OPERATIONAL MANUAL

OPS - 120 – VEHICULAR PURSUITS

Amends/Supersedes: ADM-540 (02/10/2025) **Date of Issue:** 08/10/2026

I. GENERAL

A. The apprehension of a fleeing suspect is secondary in importance to the public's safety. The guiding principle in any pursuit situation will be that the operation of any police vehicle is exercised with due regard for the safety of persons and property (refer to §46.2-920 of the Code of Virginia).

B. Any police vehicle being operated as an emergency vehicle during a pursuit must have both the emergency lights and siren systems activated continuously. If the emergency lights and/or siren fail, the officer operating the vehicle with the failed systems shall immediately terminate their involvement in the pursuit. [41.2.1; 41.2.2(h)]

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Motor Vehicle

This policy defines a motor vehicle as a motorcycle, automobile, truck or bus. A bicycle or a moped shall not be deemed a motor vehicle.

B. Vehicular Pursuit

A deliberate attempt by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend a fleeing suspect in a motor vehicle who is actively attempting to elude apprehension by law enforcement.

III. PROCEDURES

A. An officer may initiate a vehicular pursuit under the following conditions, when they determine the immediate or potential danger of the vehicle remaining at large is greater than the immediate danger of a vehicle pursuit: [41.2.2(b)]

1. The officer has a reasonable belief, based upon articulable facts, that the suspect:
   a. Has committed a violent felony.
   b. Has committed a weapon offense and poses an imminent threat to the public (e.g., brandishing a firearm or willfully discharging a firearm in a public place).
2. Special Investigations Division (SID) personnel attempting to apprehend an upper or mid-level drug "target" who has been known or is suspected of violent behavior, either directly or indirectly, and/or has been known to be armed and where their escape would lead to the destruction, concealment or the distribution of illegal and significant felony narcotics. In addition, the following must also apply:
   a. SID supervisors must have identified the specific target as upper or mid-level.
   b. Other reasonable alternatives to a potential vehicular pursuit were considered and deemed not feasible (e.g., arrested later, meeting the target outside of the vehicle, etc.).
   c. The decision to initiate a vehicular pursuit was discussed and determined in a pre-operational briefing, and all involved bureau/precinct commanders were briefed and concurred.

NOTE: Nothing in this policy shall prevent an officer from following a vehicle traveling at or below the speed limit, refusing to yield to the police vehicle with emergency lights and siren engaged for other offense categories not listed above.

B. An officer will not engage in a pursuit of a vehicle if any of the following criteria apply: [41.2.2(a)]

1. The only known or observed offenses are traffic infractions and any misdemeanor other than a firearms offense.
2. The officer knows the driver's identity, or the identity becomes known or ascertainable during the pursuit. The officer will immediately terminate the pursuit and obtain warrants for the alleged offense(s) and effect the arrest of the driver later. This shall not apply when the driver and/or occupants of the vehicle are known or identified by an officer, and the driver and/or occupant is wanted in connection with a violent felony (i.e., murder, rape, robbery, etc.), or when SID personnel are attempting to apprehend a drug target as outlined in Section III.A.2.
3. The potential dangers of the pursuit outweigh the apprehension of the suspect(s).
4. The officer is transporting a prisoner or civilian passenger, including a ride-along.

C. Before initiating and during a pursuit, the officer must be aware of and evaluate possible factors that would increase the risk of harm to bystanders, non-involved motorist, suspect vehicle occupants and officers involved in the pursuit. These factors include but are not limited to weather, traffic conditions, and pedestrian traffic. The safety of persons and property is paramount. Conditions that affect visibility and maneuverability of involved vehicles require constant evaluation for safety by pursuing officers and the on-duty supervisor during a pursuit.

D. The officer must discontinue the pursuit if conditions exist which make the pursuit unsafe, including:

1. Vehicular speed is a critical safety factor. Therefore, officers will not exceed a speed of 75 mph on city streets or 100 mph on an interstate. Officers may request to continue the pursuit in excess of these speeds WHEN they articulate both the reason for the pursuit AND that apprehension of the fleeing vehicle is necessary for preserving life. The pursuit supervisor must approve or deny the request over the radio. [4.1.2; 41.2.2(a,i)]
2. If a police vehicle involved in the pursuit sustains any damage limiting safe operation during a pursuit or equipment malfunctions that limit communication.
3. If the suspect vehicle is a motorcycle, the maneuverability, including the ability to travel between vehicles and on pedestrian walkways, increases the safety risks and may make the pursuit unsafe.

E. When operating police units during a vehicle pursuit, officers shall always exercise extreme caution and are responsible for the safe operation of their vehicles. Officers are responsible for always maintaining proper control of their vehicles. [4.1.2; 41.2.1]

1. When proceeding past any steady or flashing red signal, traffic light, stop sign or device indicating the moving traffic shall stop, the speed of the police vehicle will be sufficiently reduced to enable the police vehicle to pass the signal, traffic light or device with due regard for the safety of persons and property (see §46.2-920 of the Code of Virginia). Officers must ensure the intersection is clear before proceeding through and shall come to a complete stop if necessary. There is no absolute right to pass through an intersection against a traffic signal.
2. Officers will not initiate or continue a vehicle pursuit going the wrong way against the traffic flow on a U.S. Interstate roadway.

F. Pursuit Situations

1. When an officer initiates a vehicle pursuit, they shall advise the Communications Division of the following information: [41.2.2(c)]
   a. Reason for pursuit.
   b. Direction of travel and route during the pursuit.
   c. Complete description of the vehicle (color, make, license number, number of occupants including description if possible).
   d. Speed of the pursuit.

2. The first unit to establish visual contact with the primary police unit involved in the pursuit, and the suspect vehicle will join the pursuit. This second vehicle will maintain visual contact and may assume the duty of advising by radio the progress, speed and direction of the pursuit. [41.2.2(d)]
3. Normally, no more than two police vehicles will be involved in an active vehicular pursuit. Other units will be assigned as needed to respond in a non-emergency mode to the general vicinity to assist. However, based upon the seriousness of the suspected crimes of the vehicle's occupants (i.e., murder, robbery, maiming) and the number of occupants within the vehicle, the on-duty supervisor may permit additional units to engage in the pursuit (including having units parallel the route of the pursuit). [41.2.2(e,g)]
4. When the Real Time Crime Center staff is available and alerted to a pursuit, a member will utilize available resources to assist with the pursuit by using cameras to track the vehicle and provide location and subject description updates over the radio.
5. Prisoner transport vans, oversized vehicles (i.e., mobile command post or tactical equipment truck) and motorcycle units are prohibited from initiating and participating in vehicle pursuits as a primary or secondary unit. [41.1.3(a); 41.2.2(e)]
6. The unmarked units may initiate a pursuit; however, once marked units can take over, the unmarked vehicle will first surrender the primary, then the secondary role. The operator of the unmarked unit must remain aware of the emergency equipment in their vehicle and its effectiveness on emergency driving and public safety. [41.2.2(e)]
7. An on-duty patrol supervisor in the affected precinct is responsible for supervising the pursuit. They will closely monitor the progress of the pursuit and terminate it at any time it is judged appropriate in consideration of public safety and the procedures found herein. A pursuit may also be terminated by any supervisor who observes conditions that meet the criteria in section III. B. The supervisor and/or involved officers will not be criticized for exercising the authority to terminate a pursuit. [41.2.2(g,h)]
8. Any officer who does not discontinue a pursuit that a supervisor has terminated shall be subject to disciplinary action for violating this policy and failure to obey orders. [41.2.2(h)]
9. Utilizing stationary barricading of roadways could result in injury and is prohibited. [41.2.2(f); 41.2.3(a,b, d)]
10. Ramming the pursued vehicle is strictly prohibited. [41.2.3(a)]

G. Use of Road Spikes [41.2.3(a,b,c)]

1. Road spikes allow officers to deploy a row of spikes in the roadway to deflate the tires of a suspect vehicle fleeing from police in a vehicle pursuit and bring the vehicle to a halt.
2. The deployment of the road spike device is considered a use of force that could result in injury. The request to use this device must be weighed against factors justifying its deployment, and the same criteria used before a police pursuit shall be utilized (see Section I, paragraph A).
3. The road spikes will be kept in patrol vehicles and/or the precincts. Only those officers who have completed the training in the use of the road spikes will be allowed to check out the devices during their tour of duty. These officers will also be the only ones allowed to deploy the device.
4. The primary officer engaged in pursuit may request that the road spikes be deployed. However, the supervisor monitoring the pursuit must grant final authorization for the device's deployment and the location chosen for deployment before the road spikes are used. [41.2.3(d)]
5. The device will not be deployed or used:
   a. On curves, hills, bridges or overpasses,
   b. To stop any vehicle transporting hazardous materials,
   c. To stop any passenger bus while transporting passengers,
   d. To stop any school bus while transporting students,
   e. To stop any vehicle that poses an unusual hazard to the public,

f. To stop any two-wheeled vehicle unless deadly force is justified, or

g. At roadside checkpoints. However, this does not prohibit the use of the device to stop a suspect vehicle involved in a pursuit initiated at the checkpoint.

6. When the decision is authorized to deploy the road spikes, the primary units engaged in the pursuit will notify the officer deploying the device as far in advance as possible. The officer deploying the device shall arrive at the authorized location in sufficient time to deploy the road spikes properly and safely. All units involved in the pursuit shall be notified when the device is in place. The pursuing police vehicles shall allow enough distance between them and the suspect vehicle to enable the deploying officer to retract the device from the roadway after the suspect vehicle has driven over it. The deploying officer will not hold on to the retracting rope and handle of the device while vehicles are over running it.

7. Any time the device is used in a pursuit, its use will be documented in the vehicle pursuit report, and a use of force report will be initiated under the pursuit event identification number. If any vehicles are damaged during the deployment, photographs of the damage will be attached to the vehicle pursuit report. [41.2.2(j), 41.2.3(e)]

H. Pursuits into Surrounding Jurisdictions [41.2.2(j)]

1. Newport News Police units may pursue vehicles into surrounding jurisdictions in accordance with §19.2-77 of the Code of Virginia.

2. When pursuing a suspect vehicle into or within a surrounding jurisdiction, all Newport News Police units will follow the same criteria and procedures as if the pursuit was occurring within the jurisdiction of Newport News.

3. The Communications Division shall provide the agency of the entered jurisdiction with the following information: [41.2.2(e)]

a. Reason for the pursuit, including pending or outstanding charges.

b. Location where the pursuit is entering the respective jurisdiction.

c. Description of vehicle, to include license plate number.

d. Description of occupants, if known.

e. Whether any types of firearms are involved.

f. Description of any erratic or unusual driving maneuvers; and

g. Speed of the pursued vehicle.

4. While within the boundaries of the surrounding jurisdiction, the pursuit will be terminated at any time if requested by the respective law enforcement agency. [41.2.2(i)]

I. Pursuits into Newport News Initiated by Other Law Enforcement Agencies [41.2.2(j)]

1. Officers will respond to assist another law enforcement agency whose pursuit has immediately entered, or is about to enter, into the city limits of Newport News, provided the agency's reason for the pursuit would meet the same criteria as a Newport News police officer initiating a vehicle pursuit. The decision to maintain the pursuit response will be made by the field supervisor, as set out.

2. The Communications Division shall contact the agency involved in the pursuit to ascertain the following information: [41.2.2(f)]

a. Reason for the pursuit, including pending or outstanding charges.

b. Location where the pursuit is entering Newport News.

c. Description of vehicle, to include license plate number.

d. Description of occupants, if known.

e. Whether any types of firearms are involved.

f. Description of any erratic or unusual driving maneuvers; and

g. Speed of the pursued vehicle.

3. The field supervisor in the area the pursuit has entered will decide on whether to maintain the agency's response after the immediate initial response based on the following:
   a. The safety of the public and all law enforcement.
   b. The factors articulated by the originating agency regarding the pursuit.
   c. The identity of the offender(s); and
   d. Ability to effectively maintain the pursuit.
4. When the pursuit enters the jurisdiction of Newport News, the first two marked Newport News patrol units to make contact with the pursuit will engage in active pursuit with the neighboring agency's units. No other Newport News units will engage in active pursuit.
5. In the event the other agency's reason for the pursuit does not meet the criteria previously outlined in Section III. A and B, the Newport News Police Department will not actively engage in the pursuit. The respective law enforcement agency that initiated the pursuit will be contacted and notified as such. Officers instead will attempt to clear intersections to allow the other law enforcement agency and the pursued vehicle an unobstructed passage.
6. The field supervisor will closely monitor the progress of the pursuit and will have the authority to request that the adjoining jurisdiction terminate the pursuit. [41.2.2(h,i)]

J. Vehicle Pursuit Report [41.2.2(k); 82.2.1]

1. The primary officer involved in the pursuit will complete a pursuit entry in Axon Standards before ending their tour of duty. The vehicle pursuit will serve as the primary report under the event. All other associated reports in Axon Standards will fall under the same event identification number.
   a. If the pursuit was initiated by another agency that entered the jurisdiction of Newport News, the vehicle pursuit report will be completed by the lead Newport News officer involved in the pursuit or by an officer designated by the field supervisors overseeing the pursuit.
   b. In the summary section of the report, officers must clearly articulate their initial reason for pursuing the vehicle and conditions that affected the decision to continue and/or terminate a pursuit.
2. Each person in the officer's chain of command will review the vehicle pursuit report and associated body-worn camera footage. Each reviewer will document any compliance, training or policy issues.
   a. The officer's immediate supervisor will review the report, add any comments, and forward it through the chain of command to the officer's division/precinct commander.
   b. The division/precinct commander will review the report, make comments, and forward it to the Assistant Chief of Patrol for review and comment and forward it to Internal Affairs.
   c. A Special Operations Division supervisors may review the report and may provide feedback as to whether the pursuit complied with department policy. Training staff may also review a report and provide feedback regarding compliance with training related to vehicle pursuits.
3. Vehicle pursuit reports will be analyzed annually for patterns or trends that may indicate training needs and/or policy modification. This analysis will include a review of this policy and all reporting procedures. The analysis will be documented and forwarded to the Chief of Police for approval. [41.2.2(l)]

K. Criminal Prosecution and Civil Liability

The authority to operate an emergency vehicle in a hot pursuit situation does not protect the officer from criminal prosecution, nor does it shelter the officer from civil liability for acts constituting gross negligence.

IV. TRAINING

A. All sworn personnel will receive documented training on this policy before they begin field training. [41.2.2m]

B. Annually, all sworn personnel must complete a documented review of this policy in PowerDMS. [41.2.2n]

C. When a new revision of this policy is published in PowerDMS, supervisors will review the changes during roll-call training. This review will be documented on NNPD Form-44 *Directive Review Verification Form*.

D. Precinct lieutenants should review this policy with newly promoted supervisors, to ensure they understand:

1. How to assess pursuits for continuation/termination.
2. How to evaluate pursuits and process vehicle pursuit reports.



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Chief of Police