



WHATCOM COUNTY SHERIFF

WHATCOM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Bill Elfo, Sheriff
311 Grand Ave.
Bellingham, WA 98225

Public Transparency Dashboard Report

Vehicular Pursuits

2022 – 1st Quarter

Background Information

Vehicle pursuits expose innocent citizens, law enforcement officers and fleeing violators to the risk of serious injury or death. Deciding whether to pursue a motor vehicle is a critical decision that must be made quickly and under difficult and unpredictable circumstances.

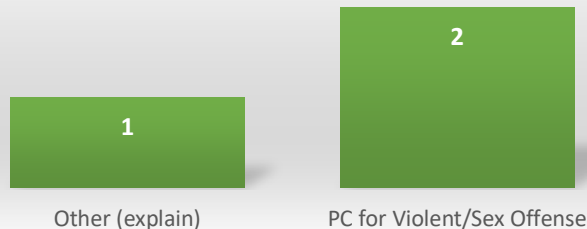
Following every vehicular pursuit, the pursuing deputy must complete a pursuit report in BlueTeam, the agencies online data reporting tool. This report collects limited information about the pursuit, and is separate from the primary case reports that will be written by the involved deputies.

During this reporting period there were 3 pursuits involving WCSO deputies. None of the pursuits resulted in a collision or injury to citizens or deputies.

Why Pursuits Were Initiated

Reason Pursuit Initiated

(JAN-MAR 2022)



Reason Pursuit Initiated

(YTD 2022)



Notes:

Deputies may not engage in a vehicle pursuit unless probable cause exists to believe a person in the vehicle has committed or is committing a violent offense or sex offense as defined in RCW 9.94A.030, or an escape under RCW 9A.76, or there is reasonable suspicion that the driver is driving under the influence and poses an immediate threat to the community, and:

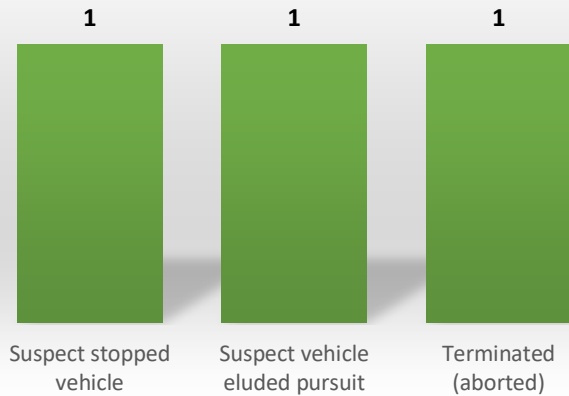
1. The pursuit is necessary for the purpose of identifying or apprehending the person, and
2. The person poses an imminent threat to the safety of others and the safety risks of failing to apprehend or identify the person are considered to be greater than the safety risks of the vehicular pursuit under the circumstances, and
3. The deputy has received authorization to engage in the pursuit from the shift supervisor.

The pursuit initiated with a reason of "other" involved a deputy attempting to make an initial stop of a racing vehicle which had stopped at a stop sign, then sped off recklessly. The deputy did not actually engage in a pursuit with the vehicle after it fled from the stop sign.

How Pursuits Were Concluded

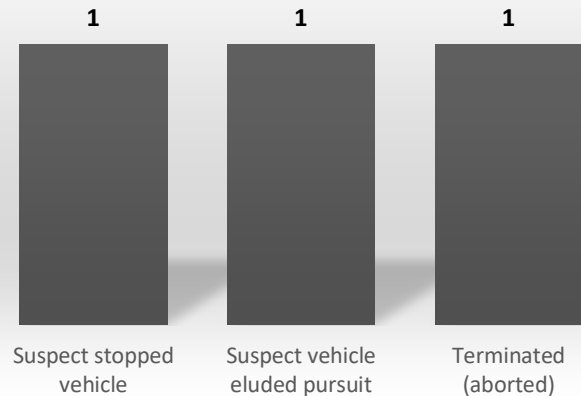
How Pursuit Concluded

(JAN-MAR 2022)



How Pursuit Concluded

(YTD 2022)



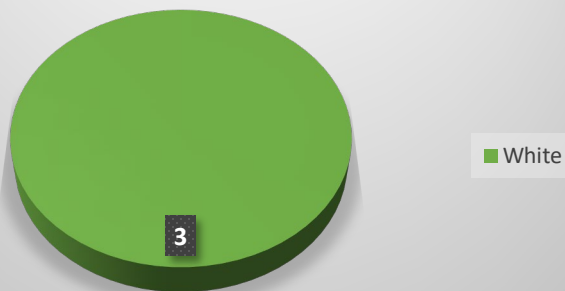
Notes:

Deputies are required to terminate a pursuit whenever the totality of the circumstances known or that reasonably ought to be known to the deputy during the pursuit indicates that the present risk of continuing the pursuit reasonably appear to outweigh the risks of allowing the suspect to escape.

Race/Ethnicity of Drivers Involved in Pursuits

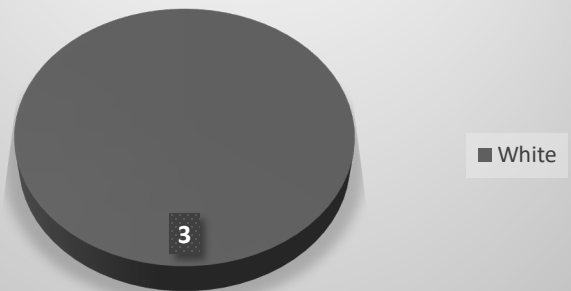
Driver Race/Ethnicity in Pursuits

(JAN-MAR 2022)



Driver Race/Ethnicity in Pursuits

(YTD 2022)



Notes:

The race of the involved driver is reported by the involved deputy based on WCSO or Department of Licensing records, or observed physical appearance, and is not always known.

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About Public Transparency Dashboard Reporting

In 2021 the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) began a project to collect and analyze new data streams related to our use of force, vehicular pursuits, traffic stops, and citizen complaints with the goal to be more transparent with the community we serve.

The Office of Professional Standards (OPS) is responsible for establishing data collection methods and standards, and for the analysis and reporting of the data. This data was first reported publicly as part of the Sheriff's 2022 annual report.

In 2023 a Public Transparency Dashboard page was added to the WCSO webpage, and the OPS began quarterly reporting to the public.