

## CAMBRIDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

**Title:** *VEHICLE PURSUIT*

**Procedure:** 4.031

**Date Issued:**

**Revised:**

### **PURPOSE:**

To establish guidelines and responsibilities for vehicle pursuits requiring emergency operation of Police Department vehicles.

### **POLICY:**

Emergency operations of department vehicles shall be conducted in strict accordance with existing statutes, rules and procedures.

Vehicle pursuit is one of the most dangerous duties a police officer must perform. When a decision to pursue is made, the safety of all concerned must be considered. The seriousness of the offense must be weighed against the hazards of the health and welfare of citizens who might be affected by the chase. During the pursuit, continuous balancing of the seriousness versus safety is mandatory.

The Department expects an officer, or his supervisor, to terminate a pursuit whenever the risks to the safety of the officers or citizens outweigh the danger to the community if the offender is not caught.

No task is of such importance as to justify the reckless disregard of the safety of innocent persons. The principles of safety shall not become secondary.

The responsibility for the decision to overtake or pursue another vehicle rests on the individual officer. In arriving at his decision he must carefully consider all factors involved and the possible consequences. To diminish the likelihood of a pursuit, officers intending to stop a vehicle should, when possible, be within close proximity to the vehicle before activating emergency lights and siren.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Vehicle Pursuit:** An active attempt by one or more officers to apprehend a suspect operating a motor vehicle, while the suspect is trying to avoid capture by using high speed or other evasive tactics such as driving off the roadway, sudden or unexpected movements or willfully failing to yield to a signal to stop.

**Serious Felony:** A felony that involves an actual or threatened attack that the officer has reasonable cause to believe could result or has resulted in death or serious bodily injury.

**Roadblock:** Any method, restriction or obstruction used or intended for the purpose of preventing free passage of vehicles on a roadway to effect the apprehension of an actual or suspected offender in a vehicle.

**Primary Pursuing Unit:** The police unit that initiates a pursuit or any unit that assumes control of the pursuit.

**Terminate Pursuit:** The officer will deactivate audible and visual emergency warning equipment (emergency lights and siren) and resume a safe speed.

**Supervisor:** The on duty patrol shift Supervisor.

### **PROCEDURE:**

Vehicle pursuit is justified only when the officer knows or has reasonable grounds to believe the suspect is attempting to evade apprehension **and the suspect, if allowed to escape, may present a danger to human life or cause serious injury to other people.**

Officers engaged in emergency vehicle operations shall use audible and visual

emergency warning equipment (emergency lights and siren).

**INITIATING PRIMARY UNIT RESPONSIBILITY**

1. The responsibility for the decision to initiate pursuit rests with the individual officer. The officer shall, in all cases, notify the Communications Center when a pursuit is underway and provide the following information:

- police unit identification;
- location, speed and direction of travel, with continuous updates;
- vehicle description including license number, if known;
- the specific reason for the pursuit, including known laws violated;
- number and description of occupants;
- when, or if, the pursuit leaves the municipal limits; and,
- when switching to another radio frequency.

2. Failure to provide sufficient information will be cause for the supervisor to order termination of the pursuit.

3. The initiating/primary unit shall be in field command and bears operational responsibility for the pursuit unless relieved by a supervisor. The authority of this unit pertains to the immediate field operation and is, always, subordinate to the shift supervisor or commanding officer.

4. The primary unit may maintain pursuit as long as it is safe to do so; until directed to terminate the pursuit by a supervisor; the suspect is stopped; or a reasonable distance has been covered which may indicate the futility of continued pursuit.

5. The decision to abandon pursuit may be the most intelligent course of action. A pursuing officer must constantly question whether the seriousness of the offense

justifies continued pursuit. **In any case, a pursuit shall terminate under any of the following circumstances:**

if, in the opinion of the pursuing officer or a supervisor, there is a clear and unreasonable danger to the officer or others created by the pursuit which outweighs the necessity for immediate apprehension;

the suspects identity has been established so that later apprehension can be accomplished and there is no longer a need for immediate apprehension;

the prevailing traffic, roadway and environmental conditions dictate the futility of continued pursuit;

the pursued vehicle's location is no longer known; or,

the pursuing officer knows or is reasonably certain that the offender is a juvenile, the offense is a misdemeanor or non-serious felony, and the safety factors involved are obviously greater than those with which a juvenile can cope.

6. Termination of a pursuit does not necessarily prohibit the following of a vehicle at a safe speed or remaining in an area to re-initiate pursuit if the opportunity and conditions permit.

7. When terminating a pursuit, the officer must advise dispatch that he is terminating pursuit. The officer will also turn off his vehicle's emergency lights and siren.

**ASSISTING UNIT RESPONSIBILITY**

1. Assistance will be coordinated by the Communications Center under the direction of the supervisor. The supervisor and primary unit will be advised of the identity and locations of units who can assist.

2. An active pursuit will normally involve no more than two units (the primary unit and one backup unit). If more

assistance is specifically requested the amount will be determined by:

- nature of offense;
- number of suspects;
- whether the participating units are single or double man cars; and,
- other clear and articulated facts that would warrant the increased hazards.

3. Only the supervisor may authorize more than two units to be in active pursuit. All other units will remain aware of the direction and progress of the pursuit, but will not join in unless specifically authorized to do so by the Supervisor.

4. An authorized assisting unit shall immediately notify the Communications Center of its identity upon joining the pursuit.

5. If the primary unit is a one-man car the assisting unit may assume radio communications responsibility allowing the primary to devote full attention to driving.

6. The assisting unit will maintain a safe distance behind the primary unit.

7. Assisting units shall avoid intersecting the path of an oncoming high speed vehicle.

8. If the primary unit becomes disabled, the assisting unit will become the primary unit. A new backup unit may be authorized by the supervisor.

**COMMUNICATION CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Receive, repeat, and properly record all incoming information on the pursuit, the pursued vehicles and occupants.

2. Immediately notify the supervisor when a pursuit is initiated.

3. Clear the radio channel of unnecessary traffic; advise other units that a pursuit is in progress and broadcast relevant information.

4. Perform relevant records and motor vehicle checks.

5. Control all radio communication during the pursuit and continue to monitor radio traffic until pursuit is terminated.

6. Coordinate assistance under the direction of the supervisor.

7. Notify, as soon as practical, outside agencies if the pursuit enters their jurisdiction.

**SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY**

1. Upon being notified of a pursuit, the supervisor will verify the following:  
 no more than the necessary units are involved;  
 the proper frequency and procedures are being utilized; and,  
 affected allied agencies are being notified.

2. The supervisor will direct the pursuit, approve or order alternative tactics, and maintain control until the pursuit is terminated.

3. Remain within our corporate limits to provide proper supervision unless the supervisor is the primary unit. The supervisor will designate an officer to remain within the corporate limits and assume command until the supervisor returns.

4. In the absence of adequate information from the primary or backup units, the supervisor will terminate the pursuit.

5. As with many tactical field problems, it is not necessary that the supervisor be physically present in order to coordinate and control the pursuit.

6. If the pursuit terminates in our jurisdiction, the supervisor will proceed to the

termination point to provide guidance and necessary supervision.

**PURSUIT INITIATED BY ANOTHER POLICE AGENCY**

1. A unit may become directly involved in the pursuit if authorized by the supervisor as long as the pursuit remains within our corporate limits. To continue outside of our

corporate limits, authorization to do so must be received from the supervisor.

2. All other relevant guidelines described in this procedure will apply.

**COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANOTHER POLICE AGENCY**

1. Monitor the progress of the pursuit and relay relevant information to the field units.

2. If the pursuit terminates in our jurisdiction, ensure that necessary police and other assistance is dispatched.

**SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY IN PURSUIT BY ANOTHER AGENCY**

1. Closely monitor the pursuit while it is in our jurisdiction to ensure that adequate assistance is provided.

2. Ensure that Police units do not continue the pursuit once the chase has passed our corporate limits unless necessary to assist the pursuing unit.

**VEHICLE OPERATIONS, TACTICS, LIMITATIONS AND PROHIBITIONS**

1. **Traffic Violations:** Pursuits for minor traffic violations are prohibited.

2. **Property Crimes:** Pursuits for property crimes will be based on the seriousness of the crime weighed against the danger to life posed by the offender and the danger posed by the pursuit itself.

3. **Motorcycles:** Motorcycles are prohibited from engaging in a pursuit.

4. **Offensive Tactics:** During the course of a pursuit, deliberate contact between vehicles; forcing the offender into parked cars, ditches, or any other obstacle; boxing in or heading off; ramming; or driving along side the pursued vehicle while it is in motion shall be prohibited unless such actions are specifically approved by the supervisor. Such tactics may be approved only when the use of deadly force would be authorized. **Reckless** or hazardous driving maneuvers of the pursued vehicle shall not be duplicated by any pursuing unit.

5. **Civilian Ride-Along:** No unit will engage in a pursuit when accompanied by a civilian ride-along.

6. **Unmarked Police Vehicles:** Officers operating unmarked vehicles (provided the vehicle is equipped with emergency lights and siren) may engage in a pursuit only when the offender presents an immediate and direct threat to life. The unmarked car will withdraw from active pursuit when a marked unit becomes available to take over the pursuit.

7. **Caravanning:** There shall be no caravanning by field units not directly involved in the immediate active pursuit.

8. **Passing:** Passing another pursuing police vehicle in a pursuit is prohibited.

9. **Spacing:** All units in a pursuit shall space themselves at a distance that will ensure proper braking and reaction time for any sudden or unexpected maneuvers.

10. **Controlled Access Highway:** Units shall not pursue offenders the wrong way on a toll road, divided highway, or ramps.

11. **Traffic Control Devices:** Extreme caution must be used whenever officers disregard traffic signs or signals.

12. **Emergency Equipment:** No officer will continue a pursuit if the emergency equipment on the unit ceases to function properly.

13. **Collisions:** No officer will continue a pursuit if his unit becomes involved in a traffic collision unless the collision is with the pursued vehicle and no other police unit is available to assume control.

14. **Roadblocks:** The use of roadblocks must be authorized by a supervisor. Generally, a roadblock will be employed only as a last resort. The use of a roadblock must be directly associated with the seriousness of the offense. The roadblock must be clearly visible and provide adequate warning to allow vehicles to come to a safe stop. The roadway shall not be completely blocked unless the use of deadly force would be authorized.

15. **Boundary Limits:** No officer will continue a pursuit initiated by this Department once the pursuit has reached the far corporate limits of an adjoining municipality without the specific approval of the supervisor.

***REPORTING AND CRITIQUE***

1. At the conclusion of a pursuit, the primary unit officer will complete a comprehensive report detailing all available information.

2. The Command Staff will review the incident report and conduct a critique of the pursuit. They will review the circumstances surrounding the incident and forward a written report to the Chief of Police. This report will contain: A review of facts surrounding the incident as it relates to adherence to Departmental policy and procedure, and a finding and recommendation in those circumstances where there is deviation from policy and procedure.