehicle which becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance.

COORDINATING SUPERVISOR: A supervisor/commander who is not involved in the pursuit; designated as the incident commander; and responsible for the management, supervision, and coordination of the pursuit.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Shippensburg University Police Department to protect the lives and property of all persons to the greatest extent possible when its officers are required to enforce laws by engaging in vehicle pursuits. To fulfill this obligation, the Department will regulate the manner in which vehicle pursuits are undertaken and performed. All personnel involved in a vehicle pursuit will abide completely with all requirements of this General Order.

PROCEDURES

AUTHORIZATION: Vehicle pursuits will be conducted in compliance with, and under the authority of, Title 75 Chapter 63 subchapter C of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.”

INITIATION AND CONTINUATION OF PURSUIT:

1. An officer may initiate a vehicle pursuit only when he/she concludes that the immediate danger to the public, the officers, and the suspect created by the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public, the officers, or the suspect created should the suspect remain at large.
2. An officer may pursue only an alleged forcible felony suspect who the officer has probable cause to arrest AND whose identity the officer does **not** know.
 - a. An officer may pursue a suspect whose identity is known ONLY if the officer has probable cause to believe the suspect would present a threat to cause death or serious injury should he not be immediately apprehended.
 - b. An officer will not pursue a suspect when the sole reason for the traffic stop is a payable violation or a misdemeanor crime.
 - c. An officer will not pursue a fleeing motorcycle operator.
3. When determining whether to initiate or continue a pursuit, an officer must consider their own driving ability, the performance capabilities of his vehicle, the location of the pursuit, the time of day and day of the week, the condition of the road surface, weather conditions, the speed and other driving behavior of the suspect, and the amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area.
4. An officer will not initiate, or become involved in, a vehicle pursuit when there are any passengers in their vehicle who are not sworn police officers of this Department or sworn officers of an allied agency involved in a law enforcement function.
5. If a vehicle is pursued within or into the jurisdiction of the Department by officers of another police agency, no officer of the Department will become involved in the pursuit without direct supervisory authorization. When deciding if and how officers from this agency should become involved in such a pursuit, supervisors will be guided by all of the requirements of this Order.
6. The primary or secondary unit will notify the coordinating supervisor via the duty officer if it is readily apparent the vehicle pursuit is leaving our primary jurisdiction (Shippensburg University Campus). The coordinating supervisor will liaison with supervisory personnel from that jurisdiction to determine their level of involvement and relinquish control of the pursuit to that jurisdiction if appropriate.

7. If a coordinating supervisor is not available to manage, supervise, or coordinate the pursuit, the officer will terminate the pursuit. The duty officer will ensure the termination announcement is made via the radio.

COLLISION RESPONSIBILITIES: Should an officer involved in a pursuit become involved in, become a contributing factor to, or witness a motor vehicle collision, that officer will immediately discontinue their participation in the pursuit; will notify Communications of the occurrence of the collision; and will take such actions as are necessary to deal with the collision.

EXCEPTION: An officer who is involved in a collision during a pursuit may continue their participation in the pursuit only if he/she is the only officer currently within sight of the suspect's vehicle, the accident appears to be minor in nature, no one appears to have been injured as a result of the accident, and the emergency lights, siren and other essential equipment of the officer's vehicle were not disabled as a result of the accident. Should an officer decide to continue a pursuit after becoming involved in a collision, he will notify the dispatcher of that fact and will request that other officers be dispatched to the scene of the collision.

PURSUIT TACTICS:

1. Only four wheeled Ford UTV vehicles registered as emergency vehicles will be utilized in a pursuit.
2. When engaged in a pursuit, officers will not:
 - a. Drive with reckless disregard for the safety of themselves or other persons; or
 - b. Drive through stop signs and/or red lights without first slowing and deliberately clearing the intersection of other traffic.
3. Police vehicles which are involved in a pursuit will have emergency lights and the siren activated at all times during the pursuit. Should the emergency lights, siren, or any other essential equipment of a police vehicle involved in a pursuit become disabled, the officer operating that vehicle will immediately discontinue his participation in the pursuit and will notify the dispatcher of that fact.
4. Following initiation of a pursuit, the coordinating supervisor will determine which officers will be involved in the pursuit. Officers not assigned to the pursuit by the supervisor will not join, follow, or otherwise become involved in the pursuit.
5. The use of roadblocks (stationary or moving) to stop a moving vehicle, intentionally driving in front of or alongside of a violator's vehicle, or intentional bumping or ramming is prohibited.
6. Officers may not discharge a firearm from or at a moving vehicle only as prescribed by the Department's General Order.
7. Officers involved in a pursuit are authorized to suspend conformance with normal traffic regulations to the extent allowed under Title 75 Chapter 63 subchapter C of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and are required to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons."

RESPONSIBILITIES – OFFICER INITIATING A PURSUIT:

1. An officer initiating a vehicle pursuit will immediately notify the duty officer of the pursuit as well as of the following information:
 - a. The location, speed, and direction of travel of the suspect vehicle;
 - b. The description and license plate number, if known, of the suspect vehicle;
 - c. The number and descriptions, if known, of occupants of the suspect vehicle; and,
 - d. The reasons supporting his decision to initiate the pursuit.
2. An officer initiating a vehicle pursuit will immediately notify the dispatcher should there be any change in any of the above required information during the pursuit.
3. The pursuit may be terminated by the primary and/or secondary units at any time.

RESPONSIBILITIES - SECONDARY OFFICERS INVOLVED IN A PURSUIT:

A secondary officer involved in a vehicle pursuit will activate all emergency vehicle equipment from the point of entry into the pursuit until it is ended, and follow the initiating officer's vehicle at a safe distance. The secondary officer will assist the primary officer with radio communications. This communication includes: vehicle speeds, direction of travel, road and traffic conditions, and other pertinent details related to the pursuit.

RESPONSIBILITIES - SUPERVISOR OF OFFICERS INVOLVED IN A PURSUIT:

1. Upon being notified of a pursuit, the supervisor and/or commander within the initiating officer's chain of command will be the coordinating supervisor. The coordinating supervisor will advise the dispatcher that they are the incident commander. The supervisor/duty officer will notify the Lieutenant and or Chief as soon as practical.
2. The coordinating supervisor will determine which officers will be involved in the pursuit and will notify those officers via radio. The supervisor will also determine and coordinate the tactics which will be utilized by the officers involved in the pursuit. The number and type of units involved and the tactics utilized should be determined on the basis of:
 - a. The nature of the offenses for which the suspect is being pursued;
 - b. The number of suspects involved;
 - c. Information concerning the tendency and/or ability of the suspect(s) to resist arrest;
 - d. The ability of the suspect(s) to continue their flight on foot at the conclusion of the pursuit;
 - e. The availability of K-9 units, airborne units, units from other agencies assisting with the pursuit, and equipment designed to terminate pursuits;
 - f. The number of officers required to handle incidents and calls for service other than the vehicle pursuit; and
 - g. Any other factors which would warrant an increase or decrease in the additional danger created by involving more vehicles in the pursuit or increasing the intensity of the tactics utilized during the pursuit.
3. The coordinating supervisor will liaison with the supervisory personnel of other agencies when it becomes readily apparent that the pursuit is leaving our jurisdiction (City limits). The coordinating supervisor will determine the other agency's level of involvement and relinquish control of the pursuit once they are involved if appropriate.
4. The supervisor will continuously review the initial, as well as all additional, information concerning the pursuit and will abide completely by all requirements of this Order when deciding whether the pursuit should continue or be terminated.

RESPONSIBILITIES – DUTY OFFICERS IN PURSUIT COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Upon being notified of a vehicle pursuit, a duty officer will immediately notify the coordinating supervisor of all essential information regarding the pursuit.
2. During a pursuit, a duty officer will:
 - a. Notify all personnel who the coordinating supervisor is;
 - b. Receive and record all incoming information concerning the pursuit;
 - c. Switch all radio transmissions not concerning the pursuit to an alternate radio channel;
 - d. Obtain motor vehicle, criminal history, and departmental records on all suspects and suspect vehicles involved in the pursuit and advise the coordinating supervisor of any pertinent information obtained;
 - e. Coordinate all officers involved in the pursuit under the direction of the coordinating supervisor;
 - f. Notify neighboring police agencies immediately.

- g. Determine the availability of airborne units to assist in the pursuit and advise the coordinating supervisor of same.

TERMINATION OF PURSUIT:

1. A pursuit may be terminated by any involved unit(s), the coordinating supervisor, or Lieutenant/Chief. If a decision is made to terminate a pursuit, all officers involved in the pursuit, as well as the dispatcher, will be notified of the decision immediately.
2. Upon notification of the pursuit's termination:
 - a. All emergency equipment will be turned off;
 - b. All emergency vehicles will immediately abide by all State transportation articles; and
 - c. The dispatcher will advise outside agencies of the vehicle's description and last known direction of travel.
3. A pursuit will be immediately terminated by all officers involved in the pursuit if:
 - a. The danger posed to the public, the officers involved, or the suspect by continued pursuit becomes greater than the immediate or potential danger posed to the public, the officers involved, and the suspect should the suspect remain at large;
 - b. The distance between the police vehicles and the suspect's vehicle becomes so great that further pursuit would likely be futile;
 - c. The suspect is alleged to have committed only misdemeanor offenses and the suspect vehicle leaves Shippensburg University campus/property;
 - d. The suspect vehicle comes under the surveillance of an airborne police unit. Under such circumstances, officers who had been involved in the pursuit may continue to follow the suspect's vehicle, as directed by the airborne unit, at a safe speed and in a safe manner;
 - e. If a coordinating supervisor is not available to manage, supervise, or coordinate the pursuit; or
 - f. The officers involved in the pursuit lose radio contact with the dispatcher.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW:

1. The officer initiating the pursuit, in consultation with all officers and supervisors involved in the pursuit, will complete a Pursuit Report for submission to the Chief of Police via the chain of command. The Pursuit Report will be completed and submitted prior to the end of the officer's work week during which the pursuit occurred.
2. The supervisor overseeing the pursuit will email all pertinent information to the Chief related to the pursuit.
3. The Lieutenant will forward a copy of all Pursuit Reports to the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) for tracking purposes. The Lieutenant will perform an analysis of all Pursuit Reports received during the preceding year to determine if patterns or trends exist that indicate the need for additional training or policy modifications. This analysis will be completed and forwarded to the Chief of Police by the end of the first quarter of each calendar year.
4. The Lieutenant will conduct a documented review of this General Order and pursuit reporting procedures on an annual basis.
5. General Order will be reviewed annually in August during roll call training."

RECISSION

APPROVALS

Executive Management Team; 2/26/2020

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DISTRIBUTION:

Public