




# Cocoa Beach Police Department

## Standard Operating Procedure



<b>Effective Date:</b> March 3, 2025	<b>Replaces:</b> <b>Amends:</b> September 23, 2020	<b>Number:</b> 200.47
<b>Subject:</b> Vehicle Apprehension	<b>Re-Evaluation:</b> 2027	
<b>Distribution:</b> All Members	<b>Related CFA Standards:</b> 14.02, 14.05M, 18.10M, 25.09M	
<b>Approving Authority:</b> Chief of Police Wes Mullins		
<b>Approval Date:</b> February 27, 2025		

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to establish guidelines and responsibilities for police personnel when engaged in vehicle apprehensions.

### 2. SCOPE

This standard operating procedure shall apply to all members of the Cocoa Beach Police Department.

### 3. POLICY

The foremost goal of the Cocoa Beach Police Department is the protection of life and property; therefore, the circumstances under which vehicle apprehensions will be permitted will be restricted and regulated.

### 4. DEFINITION(S)

- A. AVIATION UNIT APPREHENSION MODE – Available law enforcement helicopter will be utilized to assist with vehicle apprehensions.
- B. AVIATION UNIT SURVEILLANCE MODE – The helicopter will keep visual observation on the vehicle without the apparent knowledge of the occupants contained within the vehicle of the helicopter's presence. This mode may be utilized at the supervisor's discretion after ground units are called off.
- C. BACK UP VEHICLES (UNITS) – Other emergency police vehicles in addition to the active apprehension vehicles (primary and secondary), that may be assigned as back-up units.
- D. COMMAND STAFF – Any Cocoa Beach Police Officer with the rank of Major or above.
- E. EMERGENCY TRAFFIC – Cessation of all radio traffic, except by personnel responding to a specific emergency situation.
- F. EMERGENCY VEHICLE (UNIT) – Any authorized police vehicle equipped with a siren and a flashing or revolving emergency light(s), which meet the requirements of [F.S. §316](#).
- G. FLEEING VEHICLE – A vehicle being operated in such a manner that it is readily apparent that the operator of the vehicle is intending to resist attempts by law enforcement to detain the vehicle and its occupants.
- H. VIOLENT FORCIBLE FELONY – For the purpose of this policy means: treason; murder; manslaughter; sexual battery; carjacking; home invasion robbery; robbery; occupied arson; kidnapping; aggravated assault; aggravated battery; aggravated stalking; aircraft piracy; unlawful throwing, placing, or discharging of a destructive device or bomb. ([F.S. §776.08](#))
- I. IMMEDIATE SPECIFIC CONTINUING THREAT – There is significant likelihood, based upon known facts, which can be articulated, of death or serious injury if apprehension is delayed.
- J. ON-DUTY SHIFT SUPERVISOR – The supervisor having direction and authority over the operations of the shift, officer, or the primary unit involved in the apprehension.

- K. PRIMARY APPREHENSION VEHICLE (UNIT) – Generally the emergency unit, which initiates the vehicle apprehension, or any emergency unit that assumes control of the apprehension as the lead vehicle.
- L. SECONDARY APPREHENSION VEHICLE (UNIT) – The emergency unit which trails the primary unit at a safe distance and which is available to assume the primary role of or assist the primary unit.
- M. VEHICLE APPREHENSION – An active and continuing effort by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend the occupant(s) of a moving vehicle, provided the driver of such vehicle is aware, or should be aware, of the attempt being made to stop, and said driver fails to yield after a reasonable time or reasonable distance, or increases speed, or takes other evasive action.
- N. VEHICLE DISABLING DEVICE – Devices designed to assist in stopping vehicles by deflating the tires in a controlled manner. The use of the devices designed and manufactured for this purpose is not considered deadly force. On-duty Shift Supervisor approval must be obtained prior to deployment of these devices.

## 5. PROCEDURES

- A. Officers are authorized to engage in a vehicle apprehension in an attempt to detain suspects who demonstrate violence or who pose an immediate specific continuing threat to public safety. Therefore, officers may engage in a vehicle apprehension if one or both of the following conditions exist: (CFA 14.05MA)
  - 1. If the officer reasonably believes the suspect has committed (or has attempted to commit) a violent forcible felony as defined by this policy.
  - 2. If the officer reasonably believes and can articulate that the suspect poses an immediate specific continuing threat to the public's safety.
  - 3. The violent forcible felony or immediate specific continuing threat to the public's safety used to justify a vehicle apprehension must be articulated by facts or circumstances that are known or reasonably believed PRIOR TO THE INITIATION OF THE PURSUIT. After the fact determinations of violent forcible felonies or an immediate specific continuing threat cannot be used as the basis for determining that the initiation of a vehicle apprehension is within policy guidelines.
- B. PRIMARY APPREHENSION UNIT WILL: (CFA 14.05MB)
  - 1. Immediately notify the Communications Center that a vehicle apprehension is underway and provide the following information:
    - a. Location, speed and direction of travel of the fleeing vehicle
    - b. Descriptive information of the fleeing vehicle as it becomes known, (e.g., make/model, color, license plate, number and description of occupants, etc.)
    - c. Circumstances supporting the decision to apprehend including laws violated
    - d. Initial risk factor evaluation (low, moderate, high) by the primary unit and relayed to the immediate On-duty Shift Supervisor.
- C. SECONDARY APPREHENSION UNIT WILL: (CFA 14.05MC)
  - 1. Immediately notify the Communication Center of its identity and position as the secondary unit.
  - 2. Assume the responsibility of communications during the apprehension, continually providing significant information to the Communication Center and active units. This responsibility shall not restrict the On-duty Shift Supervisor from giving instructions and/or directions to the primary apprehension unit, the secondary apprehension unit, back-up units, or the Communication Center.
  - 3. Provide a continuing risk factor evaluation (low, moderate, high) to the On-duty Shift Supervisor.
  - 4. Maintain a safe distance from the primary unit, but be close enough to render assistance.
  - 5. Become the primary unit, should the primary unit become disabled. If this occurs, the On-duty Shift Supervisor will designate a new secondary unit.
- D. ON-DUTY SHIFT SUPERVISOR WILL: (CFA 14.05MF)
  - 1. Maintain overall responsibility for the decisions concerning continuance or termination of the apprehension. The On-duty Shift Supervisor shall assert control of the apprehension by:

- a. Monitoring and directing specific units into or out of the vehicle apprehension
  - b. Re-designating primary, secondary, Aviation, and back up units as necessary
  - c. Approving or ordering alternative tactics; or
  - d. Terminating the vehicle apprehension if appropriate.
2. Upon being notified of the vehicle apprehension, the On-duty Shift Supervisor shall verify the following:
- a. The offense for which the vehicle apprehension was initiated
  - b. That no more than the required number of units is involved in the vehicle apprehension
  - c. Proper radio channels are being utilized
  - d. Determine the availability of the Aviation Unit and utilize or coordinate accordingly. (CFA 14.05MD)
    - (i) A supervisor may use the helicopter in a surveillance mode or a vehicle apprehension mode. The vehicle apprehension mode shall be utilized in conjunction with the ground units involved in an actual vehicle apprehension.
    - (ii) When a helicopter is used in apprehension mode, ground units shall be readily available and participating in an active pursuit.
    - (iii) When a helicopter is operating in surveillance mode, a ground unit should be trailing the fleeing vehicle in a covert manner, and at a reasonable distance to respond should the pursuit become active.
    - (iv) If a ground unit encounters a suspect vehicle that poses a high probability of fleeing, the Aviation Unit should be immediately notified to secure a rapid response before any attempt to stop the vehicle occurs.
  - e. Ensure Communications notifies affected inter-jurisdiction agencies.
3. During a vehicle apprehension, the On-duty Shift Supervisor may assign active roles to support units including, but not limited to, deployment of vehicle disabling devices; assigning support personnel to potential termination locations and major intersections in an attempt to limit cross traffic; and/or transferring equipment or personnel as necessary.
4. The On-duty Shift Supervisor shall remain in charge of the incident until its conclusion unless relieved by competent authority or a higher authority actively directs personnel involved in the vehicle apprehension.
- E. COMMUNICATIONS WILL: (CFA 14.05ME)
1. Upon notification that a vehicle apprehension is in progress, Communications personnel shall:
- a. Initiate emergency radio traffic (10-33) and advise all other units that a vehicle apprehension is in progress, providing all relevant information, including unit numbers of the primary and back up vehicles. (CFA 25.09MB, CFA 25.09ME)
  - b. Receive and record all incoming information on the fleeing vehicle.
  - c. Ensure that the On-duty Shift Supervisor is aware of the situation.
  - d. Ascertain the availability of the Aviation Unit and report their status to the On-duty Shift Supervisor directing the vehicle apprehension.
  - e. Perform all relevant record and motor vehicle checks as expeditiously as possible
  - f. Monitor all radio communications during the vehicle apprehension and if necessary, repeat information provided by active units.
  - g. Coordinate and dispatch back-up assistance as directed by the On-duty Shift Supervisor
  - h. Notify affected area agencies and attempt to establish a common radio network when the vehicle apprehension has or is likely to cross jurisdictional boundaries. (CFA 25.09MD)
  - i. Continue to monitor the vehicle apprehension until it has been terminated, ending emergency radio traffic (10-33) when authorized by the On-duty Shift Supervisor or apprehension unit.
  - j. Ensure affected inter-jurisdiction agencies are notified.

## 6. OPERATIONAL TACTICS

A. Upon initiation of a vehicle apprehension, these risk factors should be taken into consideration:

1. High Risk - An officer may pursue the violator for a violent forcible felony or if the violator's actions pose an immediate specific continuing threat; however, the officer must discontinue the vehicle apprehension if the risks to public safety exceed the seriousness of the offense. High Risk assessment factors include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Frequent intersecting streets
  - b. Poor weather, slippery streets, low visibility
  - c. Blind curves, intersections, narrow roads
  - d. Numerous pedestrians
  - e. Speeds twice the posted limit, or greater than 80 mph
  - f. Extremely hazardous maneuvers (e.g., driving against on-coming traffic, running red lights)
  - g. Numerous law enforcement vehicles in apprehension
  - h. Officer excited, not in full control of emotions
  - i. Special circumstances (e.g., school zone, road construction)
  - j. Heavy traffic, moderate congestion
2. Moderate Risk - An officer may pursue the violator for a violent forcible felony or if the violator's actions pose an immediate specific continuing threat; however, the officer must continue to assess the risks to public safety. Moderate Risk assessment factors include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Some intersecting streets
  - b. Light pedestrian traffic
  - c. Moderate traffic, little congestion
  - d. Speeds greater than the posted limit
  - e. Officer generally calm, under control
  - f. Some hazardous, but not extreme maneuvers (e.g., crossing centerline to pass other vehicles, sudden lane changes)
  - g. Authorized number of law enforcement vehicles in apprehension
3. Low Risk - An officer may pursue the violator for a violent forcible felony or if the violator's actions pose an immediate specific continuing threat; however, the officer must continue to assess the risks to public safety. Low Risk assessment factors include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Straight road
  - b. Dry surface
  - c. Clear lines of sight
  - d. Few Intersections
  - e. Few or no pedestrians
  - f. Good weather
  - g. No hazardous maneuvers by violator
  - h. Speeds safe for conditions
  - i. Authorized number of law enforcement vehicles in apprehension
  - j. Officer calm, in full control
  - k. Helicopter involved
  - l. Little or no traffic
  - m. DUI type driving patterns

B. METHOD OF VEHICLE APPREHENSION:

1. A caravan of unassigned units is prohibited. The On-duty Shift Supervisor will ensure that only those emergency units that are necessary will actively engage in any vehicle apprehension. (CFA 14.05MD)

2. Units should never follow a suspect vehicle the wrong way on a limited access roadway and should use extreme caution if the suspect vehicle proceeds the wrong way on a one-way street or other controlled access highway.
3. Units will not pass one another unless authorized by the primary unit or the On-duty Shift Supervisor in charge.
4. Back-up units should remain at a reasonable and safe distance and remain alert to the direction and progress of the vehicle apprehension and position themselves at strategic sites for response to any need for assistance.
5. Motorcycle units shall discontinue a vehicle apprehension when a marked patrol car is present. (CFA 14.05MD)
6. Unmarked vehicles properly equipped with blue lights and sirens are permitted to engage in a vehicle apprehension but will be relieved by the first available marked vehicle. Unmarked vehicles may then act as secondary units until a second marked vehicle is present, at which time the unmarked vehicle will discontinue the vehicle apprehension mode and continue safely if additional units are required. (CFA 14.05MDH)
7. All units should terminate the vehicle apprehension when radio communications with Communications or the On-duty Shift Supervisor is lost. (CFA 14.05MH)
8. The Marine Patrol Vessel may be used to engage in vessel apprehension within the same manner and restrictions prescribed of marked patrol vehicles. (CFA 14.02A)
9. The ATV and Kubota Utility Vehicle, or John Deere Utility vehicle shall not be used in vehicle apprehension. (CFA 14.02A)

#### C. VEHICLE DISABLING DEVICES

1. The use of Department-issued vehicle disabling devices, commonly known as “Stop Stick(s)” is encouraged as a means of preventing and / or terminating vehicle apprehensions. Use of such devices is not considered deadly force. (CFA 14.05MG)
  - a. Stop Sticks may be deployed in other special circumstances which include but are not limited to:
    - (i) Active fleeing vehicles;
    - (ii) Wrong way drivers not stopping for law enforcement;
    - (iii) Impaired drivers not stopping for law enforcement;
    - (iv) At the request of other law enforcement agencies requesting aid;
    - (v) Any event in the best interest of public safety.
  - b. Stop Stick(s) will only be issued to and deployed by members who have satisfactorily completed Department training on its use.
  - c. The use of a vehicle-disabling device shall be at the discretion of any officer who can safely deploy the device; however, the deploying officer must communicate such deployment as soon as practical.
  - d. Prior to Stop Stick deployment, Communications should be advised over the radio of the geographic location and specific lane(s) of travel on which the Stop Stick(s) will be deployed. Communications shall document the time and location of the deployment in the Computer Automated Dispatch system. Back-up units shall adjust their speed and following distance as appropriate when approaching the deployment location to avoid becoming disabled by the Stop Stick(s).
  - e. Stop Stick(s) shall not be deployed to terminate motorcycle, ATV, or on any other vehicle apprehension with less than four (4) wheels unless deadly force is authorized.
2. In all cases of deployment of Stop Stick(s) the deploying member shall adhere to the following procedures:
  - a. The deploying member shall retrieve the Stop Stick(s) from the roadway once it is safe to do so. Any deployed/used/damaged Stop Stick(s) will be returned to the Department.
  - b. The deploying member shall include the following in the narrative of their incident report:

- (i) Time of deployment;
  - (ii) Deployment location;
  - (iii) Results of the use of the Stop Stick;
  - (iv) A description of which tire(s) were contacted and damaged as a result of the Stop Stick; and
  - (v) Any additional property damage as a result of deployment.
- c. Once a Stop Stick(s) has been deployed/used/damaged, the member shall complete the following procedure before a replacement is issued:
  - (i) The deploying member shall complete the manufacturer's [Stop Stick® Deployment Report](#) online. The submission of this report is MANDATORY and is the member's responsibility.
    - 1. The serial number is located on the barcode found on the Stop Stick and must be entered in the report.
    - 2. The deploying member shall use the comments section of the Deployment report to provide a brief description of the incident and effectiveness of the Stop Stick.
  - (ii) The deploying member should receive an email providing a copy of the submission form from Stop Stick, Ltd.
    - 1. The deploying member shall forward the copy of the submission form via email to the On-duty Shift Supervisor, Lieutenant, Patrol Major, and Logistics Manager immediately upon receipt of the email.
  - (iii) The deploying member shall fill out a Cocoa Beach Police Department [Equipment Replacement Form](#) and turn it in to the On-duty Shift Supervisor prior to the end of shift.
- 3. The Logistics Manager shall maintain a complete inventory of Department owned Stop Sticks and shall be responsible for issuing/assigning all new or replacement Stop Stick(s) to members.
- 4. Use of stationary roadblocks for the purposes of vehicle apprehension are prohibited. (CFA 18.10M)
- 5. Unless specifically authorized by the On-duty Shift Supervisor, use of rolling roadblocks, deliberate contact between vehicles or forcibly stopping the pursued vehicle by boxing in, heading off, ramming, or driving alongside the pursued vehicle while it is in motion is prohibited. Such actions may be considered deadly force depending on the circumstances and would therefore merit scrutiny before implementing. (CFA 18.10M) (CFA14.05MG)
- 6. An officer shall not discharge his/her firearm at or from a moving vehicle unless an occupant of the fleeing vehicle is using deadly force against him/her or another person.

## 7. TERMINATION OF VEHICLE APPREHENSION (CFA 14.05MH)

- A. Apprehending units will discontinue the vehicle apprehension when it no longer appears to be justified or it becomes an unreasonable danger to public safety. A vehicle apprehension should also be terminated when:
  - 1. In the opinion of the officer or the On-duty Shift Supervisor, the level of danger outweighs the necessity of the vehicle apprehension.
  - 2. The suspect's identity has been established to the point that later apprehension can be accomplished, and the suspect does not pose an imminent threat to the public at large.
  - 3. The distance between the officer and the fleeing vehicle is so great it becomes obvious that apprehension is unlikely.
  - 4. Police equipment failure makes it impractical or unsafe to continue.
  - 5. Loss of contact with Communications and/or On-duty Shift Supervisor.
  - 6. The officer engaged in the vehicle apprehension no longer has a reasonable belief that the person being apprehended is an immediate danger, or suspected of committing, having committed, or attempting to commit a violent forcible felony.

7. Directed to do so by the On-duty Shift Supervisor or higher authority. When terminating a vehicle apprehension, officers will immediately decrease their speed, discontinue the apprehension effort, deactivate emergency equipment, break visual contact with suspect vehicle, and immediately proceed in an opposite travel direction or pull to the side of the road. In the case of termination while using the Marine Patrol Vessel, the boat operator will slow to bare steerageway. (CFA 14.02A) Officers will verbally notify both Communications and the On-duty Shift Supervisor that this has been accomplished and the exact location of their unit.
- B. Upon the termination of any vehicle apprehension, the On-duty Shift Supervisor will inspect all involved department vehicles for damage. If any damage affecting operational components is evident or suspected, the vehicle will be taken out of service until cleared by Fleet Maintenance.

## **8. INTER-JURISDICTIONAL VEHICLE APPREHENSION**

- A. Out-bound Vehicle Apprehensions (CFA 14.05MI)
  1. If a vehicle apprehension appears likely to cross into the jurisdiction of, or influence the operations of, another law enforcement agency, Communications shall ensure prompt notice to that agency or jurisdiction. The relay and update of all relevant information shall continue if the vehicle apprehension affects the agency or jurisdiction. Such notification should include:
    - a. Vehicle description and direction of travel.
    - b. Nature of offense/reason for vehicle apprehension.
    - c. Any special conditions or considerations.
    - d. Number of suspects in the fleeing vehicle.
    - e. Number of units currently involved.
  2. It shall be the responsibility of the On-duty Shift Supervisor directing the vehicle apprehension to assess the need and/or coordinate the assistance of the affected agency or other jurisdiction.
  3. The unit(s) designated as primary and secondary apprehension vehicles shall not relinquish their involvement unless directed to by the On-duty Shift Supervisor.
  4. If the agency having jurisdiction in the vehicle apprehension requests the primary unit to discontinue the vehicle apprehension in view of public safety concerns, the primary unit or On-duty Shift Supervisor will honor that request and immediately terminate the vehicle apprehension.
  5. Apprehensions that continue outside the City of Cocoa Beach must be approved by the On-duty Shift Supervisor.
  6. Officers involved in a vehicle apprehension that continues beyond the jurisdictional limits of Cocoa Beach will adhere to the policies established by the Cocoa Beach Police Department.
- B. In-bound Vehicle Apprehensions (CFA 14.05MI)
  1. Police officers shall not become involved in another Department's vehicle apprehension unless clearly and specifically directed by the On-duty Shift Supervisor.
  2. Assistance with, or involvement in, vehicle apprehensions originating outside the City must meet the same criteria established for vehicle apprehensions that originate in the City. If the criterion does not meet the Cocoa Beach Police Department standard operating procedure, the On-duty Shift Supervisor will not authorize officers to become involved in the vehicle apprehension and may request the apprehending Department terminate the vehicle apprehension due to public safety considerations based upon existing conditions.

## **9. REPORTING**

- A. After every vehicle apprehension, the On-duty Shift Supervisor shall EMAIL a memorandum to the Lieutenant/Watch Commander AND the Major by the end of shift containing the following information: (CFA 14.05MJ)



1. Name (s) of initiating and assisting officers (units) involved and case report
  2. Reason for the vehicle apprehension
  3. Place of origin
  4. Route of travel
  5. Length of vehicle apprehension (distance and time)
  6. Point of termination
  7. Use of vehicle disabling devices including location, results, and description of which tire(s) were contacted and damaged as a result
  8. Suspect's name and charges (if apprehended)
  9. Injuries and/or damage that occurred because of the vehicle apprehension
  10. Any other noteworthy data or findings
  11. Determination as to whether the apprehension followed the guidelines of this standard operating procedure.
- B. The Lieutenant/Watch Commander shall review the memorandum to determine whether policy, training, equipment or disciplinary issues should be addressed and forward his/her findings through the Chain of Command to the Chief of Police within thirty (30) days of receipt of the memorandum. (CFA 14.05MJ)

## **10. TRAINING**

Newly hired officers will receive initial training on this policy during their field training program. (CFA 14.05MK)

## **11. APPENDIX**

- A. [Stop Stick® Deployment Report](#)
- B. [Cocoa Beach Police Department Equipment Repair/Replacement Request Form](#)