



CHATHAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

**SOP # OPS-011:
VEHICLE PURSUITS**

**EFFECTIVE: 02/01/18
REVISION: 07/11/22**

PURPOSE

Vehicle pursuits present a danger to the lives of the public, officers, and suspects involved in the pursuit. In order to protect lives and guide officers in the safe performance of their duties, the Chatham County Police Department (CCPD) shall regulate the manner in which vehicle pursuits are undertaken and conducted. This policy is to be used in conjunction with the CCPD Use of Force policy and O.C.G.A. §40-6-6.

POLICY

The CCPD recognizes and respects the value of human life. The vehicle pursuit of an offender is often necessary to fulfill the law enforcement mission. Another important part of the law enforcement mission is the protection of the general public. Therefore, a vehicle pursuit is justified only when a CCPD police officer has reasonable grounds to believe the offender has committed or is attempting to commit a forcible felony of a violent nature and when the necessity of immediate apprehension outweighs the level of danger created by the pursuit. CCPD police officers shall not pursue vehicles for misdemeanors, traffic violations, violations of local ordinances, or non-forcible felonies.

All vehicle pursuits must comply with O.C.G.A. §40-6-6 pertaining to emergency vehicles and the contents of this Order. At no time will a CCPD police officer act with reckless disregard for proper law enforcement procedures in a vehicle pursuit.

CCPD police officers are responsible for their actions and must remember that using emergency equipment (i.e., lights and siren) does not relieve that responsibility.

DEFINITIONS

AUTHORIZED LAW ENFORCEMENT VEHICLE – For the purposes of this SOP, an authorized law enforcement vehicle is any marked CCPD police vehicle with a functioning audible signal (siren) and a functioning flashing or revolving blue light.

CARAVANING - The operation of police vehicles in a line or alongside each other during a pursuit.

DEADLY FORCE - That degree of force that is likely to cause death or great bodily injury.

DISCONTINUE THE PURSUIT - Law enforcement officers end their involvement in the pursuit by slowing down to the posted speed limit, turning off emergency lights and siren, and changing their direction of travel or stop.

FORCIBLE FELONY - Any felony which involves the use or threat of physical force or violence against any person.

INTER-JURISDICTIONAL PURSUIT - Any vehicle pursuit that crosses into a neighboring jurisdiction, such as across the municipal, county, or state line.

PRIMARY UNIT - The authorized law enforcement vehicle that initiates the pursuit or any other unit that assumes control of the pursuit.

PURSUIT INTERVENTION TECHNIQUE (PIT) MANEUVER - The PIT maneuver is a method by which one car pursuing another can force the pursued vehicle to abruptly turn sideways to the direction of travel causing the driver to lose control and stop.

ROADBLOCK - Any method, restriction, or obstruction of a roadway utilized or intended to prevent the free passage of vehicles in order to apprehend the occupants of a particular vehicle.

SECONDARY UNIT - Any authorized law enforcement vehicle that becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance.

STOP STICK® - A tire deflation device used to bring a fleeing vehicle to a stop.

TRAFFIC STOP-TERMINATION REPORT – CCPD form 1033 shall be completed each time a CCPD officer initiates a traffic stop wherein the suspect flees from the officer or fails to stop, and the officer immediately disengages from the violator. If the officer does not immediately disengage from the stop or attempted stop or takes any action towards pursuing the violator, he/she will complete the Vehicle Pursuit Form.

TERMINATE THE PURSUIT - Stopping a fleeing vehicle by the use of intervention methods, such as tire deflation devices (Stop Sticks®), to stop the continued movement of the fleeing vehicle.

VEHICLE PURSUIT - An active attempt by a Law Enforcement Officer, operating an authorized law enforcement vehicle, to attempt to apprehend a fleeing suspect who is actively attempting to elude the police and willfully disobeying the officer's visual and audible signals to stop (lights and siren).

PROCEDURE

I. ENGAGING IN A PURSUIT

- A. Officers must bear in mind the danger involved in a pursuit and, after quickly weighing established pursuit procedures, make intelligent decisions as to engaging in and/or discontinuing or terminating a pursuit.
- B. In deciding whether to engage in a pursuit, officers shall take into consideration the following issues:
 - 1. The seriousness of the offense (nature of the violent felony), the time of day, and the presence of other persons in the police vehicle or the pursued vehicle need to be balanced.
 - 2. The road conditions, weather, and environmental conditions should be in favor of aggressive driving.

3. Areas densely populated with vehicular and pedestrian traffic only heighten the dangers of a pursuit.
 4. The relative performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle should be compared with the vehicle being pursued.
- C. Generally, motorcycles and large vehicles such as tractor trailers, busses, etc., should not be pursued due to the lack of termination options unless the necessity of immediate apprehension outweighs the level of danger created by the pursuit as determined by the pursuit supervisor.
- D. The primary officer and the pursuit supervisor shall continuously evaluate the circumstances, factors, and conditions during the pursuit. Whenever one of these factors changes, the decision to continue the pursuit shall be reevaluated. Officers should consider discontinuing a pursuit when any of the following occur.
1. Circumstances become known, which negates the justification for the pursuit.
 2. The pursuit enters an area where the danger increases due to pedestrian or vehicular traffic, especially school zones or shopping areas.
 3. Speed of the vehicles, especially in relation to the posted limit and roadway.
 4. Weather or road conditions change for the worse.
 5. Length of the pursuit.
- E. When given the order to discontinue the pursuit, or when the pursuing officer decides to discontinue a pursuit, the pursuing officer will deactivate audible and visual emergency warning equipment (emergency lights and siren), change their direction of travel or stop.
- F. If a police vehicle is involved in a collision, the police vehicle involved will immediately disengage from the pursuit, advise of location, and render aid and/or request additional support to the accident scene.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRIMARY UNIT

- A. Officers must activate all emergency equipment during pursuits, including the audible signal and a flashing or revolving blue light.
- B. When there is no Secondary Unit involved, the Primary Unit shall handle all communications relating to the direction of travel, suspects, descriptions, and all matters relating to the actual pursuit. This shall not restrict the supervisor from giving instructions or other information directly to the primary vehicle, the secondary vehicle, or the Communications Center.
- C. The Primary Unit should maintain a safe distance from the fleeing vehicle.
- D. The Primary Unit will relay the following information immediately:
1. Unit number and the fact that they are in a pursuit.
 2. The starting location and direction of travel.

3. Description of the vehicle (make, color, tag #, etc.) and occupants (race, sex, number, etc.), if known.
4. Reason for the pursuit.
5. Changes in location and direction of travel during the pursuit.
6. Traffic violations committed by the suspect as they occur and the speed of the pursuit.
7. Location at the time the pursuit is discontinued.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECONDARY UNIT

- A. The Secondary Unit will notify the Communications Center and the primary officer of their involvement in pursuit. The Secondary Unit should maintain a safe distance from the primary unit while maintaining visual contact and close proximity of the fleeing vehicle.
- B. The Secondary Unit will assume primary communications for the pursuit unless or until properly relieved by the Aviation Unit or the pursuit supervisor. The Secondary Unit will, at a minimum, relay the following information.
 1. Unit call sign.
 2. Current location (street and cross street or landmark – the current location should be continuously given as the pursuit progresses).
 3. The direction of travel each time there is a change of direction.
 4. Traffic violations committed by the suspect as they occur and the speed of the pursuit.
- C. Should the Primary Unit become inoperable, the Secondary Unit will assume the primary position.
- D. If a crash involving the public occurs, the Secondary Unit will stop to check for injuries and stay with the collision allowing another unit to become the Secondary Unit.

IV. AVIATION UNIT

- A. When access to aviation assistance is available, it should be requested.
- B. Once the Aviation Unit has established visual contact with the pursued vehicle, it shall become the Primary Pursuit Unit; however, the Primary Patrol Unit and supervisor are still responsible for the pursuit packet and all reporting documents. The Primary Patrol Unit and the Secondary Unit shall discontinue communications, decrease speeds, and follow at a safe distance, preferably out of sight of the offender, so that the Aviation Unit can coordinate the vehicle apprehension.
- C. The Aviation Unit will advise the Communications Officer of the following:
 1. Unit call sign.
 2. Current location (street and cross street or landmark – the current location should be continuously given as the pursuit progresses).

3. The direction of travel each time there is a change of direction.
 4. Traffic violations committed by the suspect as they occur.
 5. Potential hazards and possible apprehension sites.
- D. If ground units are not within visual contact and the air unit determines that it is unsafe to continue the pursuit, the air unit has the authority to terminate the pursuit.

V. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The pursuit supervisor shall acknowledge the occurrence of the pursuit via the police radio, take and maintain command of the pursuit unless formally relieved, and continually monitor radio traffic of the pursuit (The pursuit supervisor will monitor the pursuit activities and not be an active participant in the pursuit).
1. The supervisor will consider the available information and make a decision to allow the pursuit to continue or terminate it.
 2. The supervisor will monitor the pursuit and direct additional assistance as required.
- B. Factors in the decision to assign additional assistance include, but are not limited to:
1. The nature and circumstances of the offense.
 2. The number of suspects.
 3. The number of officers in the primary and backup/secondary vehicles.
- C. The pursuit supervisor should continuously plan the tactics to be used to end the pursuit (i.e., tire deflation device deployment, or discontinue the pursuit).
- D. A pursuit entering into another precinct will continue to be commanded by the supervisor authorizing the pursuit.
- E. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to coordinate pursuits entering concurrent jurisdictions.
- F. If the vehicle being pursued leaves Chatham County, the supervisor in charge shall request that the county being entered assume command of the pursuit. Units of the CCPD will act as support units. If the county being entered does not assume command, the supervisor will request that agency provide support units.
- G. When the decision is made to discontinue the pursuit, the supervisor will announce his decision over the radio. The Communications Officer will repeat his announcement to ensure that all officers hear the message. All officers involved will acknowledge they heard the command.

VI. COMMUNICATION CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Communications Center is responsible for controlling and directing all radio communication as well as receiving and recording all information concerning the vehicle and/or occupants being pursued.
- B. A shift supervisor and/or Watch Commander should be notified immediately of the pursuit.

- C. The Communications Officers will secure the talk group from any transmission not related to the pursuit when applicable and keep all talk groups updated on the pursuit status.
- D. The Communications Officer will yield the responsibility for the assignment of units in the pursuit to the pursuit supervisor.
- E. The primary Communications Officer will dispatch additional units, if needed, to conduct traffic control and investigate accidents as they occur.
- F. In the event the pursuit is terminated, that information will be broadcast across all talk groups and acknowledged by all units involved. The supervisor(s) and Watch Commander will also be made aware of this occurrence.

VII. PROHIBITED ACTIONS

- A. Officers shall not pursue vehicles for misdemeanors, traffic violations, violations of local ordinances, or non-forcible felonies.
- B. Officers will not engage in or continue in a pursuit when the vehicle and/or driver's pertinent information is known, and there is no immediate need to apprehend.
- C. Caravanning (police units following each other) a pursued vehicle is forbidden as there shall be no more than three units (the primary unit, the secondary unit, and a third unit for immediate assistance) behind the suspect vehicle.
- D. Unmarked Police vehicles, pick-up trucks, and/or motorcycles shall not engage in vehicle pursuits.
- E. Officers shall not ram a pursued vehicle in an attempt to force the vehicle to spin out or leave the roadway, except when the use of deadly force is authorized in accordance with CCPD Policy # ADM-007 Use of Force.
- F. Officers will not attempt to pass other police units involved in the pursuit, unless otherwise directed to do so by the pursuit supervisor.
- G. Pursuits will not cross state or county lines without the authorization of the supervisor.
- H. Officers will not become involved in a pursuit while transporting civilians or prisoners.
- I. The use of a roadblock is prohibited.

VIII. TIRE DEFLATION DEVICE (STOP STICK®)

- A. Authorized Use
 - 1. The pursuit supervisor must authorize the use of the tire deflation device prior to its deployment. The safety of the deploying officer(s) is paramount.
 - 2. Only those officers trained in the use of the tire deflation device shall carry or deploy the device.
- B. Setup
 - 1. The pursuit supervisor will radio authorization to deploy the device.
 - 2. The device may be used only with vehicles having four or more tires.

3. Officer(s) deploying the device will proceed to a location far enough ahead of the pursuit to safely allow complete deployment prior to the arrival of the suspect.
4. Officers will never pass a pursuit to attempt to deploy the device.
5. The use of stop sticks will be decided based on the following criteria:
 - a. A relatively level, straight road surface and surrounding topography.
 - b. Visibility and other vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
 - (1) Whenever possible, limit or isolate traffic from the pursuit or location where Stop Stick is being deployed.
 - (2) NEVER deploy Stop Stick with pedestrians in the immediate vicinity.
 - c. Type of vehicle being pursued.
 - d. Weather and road conditions.
 - e. Whether the pursuit should be discontinued.
 - f. Available safe cover for the deploying officer(s) such as a bridge, large tree, or brick wall.
 - g. Avoid deploying Stop Stick:
 - (1) In areas with heavy traffic.
 - (2) In populated areas or locations with pedestrians nearby.
 - (3) Near road construction.
 - (4) Near steep embankments, curves, or obstacles that limit the deploying officer's view of traffic and the approaching pursuit.
6. The officer(s) deploying the device will park their police vehicle completely off the roadway with the emergency lights on and the trunk lid closed.
7. The deploying officer(s) will radio pursuing units with the following information:
 - a. The location of the device.
 - b. The lane(s) of traffic the device is covering.
 - c. When the device is deployed.

C. Deployment and Recovery

1. Using the method approved by the manufacturer, deploy the device on the roadway well ahead of the suspect's vehicle after confirming that the approaching vehicle is the suspect's vehicle.
2. The deploying officer(s) will maintain control over the cord attached to the device and proceed to a position of cover (i.e., bridge support, large tree, or brick wall).
 - a. The police vehicle may be used to provide limited cover as a last resort.
 - b. Officer(s) must take a position that will not put them in harm's way if the law enforcement vehicle is struck.

- c. Officer(s) will keep in mind that the device may move, bend, or flip depending on how a vehicle strikes it.
3. After the pursued vehicle has cleared the device, the device should be recovered using the method approved by the manufacturer.
4. The deploying officer(s) will radio pursuing units with the following information:
 - a. When the device has been cleared from the roadway.
 - b. If the suspect vehicle struck the device.
 - c. Other pertinent information (i.e., number/description of occupants, if seen)
5. Supervisors may give approval for other situations deemed appropriate for the use of the device, such as to prevent a vehicle from leaving the scene (i.e., a suspect vehicle in a high-risk situation or felony incident).
6. After a device has been deployed, impacted, and recovered, the deploying officer will properly package the device and place the device in the property room as evidence. Quartermaster will replace the used Stop Stick section with a new section, which is to be placed in the protective sleeve and stored as directed.
7. The deploying officer shall complete a Pursuit Termination Tactics Deployment Report, even if the pursued vehicle does not make contact with the device, and fax a copy of the report to the Training Unit. The original shall be submitted to the Traffic Unit Commander, via the chain-of-command, along with all other required reports. The report will be reviewed at each level as to adherence to policy, the effectiveness of the device, and potential training issues.

IX. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES AFTER TERMINATING A PURSUIT

- A. After the pursuit has been terminated, the pursuit supervisor will conduct a thorough investigation as to the facts leading to the pursuit, the actions of all officers involved, and the outcome of the pursuit.
- B. The On Duty Commander, if available, may also respond and notify superiors of the outcome of the pursuit.
- C. Prior to the end of the tour of duty, the supervisor of the pursuing officer will ensure that the preliminary and any supplemental reports are completed.
- D. Vehicle Pursuit Report shall be completed in Blue Team in its entirety and submitted through the Chain-of-Command for review.
- E. The pursuit supervisor will notify their Watch Commander by phone or e-mail as soon as possible as to the outcome of any pursuit.

X. VEHICLE PURSUIT REPORTS AND REVIEW

- A. A Vehicle Pursuit Report shall be completed by the pursuit supervisor when an Officer(s) are engaged in any pursuit as defined in this SOP.

- B. The Vehicle Pursuit Report, along with a copy of all other reports, appropriate video footage (if available), and printouts shall be submitted to the Watch Commander by the pursuit supervisor as soon as possible after completing the Vehicle Pursuit Report.
- C. Vehicle Pursuit Reports that involve injury or property damage will be immediately brought to the attention of the Division Commander via the chain-of-command.
- D. Division Commanders shall submit all Vehicle Pursuit Reports to the CCPD Vehicle Pursuit and Accident Review Board for review within ten days of the incident.
 - 1. The Accident Review Board will review the circumstances surrounding each submitted report and determine if the pursuit was within policy.
 - 2. The Accident Review Board will also make recommendations on amending the policy or revising training where applicable and submit “out-of-policy” reports to the respective officer’s commander for further action.
- E. When a CCPD officer initiates a traffic stop wherein the suspect flees from the officer or fails to stop, and the officer immediately disengages from the violator the officer shall complete a Traffic Stop-Termination Report (CCPD Form 1033).
 - 1. The officer shall forward the Traffic Stop-Termination Report to their supervisor, who shall forward it to the Precinct/Unit Commander for review. The Precinct/Unit Commander will forward the report to the Patrol Division Commander.
 - 2. The Patrol Division Commander or designee will track all Traffic Stop-Termination Reports and report the findings in the annual Pursuit Analysis Report.
- F. The Patrol Division Commander or designee shall complete an analysis of all pursuits for the previous year.
 - 1. The analysis shall be completed prior to March 1st for the preceding year.
 - 2. The completed analysis report shall be filed with the Office of the Chief of Police, and copies shall be supplied to all members of the Command Staff and the Accreditation Unit.
- G. The Patrol Division Commander or designee shall submit an annual written report of all vehicle pursuits on the GACP Annual Pursuit Data Collection form as provided by the Director of State Certification, GA Chiefs of Police.
 - 1. This form shall be submitted by March 1st for the preceding year.

XI. OTHER AGENCY PURSUITS

- A. Requests by other agencies for assistance in a vehicle pursuit occurring outside the jurisdictional boundaries of the CCPD will be relayed to a Lieutenant or Sergeant for immediate evaluation, approval, and possible assignment.
- B. Upon the communication center becoming aware of a pursuit by another agency within the jurisdiction of the CCPD, the Communications Center will immediately notify the

affected precinct by radio and broadcast the pertinent details, including the radio channel on which the pursuit is occurring.

- C. Officers shall not become involved in another agency pursuit unless all of the following requirements are met:
 - 1. The pursuit is in compliance with this SOP.
 - 2. CCPD involvement is specifically authorized by a Lieutenant or designee.
 - 3. It is clear that a single unit from the other agency cannot obtain immediate assistance from its agency.
 - 4. A clear emergency exists, which dictates that immediate intervention and assistance from the CCPD is needed.

XII. Vehicle Pursuit Training

- A. Initial training on this policy will be provided to officers and documented.
- B. Vehicle Pursuit Training will be conducted annually and documented accordingly.

BY ORDER OF:

Electronically Signed in PowerDMS on 07/11/2022

Jeffrey M. Hadley
Chief of Police