

VEHICLE PURSUITS

STANDARD NO(S):

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REFER TO:

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I. OBJECTIVE:

To establish guidelines for making decisions with regard to vehicular pursuit.

II. POLICY:

Vehicular pursuit of fleeing suspects can present a danger to the lives of the public, officers, and suspects involved in the pursuit. It is the responsibility of the SCSO to assist officers in the safe performance of their duties. To fulfill these obligations, it shall be the policy of the SCSO to regulate the manner in which vehicular pursuits are undertaken and performed.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. VEHICULAR PURSUIT** - An active attempt by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend a fleeing suspect who is actively attempting to elude police.
- B. AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE** - An SCSO vehicle equipped with operable emergency equipment as designated by the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law section 101
- C. PRIMARY UNIT** - the police unit which initiates a pursuit or any unit which assumes control of the pursuit.
- D. SECONDARY UNIT** - any police vehicle which becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance.
- E. PURSUIT INTERVENTION MANEUVERS** - Are one or more authorized techniques designed to terminate a vehicle pursuit in a safe and prudent manner.

1. CHANNELIZATION: is the blocking of egress routes from intersections with vehicles or barricades, leaving only one exit available to the pursued vehicle, in order to direct the vehicle to or away from specific areas.
2. BOXING IN: entails surrounding a pursued vehicle with police vehicles, which synchronize their speed and maneuvers, forcing the pursued vehicle to slow and eventually stop. The technique may also be used to surround a stationary vehicle to prevent its movement.
3. STINGER (Stop Sticks) - A Tire Deflation Device manufactured by Stinger Spike Systems. The STINGER when deployed is ten feet in length and weighs four (4) pounds. The STINGER units are equipped with power point hollow spikes held in a durable nylon base. When the STINGER is run over by a tire, the spiked tip will pierce the tire, causing the power point hollow spike to be inserted into the tire and the tire to deflate. This controlled deflation will cause the target vehicle to slow down. STINGER is the only tire deflation device approved for use by the Seneca County Sheriffs Office. All SCSO marked vehicles assigned to supervisory personnel are equipped with STINGER (Stop Sticks).
4. HIGH CENTER of GRAVITY VEHICLE: A vehicle having a high center of mass and/or a narrow wheel track relative to a high center of mass.

IV. DETAILS:

A. INITIATION OF PURSUIT:

1. The decision to initiate pursuit must be based on the pursuing officer's conclusion that the immediate danger to the officer and the public created by the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public should the suspect remain at large.
2. Any law enforcement officer in an authorized emergency vehicle may initiate a vehicular pursuit when the suspect exhibits the intention to avoid apprehension by refusing to stop when properly directed to do so. Pursuit may also be justified if the officer reasonably believes that the suspect, if allowed to flee, would present a danger to human life or cause serious injury.
3. At no time will members of the Corrections Division engage in a pursuit.
4. Deputies assigned to the Civil Division, in uniform in an authorized emergency vehicle, may engage in a pursuit pending arrival of other authorized emergency vehicles and then shall relinquish primary unit responsibility.

5. In deciding whether to initiate pursuit, the officer shall take into consideration:
 - a. road, weather and environmental conditions
 - b. population density and vehicular and pedestrian traffic
 - c. the relative performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle and the vehicle being pursued
 - d. the seriousness of the offense
6. No member of the SCSO shall become involved in a pursuit if they are transporting a prisoner or if they have a civilian in the vehicle.
7. SCSO unmarked vehicles shall be permitted to become involved in a vehicle pursuit provided they have and display proper emergency warning devices. An unmarked vehicle involved in a pursuit shall immediately stop the pursuit once a marked police car has arrived.
8. SCSO high center of gravity vehicle are permitted to enter into a pursuit. Officers pursuing in a high center of gravity vehicle should be aware of the vehicles limitations and not exceed them. An officer pursuing in a high center of gravity vehicle should disengage the pursuit if another marked vehicle is able to take its place.

B. PURSUIT OPERATIONS:

1. All emergency vehicle operations shall be conducted in strict conformity with all applicable traffic laws including Vehicle and Traffic Law Section 1104.
2. Upon engaging in a pursuit, the pursuing vehicle shall activate appropriate warning equipment.
3. Upon engaging in a pursuit, the officer will notify the E-911 Center of the location, direction and speed of the pursuit, the description of the pursued vehicle and the initial purpose of the stop.
4. The initiating/primary unit will establish a two (2) second following distance to obtain pertinent information regarding the suspect vehicle and occupants. Once this information has been obtained the primary unit will establish and maintain a minimum four (4) second following distance.
5. The primary unit will keep the E-911 Center updated on the pursuit location, speed and subsequent offenses observed.
6. E-911 personnel will notify any available SCSO supervisor of the pursuit, clear the radio channel of non-emergency traffic, and relay necessary information to other officers and jurisdictions.

7. When engaged in pursuit, officers shall not drive with reckless disregard for the safety of other road users and pedestrians.
8. Upon arrival of a secondary unit, the primary unit will relinquish radio communications responsibilities to the secondary unit. The primary and secondary unit will stagger their patrol vehicles to allow for both units to observe the suspect vehicle. Additionally the secondary unit will establish and maintain a minimum four (4) second following distance to the primary unit.
9. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise (multiple suspects, nature of offense committed) a pursuit will consist of no more than four police vehicles: a primary, secondary back up unit, a third and fourth back up units. Additional assist units will be allowed to remain in close proximity to the pursuit should one of the pursuing units become disabled or otherwise unable to continue in the pursuit and attempt to deploy stop sticks. These assist units will not become actively involved in the pursuit unless directed to do so by a supervisor.
10. The third and fourth back up units will be staggered behind one another and shall maintain a four (4) second following distance from one another. The third and fourth back up units will serve as backup at the conclusion of the pursuit.
11. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, the pursuing units will not pass one another.
12. The primary pursuit unit will become secondary when the fleeing vehicles comes under air surveillance or when another unit has been assigned primary responsibility.

C. SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. When made aware of a vehicular pursuit, the appropriate supervisor shall monitor incoming information, coordinate and direct activities as needed to ensure that proper procedures are used, and shall have the discretion to terminate the pursuit.
2. Where possible, a supervisor shall respond to the location where a vehicle has been stopped following a pursuit.
3. Whenever possible a supervisor shall not become directly involved in a pursuit.

D. PURSUIT TACTICS:

1. When feasible, available patrol unit having the most prominent markings and emergency lights will be used to pursue, particularly as the

primary unit. When a pursuit is initiated by other than a marked patrol unit, such unit will disengage when a marked unit becomes available.

2. High Center of Gravity Vehicles may be used for pursuits, however they will disengage when support from marked patrol sedans become available. The operators of High Center of Gravity Vehicles must take into account the unique handling characteristics of the vehicle and adjust their operation of the vehicle accordingly.
3. Officers will not follow the pursuit on parallel streets unless authorized by a supervisor or when it is possible to conduct such an operation without unreasonable hazard to other vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
4. All intervention tactics short of deadly force such as STINGER (Stop Stick), rolling roadblocks, and channeling (with appropriate advanced warning) will be authorized when it is possible to do so and when Deputies utilizing these tactics have received appropriate training in their deployment or technique. The Sheriff shall deem what training is appropriate to authorize such deployment.
5. Decisions to discharge firearms at or from a moving vehicle, or to use roadblocks, shall be governed by this agency's use of force policy, and are prohibited if they present an unreasonable risk to others. They should first be authorized, whenever possible, by a supervisor.
6. Roadblocks which completely block all lanes of the roadway are authorized so long as the suspect has adequate advance warning, no less than 1700 feet or .3 miles, which allows the suspect adequate distance to stop the suspect vehicle prior to reaching the roadblock.
7. Once the pursued vehicle is stopped, officers shall utilize appropriate High Felony Stop officer safety tactics and shall be aware of the necessity to utilize only reasonable and necessary force to take suspects into custody.

E. TERMINATION OF THE PURSUIT:

1. The primary pursuing unit shall continually re-evaluate and assess the pursuit situation including all of the initiating factors and terminate the pursuit whenever he or she reasonably believes the risks associated with continued pursuit are greater than the public safety benefit of making an immediate apprehension.
2. The pursuit may be terminated by the primary pursuit unit at any time.
3. A supervisor may order the termination of a pursuit at any time.
4. A pursuit shall be terminated if the suspect's identity has been determined, and immediate apprehension is not necessary to protect the public or officers, and apprehension at a later time is feasible.

F. INTERJURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS:

1. The pursuing officer will notify the E-911 Center communications when it is likely that a pursuit will continue into a neighboring jurisdiction or across the county line.
2. When a pursuit enters this jurisdiction, the actions of SCSO officers shall be governed by this policy

G. MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS:

1. Since many pursuits become multi-jurisdictional, assisting SCSO units must take into account the total number of police vehicles engaged in a pursuit before deciding to engage as an assist unit. No SCSO member will assist in any pursuit if there are four or more vehicles pursuing the suspect. If any SCSO member is involved in a pursuit initiated by an outside agency and that pursuit leave Seneca County, SCSO members must disengage unless authorized to continue by a SCSO supervisor.

H. AFTER-ACTION REPORTING :

1. Whenever any officer engages in a pursuit, the officer will file a SCSO Vehicle Pursuit Report (SCSO-LE-010) detailing the circumstances of the pursuit. Each deputy who is involved in the pursuit regardless of the level of involvement will complete the pursuit report form. Examples of minimal involvement that would require a report include but are not limited to: began response to the area of the pursuit to assist, answered up on the radio to assist and were cancelled, attempted to respond to a point of interception to deploy STINGER, arrived after actual pursuit ended and assisted in taking suspect(s) into custody. This report shall be critiqued by the appropriate supervisor or supervisors to determine if policy has been complied with and to detect and correct any training deficiencies.
2. The department will periodically analyze police pursuit activity and identify any additions, deletions or modifications warranted in departmental pursuit procedures.

I. TRAINING:

1. Officers who drive police vehicles shall be given initial and periodic update training in the agency's pursuit policy and in safe driving tactics.