AUBURN POLICE DEPARTMENT

PURSUIT ANALYSIS

2019

This document is to report 2019 pursuit information, conduct a comparative analysis against recent years on a variety of pursuit aspects, offer suggestions on how to improve decision-making during pursuit driving by Auburn officers, and to identify areas where EVOC training can be enhanced.

Commander Mike Hirman

AUBURN POLICE DEPARTMENT

2019 Pursuit Analysis

The information in this analysis was obtained from Spillman Incident Reports, CAD dispatch printouts, Supervisor's Reports of Pursuits, along with their corresponding Pursuit Critiques.

The current procedure for collecting data on pursuits is outlined below and in the Auburn Police Department Policy Manual, Chapter 307.

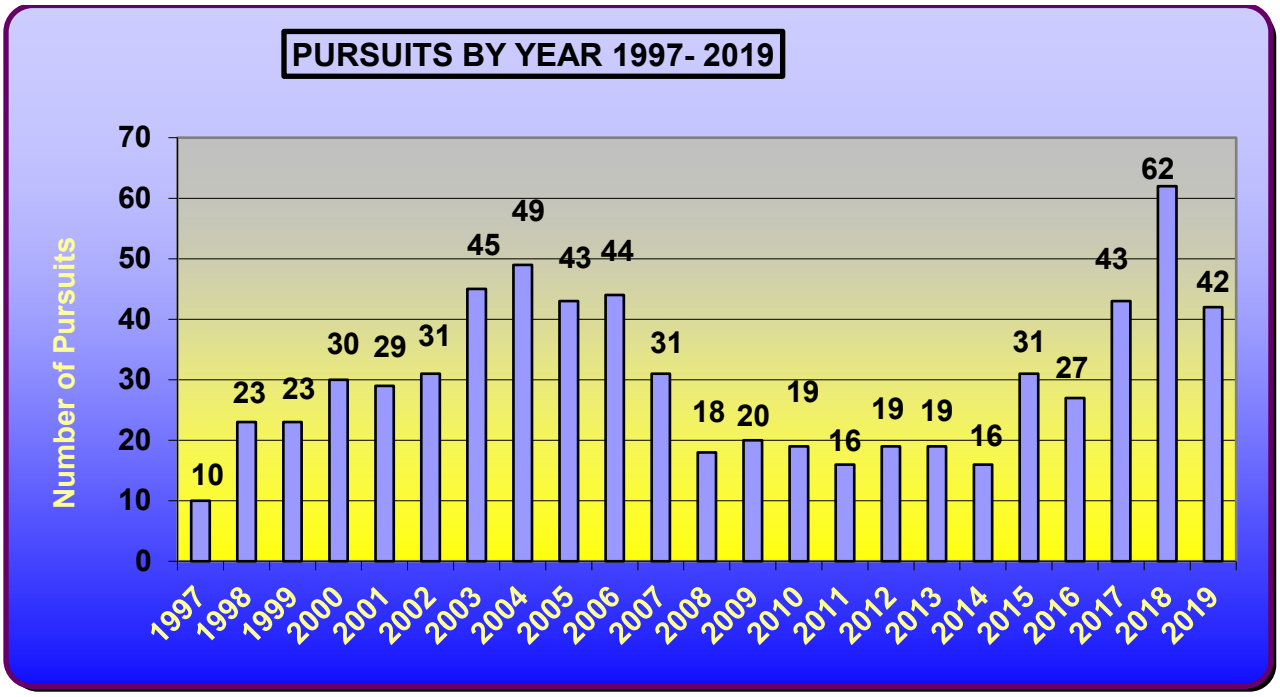
Vehicle Pursuit Reporting

1. Immediately following pursuits, patrol supervisors are responsible for completing a *Supervisory Report of Pursuit* through Blue Team. This report is forwarded through the chain of command to the Chief of Police.
2. Once the Office of Inspectional Services logs the report, it is then available to the EVOC coordinator for the purposes of data collection, annual analysis, evaluating and/or recommending changes to the pursuit policy, and identifying potential training opportunities.
3. Following the pursuit, typically the next day or next opportunity to gather those involved in the pursuit, the patrol supervisor conducts a *Pursuit Critique* and forwards it through the same channels as the *Supervisor's Report of Pursuit*. The purpose of the critique is to identify those aspects of the pursuit that went well and those that could be improved. It is also designed to determine whether the pursuit met the policy manual guidelines, or whether if deviated outside the guidelines.

2019 Pursuit and Comparative Analysis

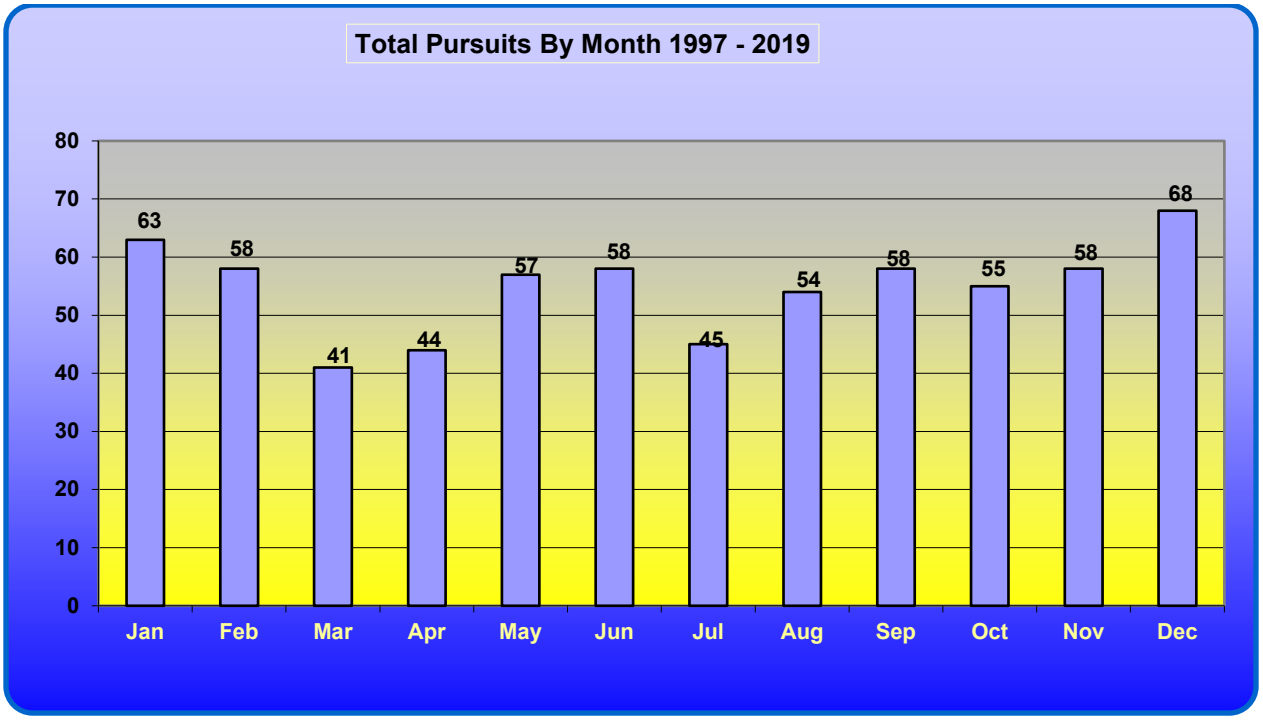
Following is a collection of key charts and tables that cover vehicle pursuits by type, time of day, tactical intervention and more. In addition, key observations for each category are provided.

Chart 1. Total Pursuits by Year



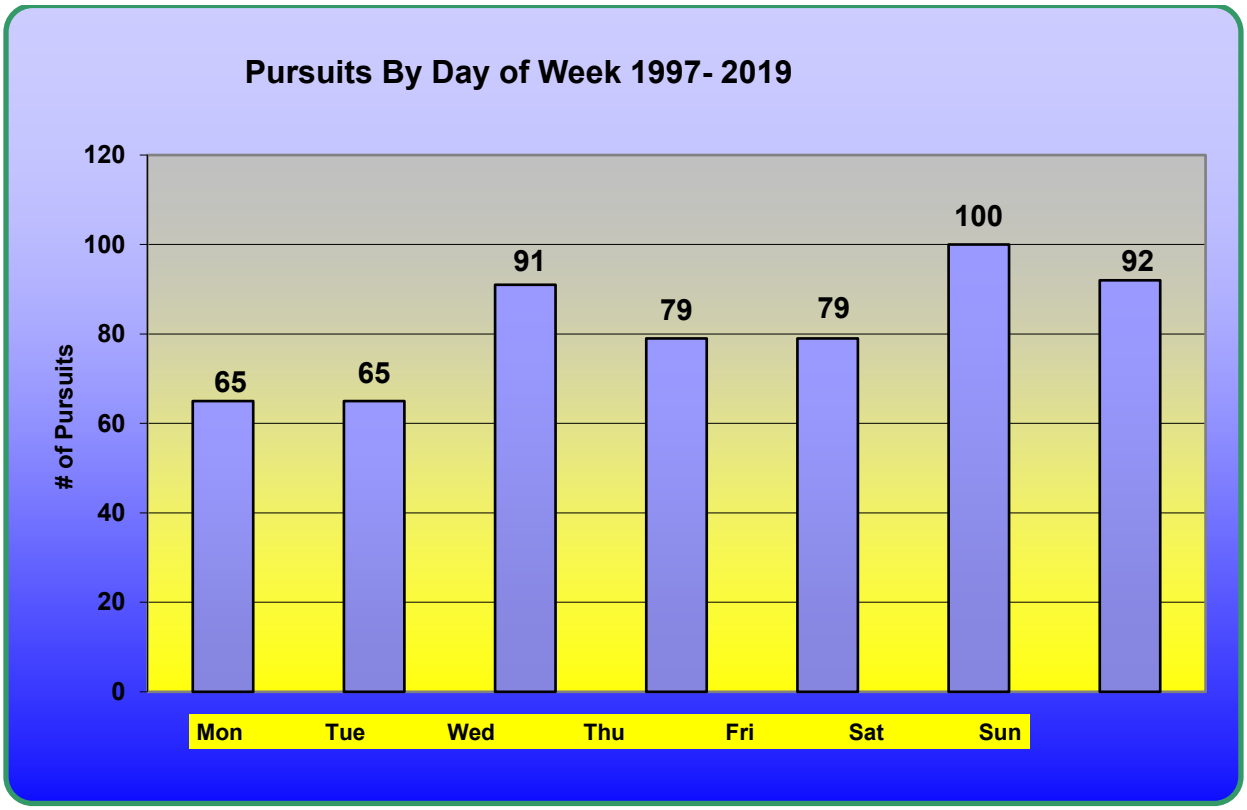
Observations: There was a 37% decrease in the number of pursuits from 2018.

Chart 2. Pursuits by Month 1997-2019



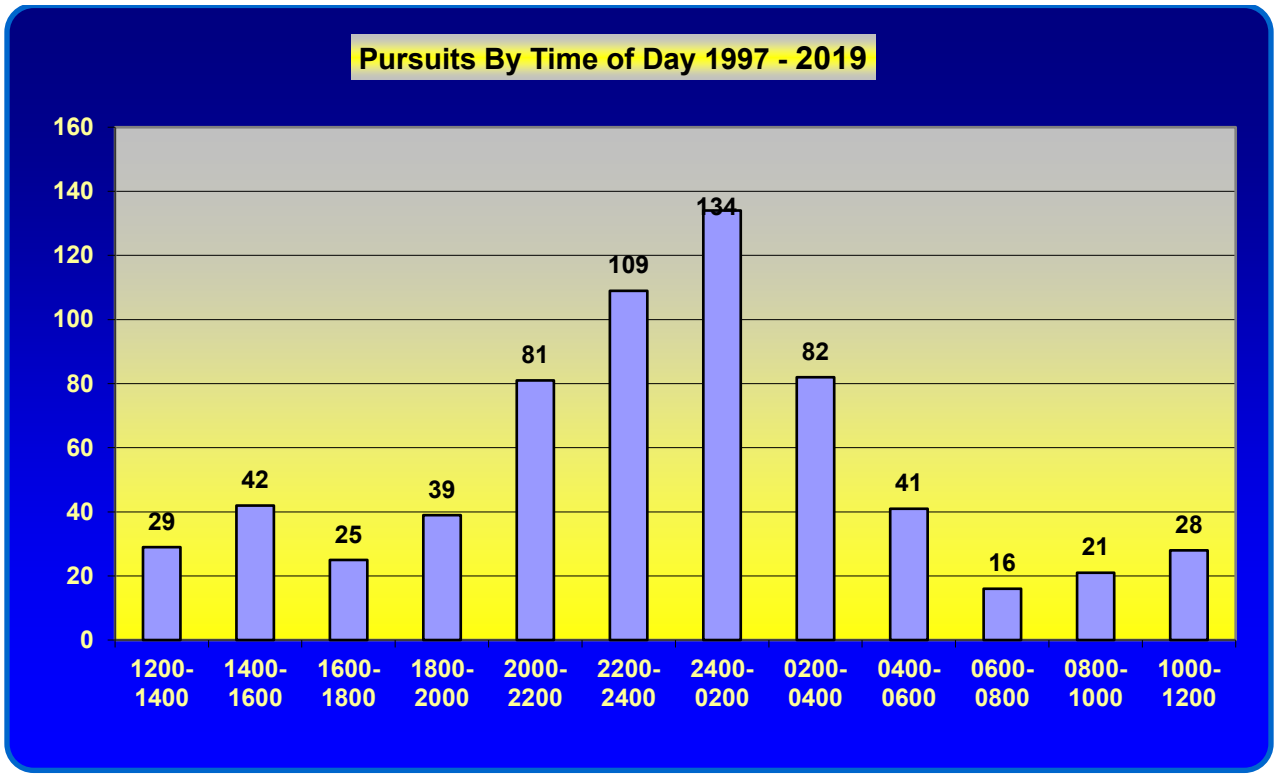
Observations: No significant trend in the number of pursuits by month. The months with the lowest number of pursuits are March, April, and July.

Chart 3. Pursuits by Day of the Week (1997-2019)



Observations: Historically, Sundays and Mondays have the highest number of pursuits.

Chart 4. Pursuits by Time of Day (1997-2019)



Observations:

Pursuits in Auburn primarily occur between 2000 hours and 0300 hours. There is a number of possible explanations for this trend. Favorable traffic conditions are present during this period. Patrol staffing deployment between these hours is increased as this period correlates with the hours of the highest calls for service. The ratio of officers versus citizens on the road is greatest at this time, and Auburn crime data indicate the criminal element is more active between these hours. With the exception of the afternoon rush hour, this is reflective of the APD workload and staffing distribution.

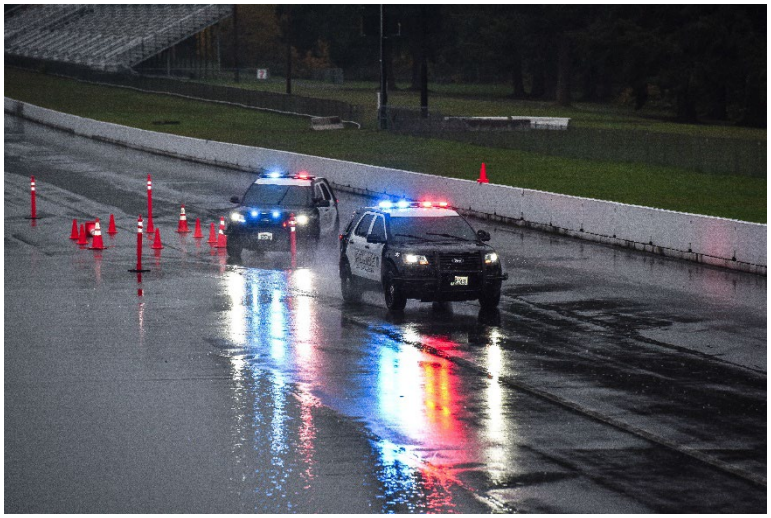
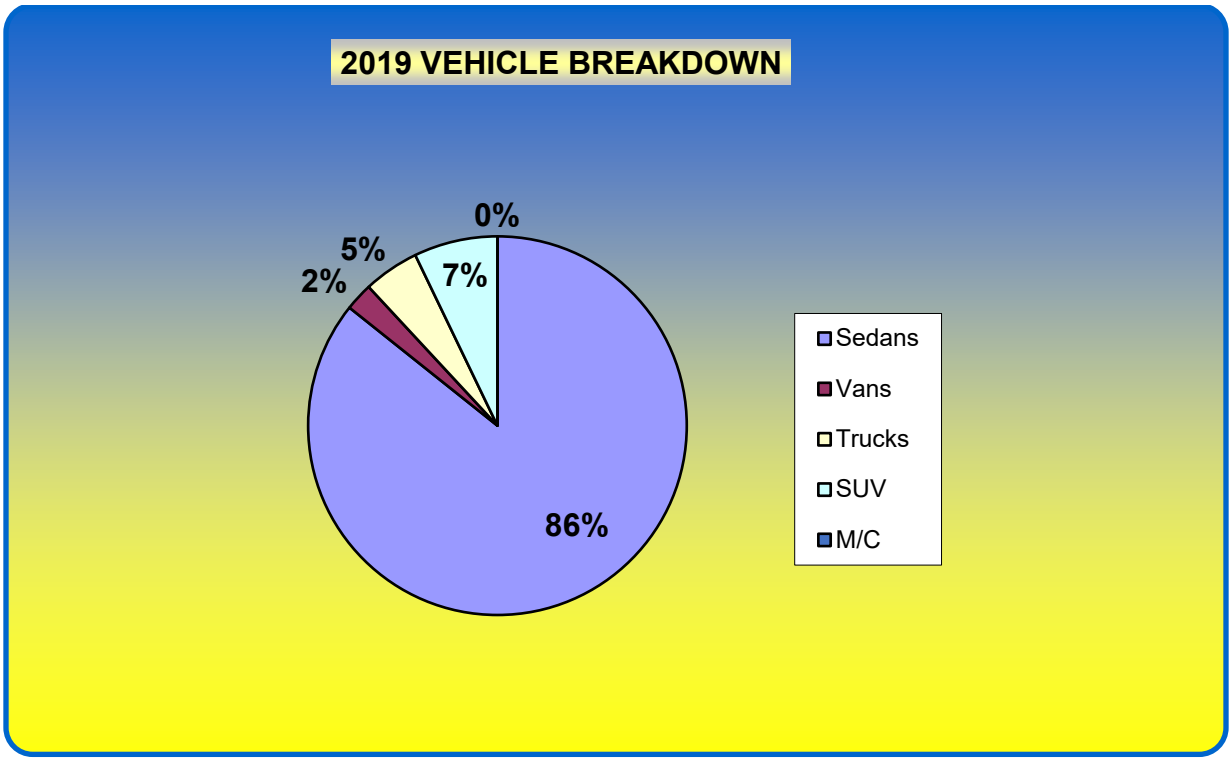


Chart 5. Pursuits by Vehicle Type



Observations: Sedans make up by far the majority of cars initiating pursuits.

Chart 6

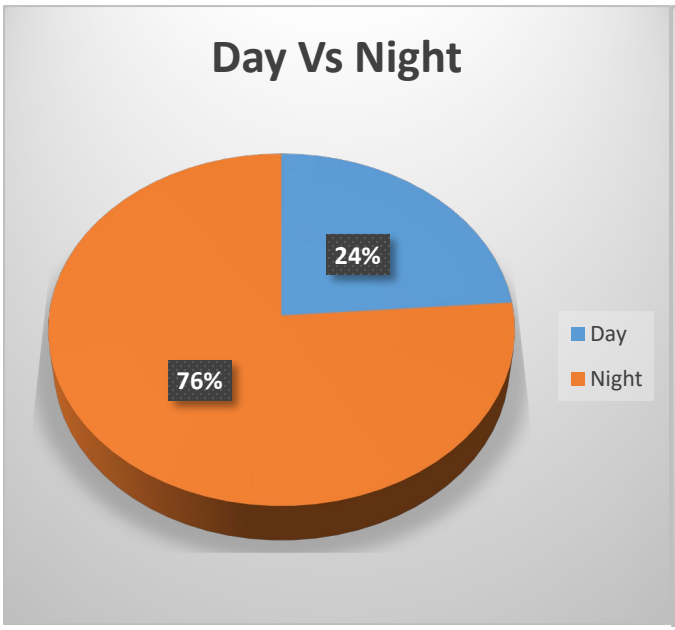
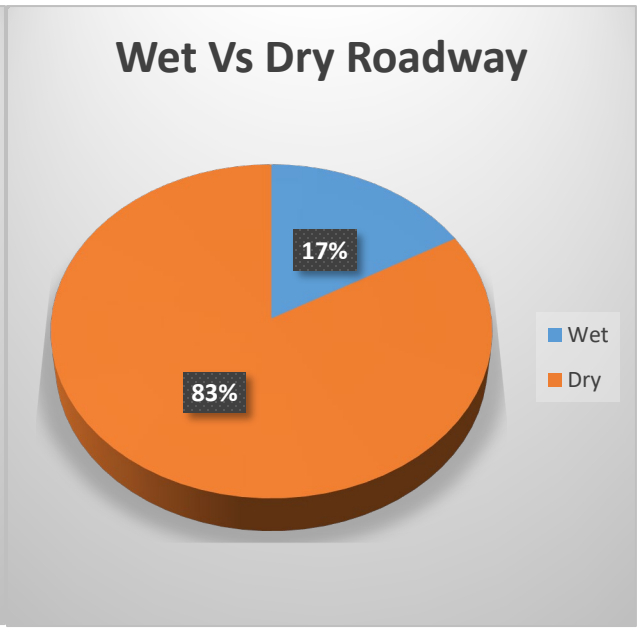
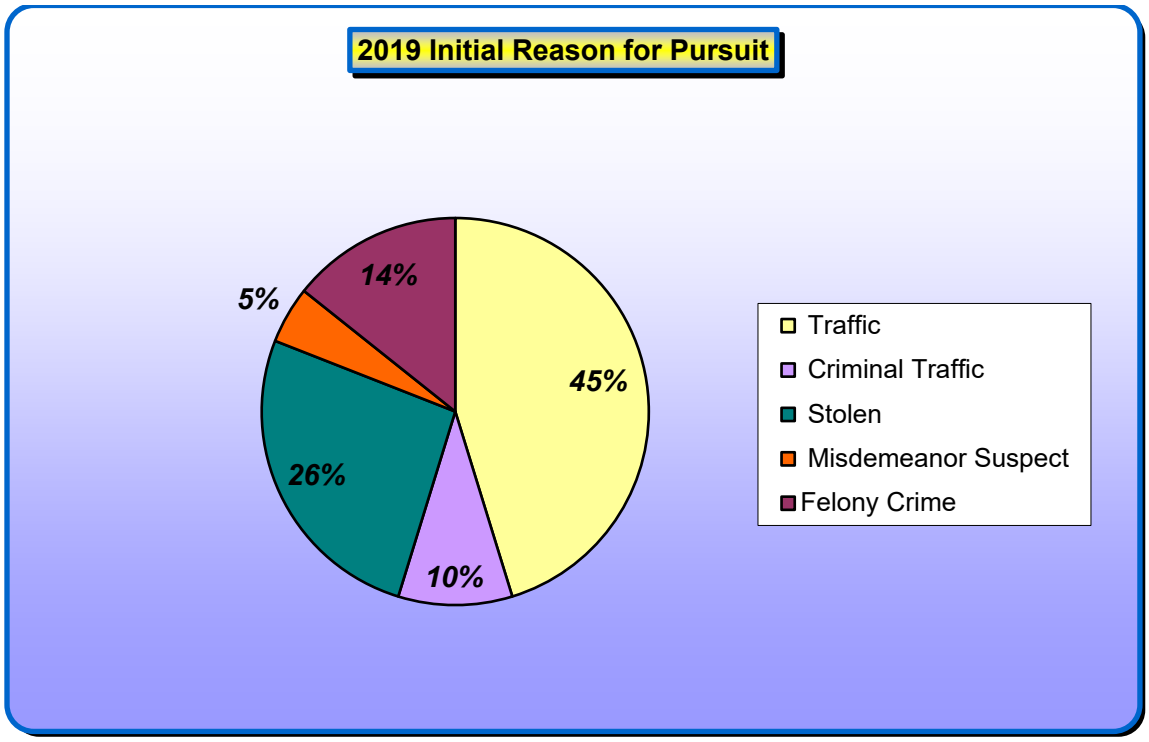


Chart 7



Observations: Most pursuits happen at night and on dry roadways.

Chart 8. Initial Reason for Pursuits (2019)



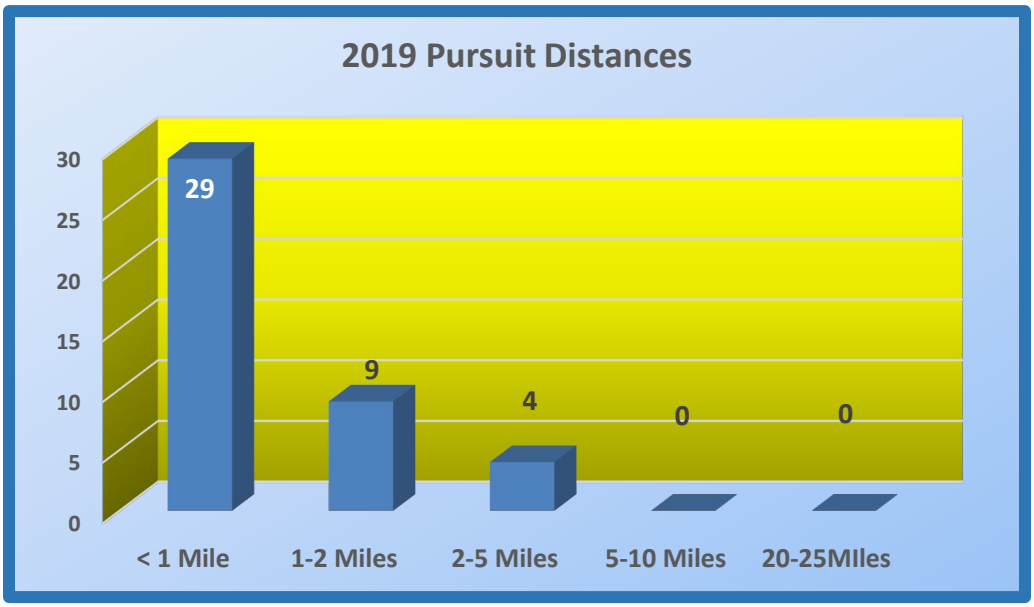
Observations:

- Definition: The *Initial Reason for Pursuit* refers to the crime or infraction observed by the officer that provided probable cause for the stop. The purpose for collecting this data is to show that officers oftentimes have only limited knowledge as to the underlying reasons suspects are fleeing from them.

- In 2019, 45% of the pursuits were initiated for traffic infractions. In 2018, only 31% fit this category. Of significance is that this year not only were more pursuits initiated based on traffic infractions, but 78% of this year's pursuits were aborted or terminated. This is due in part to recent change in the department pursuit policy prohibiting lengthy pursuits initiated from traffic infractions or non-violent misdemeanors.

- In 2019, although other crimes may have been present, officers knew that 40% of the time, they were chasing felony suspects for crimes other than eluding (stolen vehicles and felony suspects/warrants).

Chart 9 2019 Pursuit Distances



Observations:

- Chart 9 depicts the categorical distance of the 42 pursuits in 2019.

- In previous years, officers were reporting exact distances of pursuits. That changed in recent years when nearly all reports of pursuits were entered into Blue Team. This program only reports the distance by category. However, a rough estimate was still available. The hope is to reduce the length of pursuits and whereas in 2017, the average pursuit was less than one mile (.94). However, in 2018 the total number of miles Auburn officers pursued suspects was 91.55 miles. This was an average of 1.48 miles per pursuit. 2019 pursuits significantly reduced this average. The 42 pursuits totaled 33.29 miles, averaging .88 miles per pursuit. This would be the lowest recorded average distance.

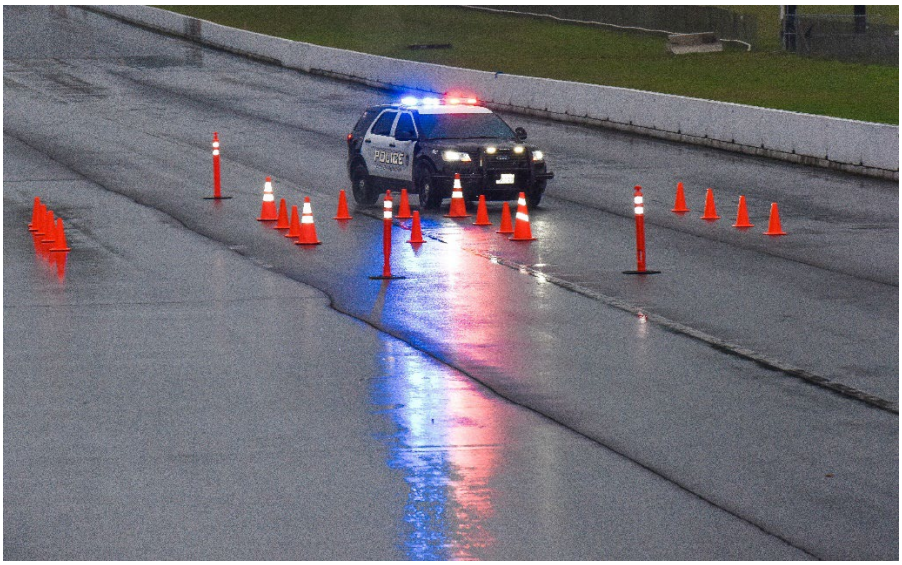
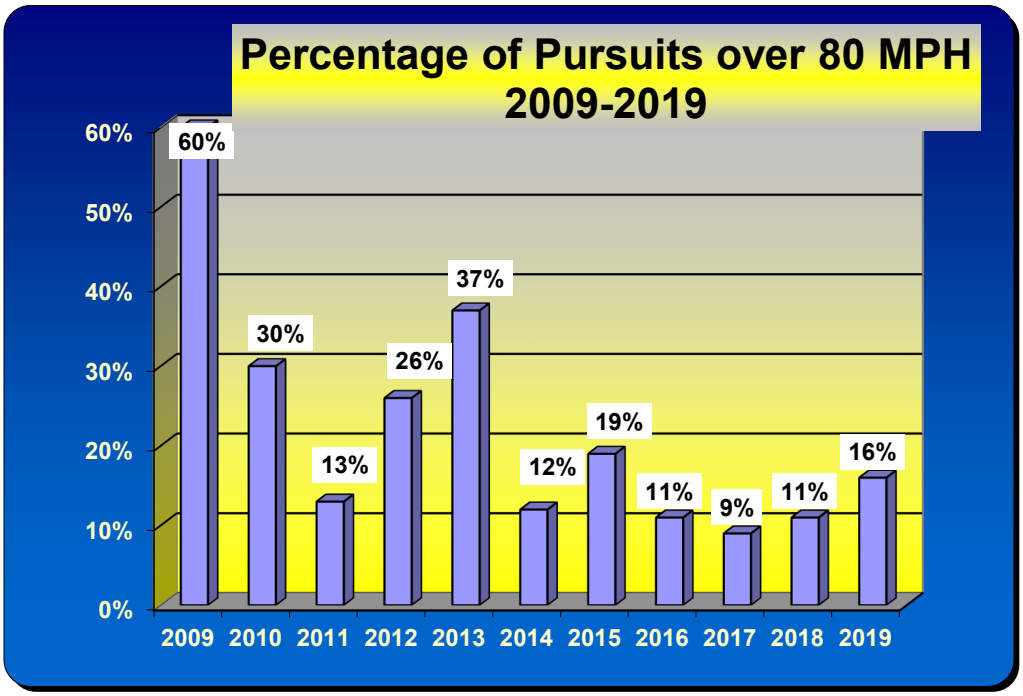


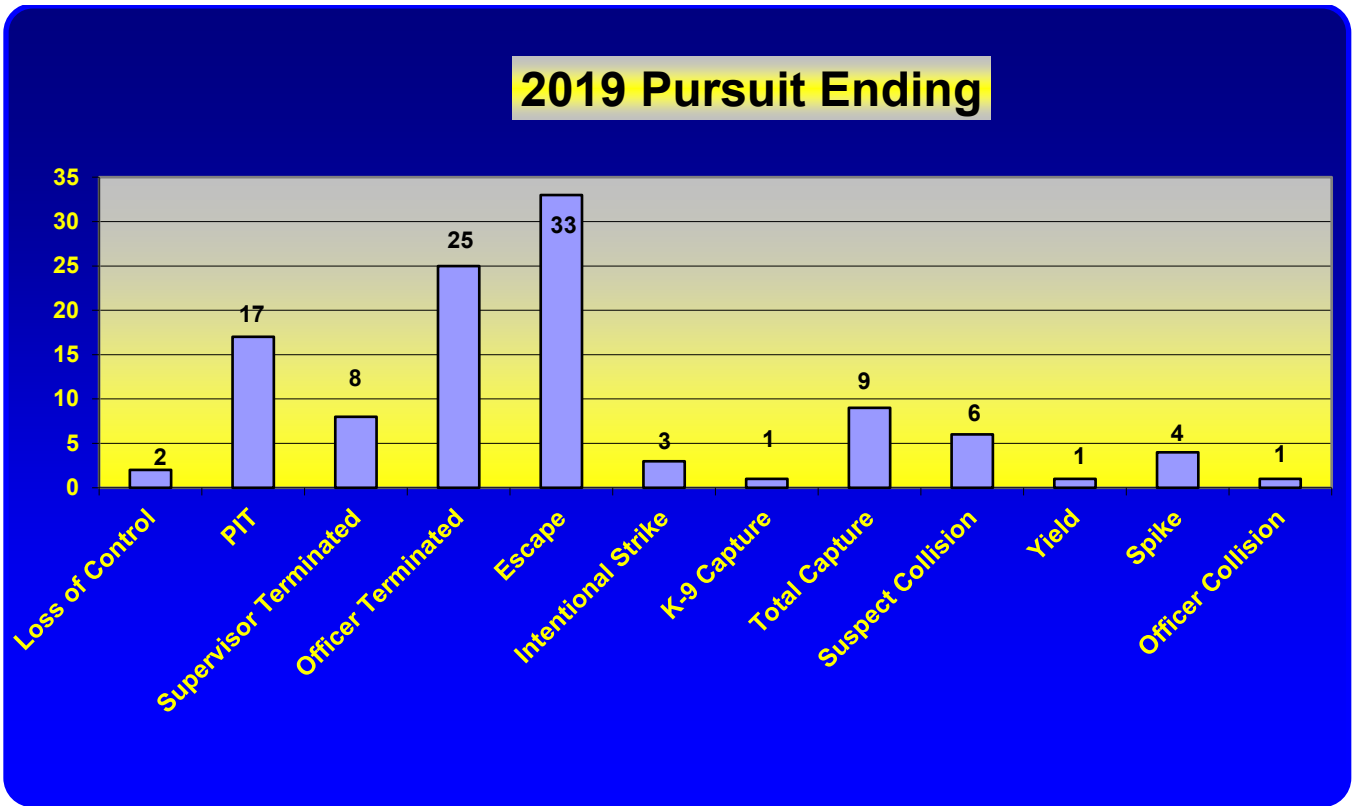
Chart 10. Pursuit Speeds 2019



Observations:

- Of significance to note is the percentage of pursuits during each year that had sustained speeds at 80 mph or greater. The reason for selecting this range of speeds is so officers understand the importance of ending pursuits as soon as possible. Furthermore, there is a correlation between high speeds, prolonged distance, and pursuits that end in collision. The above chart shows the percentage of pursuits between 2009 and 2019 that were classified at speeds greater than 80 mph. All years prior to 2014 combined averages 32.5% over 80 MPH. In 2014, only 12% of the pursuits had sustained speeds of 80 MPH or higher. For the past four years, 2016 – 2019, Auburn police pursuits over 80 mph consisted of an average of under 12%.

Chart 11. Pursuit Ending 2019



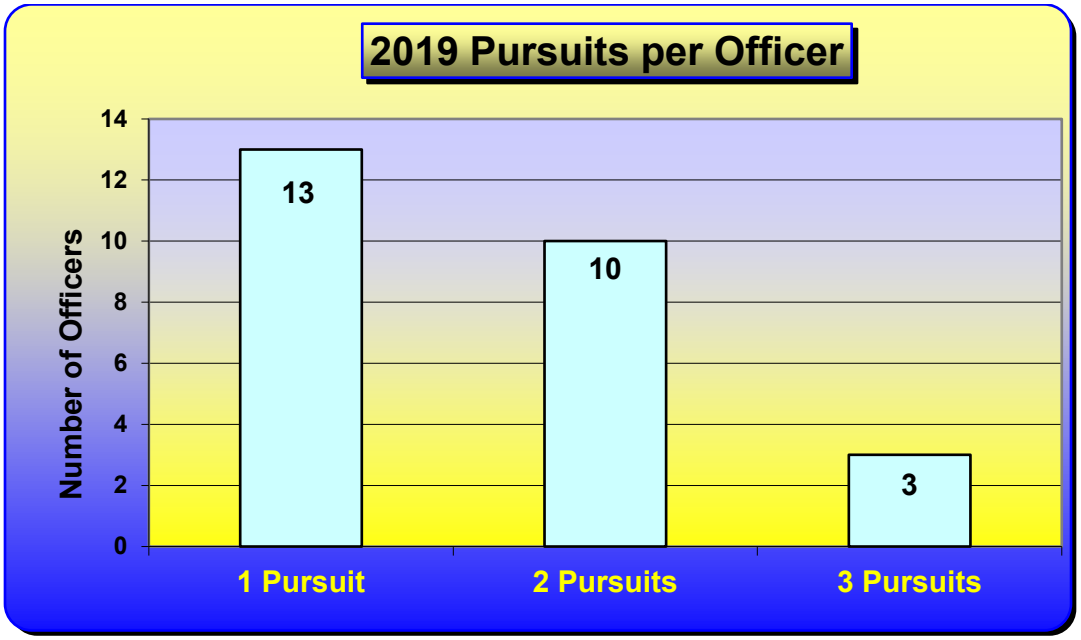
Observations:

- The above chart reflects how 2019 pursuits ended. Some pursuits are represented by more than one category. For example, whereas 33 suspects escaped, some of them are represented under PIT and officer terminated. Of note, in 2018, 41 pursuits were terminated either by the officer or the supervisor. These 41 terminated pursuits represent 66% of all 2018 pursuits. Last year in 2019 however, 33 pursuits were terminated, representing 78% of the total for the year.

- The PIT maneuver was used on 17 occasions. In some pursuits the PIT was performed more than once.

- Officers used Spike strips on four occasions in 2019, whereas in 2018 there were significantly more pursuits and spike strips were only used one time.

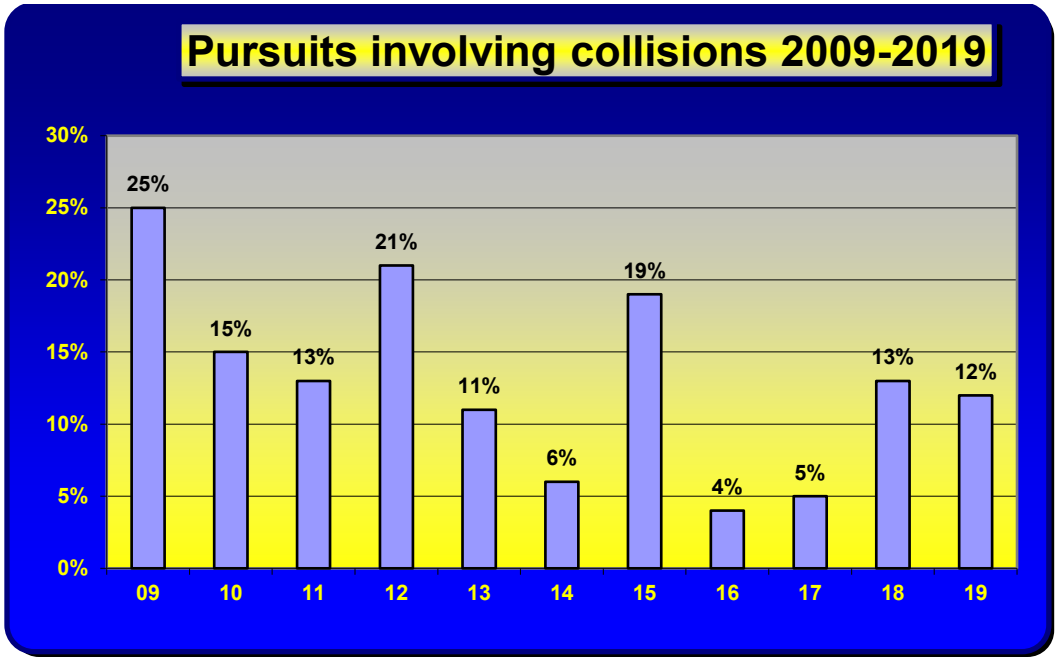
Chart 12. Officer Frequency 2019



Observations:

For training purposes, it is helpful to monitor the number of pursuits that individual officers initiate. For example in years past, an officer who initiated far more pursuits than other officers prompted a review of the officer's practice. It was determined that this particular officer made a habit of turning on his emergency equipment from long distances behind motorists. This possibly instilled confidence in the motorist to flee. After training, the following year when the officer turned on his equipment directly behind the motorists, his frequency of pursuit was significantly reduced. In 2019, of the 42 pursuits, 13 officers initiated one pursuit, ten officers initiated two pursuits, and three officers initiated three pursuits. These averages fall within an acceptable range.

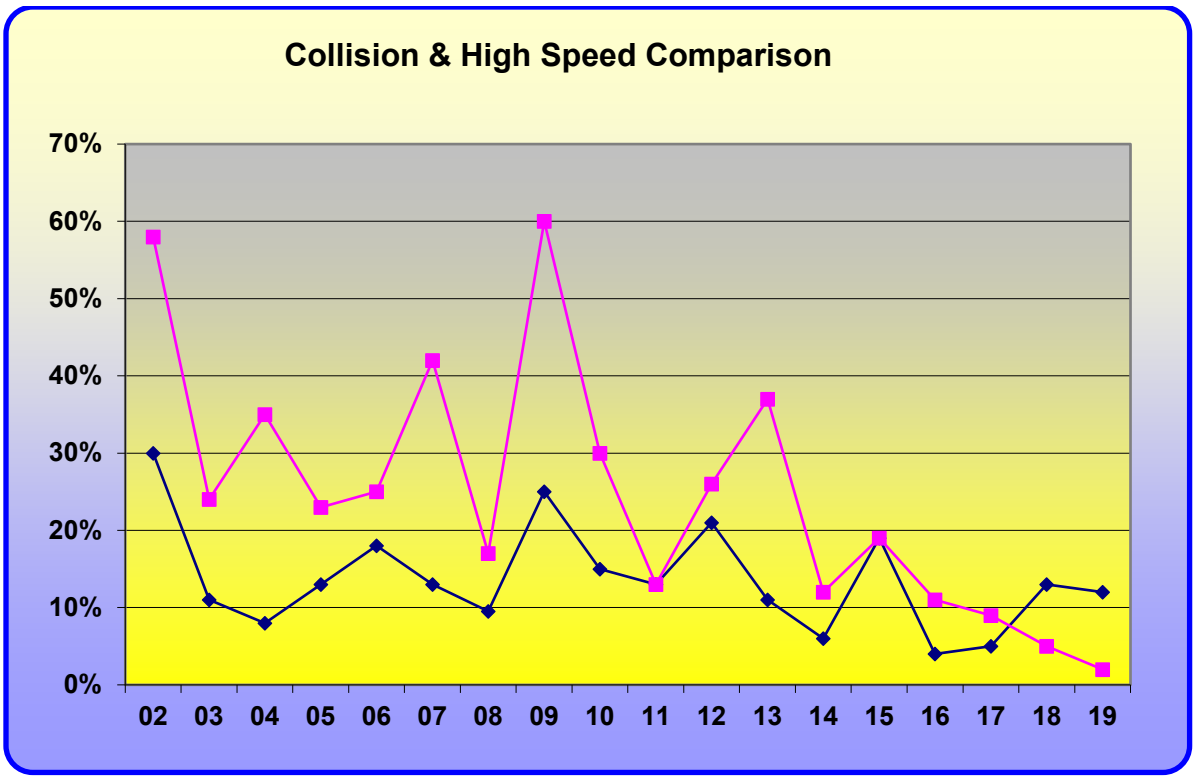
Chart 13. Pursuits Involving Collisions 2009 – 2019



Observations:

- In 2018, there were eight (8) collisions, seven (7) by suspects and one by the officer. In 2019, the number of pursuits involving collisions decreased to five (5), four by suspects and one by an officer.

Chart 14. Collisions Vs High Speed Pursuits 2002 – 2019



Pink Represents Speed over 80 MPH

Black Represents Percentage of Pursuit Collisions

Observations:

This chart depicts a possible correlation between the incidence of collisions and pursuits at speeds greater than 80 MPH, at least for most of the years depicted. In 2018, although there was a 44% increase in the total number of pursuits from 2017, there were also three (3) collisions that occurred with pursuit speeds over 80 mph. This is significant because these three collisions represent 23% of all pursuits over 80 mph. In other words one quarter of the pursuits over 80 mph resulted in a collision. In 2019, there was only one collision in a pursuit where speeds reached 80 MPH. However, even in this one instance, the collision occurred at a much slower speed when the suspect collided with two police cars.

Summary

1. The number of pursuits experienced at the city of Auburn tends to fluctuate similar to other crimes reported. 2008 through 2014 were record low years averaging in the teens. The following four years (2015-2018) saw a significant increase in the number of pursuits than the seven prior years, topping out at 62 in 2018. In 2019 there was a significant drop to 42. The average length

of each chase has declined significantly. This was due to a change in the department pursuit policy of not engaging in pursuits for minor crimes. Conversely, this change in policy over time was likely to contribute to the increase in the number of pursuits since many suspects are aware of the no chase policy.

2. In terms of what the officers knew at the time the suspects initiated the pursuits, 45% of them were initiated from traffic infractions. 15% of the pursuits were initiated for misdemeanor or criminal traffic reasons. This is not to say that these were the only crimes the pursuit suspects were involved in, but officers were aware of felonious reasons initially in 40% of the pursuits. In fact, in all pursuits except when the suspects escaped, there were always other underlying reasons for fleeing.

3. The Auburn Police Department has a highly efficient method of capturing pursuit data for subsequent analysis and training.

4. As of this writing there are ongoing discussions about modifying the pursuit policy to allow greater discretion to officers and supervisors on pursuits for minor crimes. As noted above, there are always underlying reasons why suspects flee from the police. One thing we know for sure is that it is a very rare occasion when a motorist flees from the police simply for a broken tail light. We do know there are other reasons, such as warrants, weapons violations, and other felonies.

5. Supervisors appear to be involved in monitoring the 2019 pursuits, but will need to be more engaged if the pursuit policy is modified. If more discretion is allowed, officers and supervisors must be cognizant of constantly weighing the risk to the public versus the need for apprehension. This year either supervisors or the officers appropriately terminated 33 of the 42 pursuits. This is commendable. If the policy is relaxed, the number of terminated pursuits is expected to decline.

6. Of note for 2019 pursuits however, is that of the 42 pursuits, 16 (38%) fell outside of policy. This is compared to 17% in 2018 where 11 pursuits fell outside of policy. In order to put this in perspective, the number of 2019 pursuits outside of policy in some cases is a product of previously convincing the supervisor to accurately critique each pursuit. In other words, the supervisor should focus on lessons to be learned for training purposes as opposed to calling a pursuit out of policy for fear of discipline. Of the 16 pursuits, 12 were because the officers did not terminate within a reasonable distance. The other four were due to pursuit procedures such as engaging in a pursuit with a rider in the car or not supplying sufficient information over the radio, or in some cases for not using their siren.

Training

For many years EVOC training consisted of eight hours for each officer, every three years. During the eight hours, the officer received training in the Pursuit Policy, vehicle placement, auto-cross, high speed tactical driving, pursuit scenarios, and the Pursuit Immobilization Technique.

Recently, there was a slight change. In order to capture officer attention, EVOC training was shortened to four hours of intensive high speed, PIT, and scenario based training. At least one third of the commissioned officers received pursuit driving and pursuit scenario training. They also received refresher training in the Pursuit Immobilization Technique. EVOC instructors have the officers continue to perform high speed training and the PIT maneuver until both the officer and

instructor are confident that the officer is thoroughly familiar with these techniques. The intent of training at Pacific Raceways is to get more officers through this critical high risk - low frequency training.

The EVOC coordinator and several instructors review department pursuits and collisions. A determination is made to consider additional training for the officers that are found to be involved in preventable collisions.

There is currently a push to provide basic EVOC training to new recruits in order to provide them with this important training prior to annual training in October.

In the event the pursuit policy is modified, supervisors will need to prioritize EVOC training during patrol briefings, and to ensure they closely monitor each pursuit.