

Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Standard

Purpose:

Vehicle pursuits are dangerous and pose a high risk for officers and the community. Both law enforcement personnel and the general public will benefit from a Law Enforcement Vehicular Pursuit Standard.

Standard:

Law enforcement agencies shall establish a written policy that governs the pursuit of motor vehicles. The policy, at a minimum, shall include the following:

- Definition of a motor vehicle pursuit;
- Defining the criteria under which a pursuit can be initiated;
- Evaluating the circumstances (seriousness of the alleged offense, conditions of the road and location of the pursuit, time of day and weather conditions);
- A provision that prohibits or discourages pursuits when the suspect is known to the officers or easily identifiable, unless the officers have probable cause to believe the suspect's escape poses a significant threat of death or serious physical injury to officers or others;
- Responsibilities of the initiating unit and secondary units;
- Specifying the roles and restrictions pertinent to marked, unmarked, or other types of police vehicle involvement in the pursuit;
- Provide communication protocols addressing responsibilities for officers and telecommunicators;
- Describing supervisors' responsibilities;
- Specifying when and who has the authority to terminate pursuit;
- Engaging in inter and intra-jurisdictional pursuits involving personnel from the agency and/or other jurisdictions;
- A requirement that agencies provide training to officers prior to the utilization of pursuit termination tactics and intervention techniques (e.g. PIT maneuver, tire deflation devices, road blocks, etc.);
- Requiring a written report and an administrative review of each pursuit; and
- Conducting a documented annual analysis of pursuit reports, to include a review of policy and reporting procedures, approved by the head of the agency.

Commentary:

Law enforcement agencies have historically engaged in vehicular pursuits. Due to the extreme danger that these pursuits present, many agencies have limited the circumstances in which they will allow their officers to engage in pursuits. Additionally, some agencies have outright prohibited the practice or limited them to the rarest of circumstances when deemed necessary based upon a variety of factors.

The agency should have explicit policies and procedures for pursuits. All sworn personnel should be provided with this written directive. Agencies may wish to consider frequent discussions and reviews of the policies/procedures during shift briefings and/or in-service training sessions.

Because of the inherent risk and the real possibility of injury and loss of life, agencies should seek to limit the use of vehicular pursuits. A vehicle pursuit should be terminated whenever the level of danger created by the pursuit outweighs the immediate consequences of the suspect's escape.