



Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



Interim Policy 13.031 – Vehicle Eluding and Pursuits

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13.031-POL-1 Definitions

Eluding: when an officer operating an authorized police vehicle issues by hand, voice, emergency lights or siren a visual and/or audible signal to the driver of a vehicle to stop, and, after a reasonable time to yield in response to the officer's signal, the driver increases speed, takes evasive actions, and/or refuses to stop.

Pursuit: an attempt by a uniformed peace officer in a vehicle equipped with emergency lights and a siren to stop a moving vehicle where the operator of the moving vehicle appears to be aware that the officer is signaling the operator to stop the vehicle, and the operator of the moving vehicle appears to be willfully resisting or ignoring the officer's attempt to stop the vehicle by increasing vehicle speed, making evasive maneuvers, or operating the vehicle in a reckless manner that endangers the safety of the community or the officer ([RCW 10.116.060](#)).

13.031-POL-2 When Sworn Employees May Pursue and Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Sworn Employees May Not Pursue Unless the Following Requirements Have Been Met:

- The pursuing sworn employee has completed an emergency vehicle operator's course (EVOC), has completed an updated EVOC within the previous two years, and has been certified in at least one pursuit ending option (see 13.031-POL-3 Ending or Terminating Pursuits); and
- There is probable cause to believe that a person in the vehicle has committed or is committing a violent offense or sex offense ([RCW 9.94A.030](#)); and

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- The person poses a significant imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to others such that, under the circumstances, the public safety risks of failing to apprehend or identify the person are greater than inherent risk of pursuit driving; and
- The pursuing sworn employee has received authorization to continue the pursuit from a supervisor; and
- A supervisor is actively monitoring and supervising the pursuit.

A vehicle pursuit may not be initiated if all the requirements above are not met, and the pursuit must be terminated, unless circumstances change.

Sworn employees are prohibited from pursuing for the sole crimes of eluding, escape, or DUI.

Sworn employees will terminate a pursuit when the risk to any person(s) outweighs the need to stop the eluding vehicle.

2. Sworn Employees and Supervisors Must Consider Alternatives to Pursuits

Factors to be considered in weighing the risk of the pursuit include:

- Underlying reason for pursuit
- Location
- Direction of travel and roadway geometry or configuration
- Weather and roadway conditions
- Speed
- Traffic conditions (pedestrians and vehicles)
- The known presence of minors in the vehicle
- Speed and operation of the eluding vehicle

3. Unmarked Units Without Emergency Equipment Will Not Engage in Pursuits

4. Sworn Employees in Pursuits Will Activate Emergency Lights and Will Use Their Sirens Continuously to Warn Others of the Emergency Nature of the Situation

5. Sworn Employees Must Notify Communications of Pursuits

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

The primary pursuing unit will immediately advise Communications when initiating a pursuit and will update relevant details including:

- Reason for pursuit
- Location
- Direction
- Description of suspect vehicle and suspect(s)
- Speed
- Traffic conditions (pedestrians and vehicles)

The secondary unit, after joining the pursuit, unit will, if feasible, assume the responsibility for all radio transmissions from the primary unit.

6. Communications Will Notify Supervisors of Pursuits

The Community Safety Communications Center (CSCC) will immediately notify the primary unit's supervisor and watch commander of the pursuit.

If the pursuing unit's supervisor is not available, Communications will notify another supervisor in the precinct.

7. Controlling Supervisors Will Approve and Monitor All Pursuits

The supervisor who has approved the pursuit is the controlling supervisor of all aspects of the pursuit unless control is taken over by a higher-ranking supervisor. The controlling supervisor will immediately establish radio contact with the primary pursuing unit and will gather relevant information, as soon as practicable.

The controlling supervisor will actively monitor the pursuit to provide ongoing assessment and supervisory control.

Supervisors will terminate a pursuit when the risk to any person(s) outweighs the need to stop the eluding vehicle.

8. Marked Police Vehicles Take Priority in Pursuits

Police motorcycles and unmarked police vehicles with emergency equipment may initiate pursuits. However, marked police vehicles will assume the primary positions as soon as possible.

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

9. Police Vehicles with Civilian Riders or Passengers Will Not Participate in a Pursuit, in Any Capacity

13.031-POL-3 Ending or Terminating Pursuits

1. Intentional Vehicle-Related Force Tactics Are Prohibited as Pursuit-Ending Tactics Except as Justified Under the Use of Force Policy

Sworn employees will not use any intentional vehicle-related force tactics for the sole crime of eluding. These tactics are uses of force per manual section [8.300-POL-6 Use of Force Tools Interim Policy – Vehicle-Related Tactics](#).

Exception: Only sworn employees who have been trained in the Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT) or stop sticks may engage in these techniques. Sworn employees will obtain supervisor approval before performing a PIT, if feasible.

2. The Pursuing Sworn Employee or Controlling Supervisor Overseeing the Pursuit Will Develop a Plan to End the Pursuit, as Soon as Practical

(See 13.031-POL-4 Pursuit Ending Options)

3. The Primary Sworn Employee or a Supervisor May Terminate a Pursuit

4. Sworn Employees will Disengage When Pursuit is Terminated

When a pursuit is terminated by the primary sworn employee or a supervisor, pursuing officers will do the following:

- With ICV/BWV still recording, return to a normal driving pattern, obeying all traffic laws, and
- Deactivate all emergency equipment.

5. Sworn Employees Will Not Reinitiate Pursuits That Have Been Terminated

Once a pursuit is terminated, no sworn employee will pursue the same vehicle anywhere in the city.

Exception: A sworn employee may reinitiate the pursuit if either of the following apply:

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- A sworn employee has an articulable basis to believe that a new violent crime has been committed, or
- A supervisor gives authorization to reinitiate the pursuit.

6. The Department Will Not Discipline Officers, Supervisors, or Commanders for Declining to Initiate or Deciding to Terminate a Pursuit

13.031-POL-4 Pursuit Ending Options

Sworn employees pursuing a vehicle have two pursuit ending options: a Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT) and/or the use of stop sticks.

Supervisors controlling a pursuit and pursuing officers must formulate a plan as soon as practicable for utilizing a pursuit ending option. If formulating a plan provides no pursuit ending options, the pursuit will be terminated.

1. Sworn Employees Using a Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT)

A PIT maneuver is only authorized for sworn employees who have been certified in the technique. Use of a PIT maneuver on a motorcycle is considered deadly force.

For when a PIT maneuver is authorized, see manual section [8.300-POL-6 Use of Force Tools – Vehicle-Related Tactics](#).

(See also manual section [8.400-Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#))

2. Sworn Employees Using Stop Sticks

Use of stop sticks on a motorcycle is considered deadly force.

Sworn employees may deploy stop sticks only after giving the deployment location over the radio to other units. If the primary pursuing officers do not acknowledge, then the stop stick devices will not be used.

The controlling supervisor or primary pursuing officer may override or rescind the decision to deploy stop sticks.

Sworn employees deploying stop sticks must be certified in their use and are responsible for reporting the use of the stop sticks. Stop stick deployment without tire deflation is a Type I use of force. Stop stick deployment with tire deflation is a Type II use of force unless the level of force meets the threshold for a Type III per manual section [8.400-Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#).

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

13.031-POL-5 Pursuit Reporting and Documentation

1. All Driver Sworn Employees Involved in a Pursuit will Complete a Blue Team Vehicle Pursuit Entry

Driver sworn employees will detail their involvement in the pursuit using a Blue Team entry titled "Vehicle Pursuit." In the incident summary, sworn employees will detail:

- The reason(s) for the pursuit
- Lighting conditions
- Roadway lighting
- Traffic conditions
- Road conditions
- Weather conditions
- Whether their vehicle was a one- or two-officer car
- Whether their vehicle was marked
- Whether lights and sirens were activated
- Route of travel
- What pursuit ending option was considered and why it was used or why it was not used

When the sworn employee has completed the Blue Team entry, they will forward the entry to the reviewing supervisor.

Passenger sworn employees involved in the pursuit will complete a witness officer statement and forward it to the reviewing supervisor for attachment to the driver sworn employee's Blue Team entry.

2. Controlling Supervisors May or May Not be the Reviewing Supervisor, Depending on Circumstances of the Pursuit

The controlling supervisor may or may not review Blue Team entries. The reviewing supervisor may be different from the controlling supervisor if a pursuit occurs and is approved by the controlling supervisor, depending on the circumstances, such as the following:

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

- Another sworn employee, not the controlling supervisor, deploys stop sticks, the controlling supervisor will complete the Pursuit Blue Team entry and review Blue Teams and the use of force, which will be sent to the precinct admin lieutenant for the use of force review per manual section [8.400 – Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#).
- If the controlling supervisor deploys stop sticks, the controlling supervisor will complete a Pursuit Blue Team entry and a use of force Blue Team entry. Another supervisor, uninvolved in the pursuit, will review all appropriate paperwork including reports, witness officer(s) statements, and Blue Team entries. A precinct lieutenant admin will review the pursuit and use of force per manual section [8.400 – Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#).
- If there is a collision, the controlling supervisor and pursuing primary officer will each complete a Pursuit Blue Team entry. Another supervisor, uninvolved in the pursuit, will review all appropriate paperwork including reports, witness officer(s) statements, and Blue Team entries.
- If there is a Type III use of force, or a fatality collision, FIT or other appropriate units will respond per manual section [8.400 – Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#), and those units primary responsibilities will be reviewing all appropriate paperwork.

(See also manual section [8.400-POL-1\(8\)](#) Except as Provided in [8.500-POL-6](#), No Supervisor Who Ordered, Used, or Participated in Reportable Force, or Participated in the Tactical Planning That Led to the Use of Reportable Force, Will Conduct the Investigation of the Incident, Unless it is Impractical Under the Circumstances)

3. Reviewing Supervisors Will Review Video and Each Sworn Employee's Blue Team Entry

The reviewing supervisor will review video from the pursuit to assess circumstances of the initiation of the vehicle stop, continuation, and termination of the pursuit.

The reviewing supervisor will bookmark the relevant video for subsequent review.

The reviewing supervisor will ensure all driver sworn employees involved in the pursuit complete a Blue Team entry titled "Vehicle Pursuit" and that the primary sworn employee completes an incident report.

The reviewing supervisor will review each officer's Blue Team entry.

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

In the Comments Section of each officer's Blue Team entry, the reviewing supervisor will include:

- A short summary of the pursuit
- What control they extended over the pursuit
- Whether the decision to initiate and/or maintain pursuit of an eluding vehicle was within policy
- What pursuit ending option was used or not used, and why
- Recommendations: training, OPA referral, commendation, etc.

The reviewing supervisor will attach any associated administrative reports to the Blue Team entry and then forward them to the Chief of Police through the primary pursuing sworn employee's chain of command, whether a suspect is apprehended or not.

Watch lieutenants and precinct captains will review the bookmarked portions of the video from all vehicles involved in the pursuit before inputting their comments into each sworn employee's Blue Team report.

4. The Sworn Employee Deploying Stop Sticks Will Report the Use

After the deployment, the sworn employee will collect damaged sections of the device and complete a Stop Stick Deployment Report (form 2.26).

The sworn employee sends a copy of the form to Quartermaster along with the damaged stop sticks.

The sworn employee sends a copy of the form to the Training Unit along with a copy of the incident report.

Exception: Damaged stop sticks submitted as evidence will not go to the Quartermaster.

The Training Unit will inspect the damaged stop sticks, if necessary and work with the Quartermaster to arrange for disposition of the equipment.

(See 13.031-PRO-1 Sending Damaged Stop Sticks to Quartermaster)

Sworn employees will report the use of stop sticks per manual section [8.400 – Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#). The sworn employee will attach a copy of the Stop Stick Deployment Report to their Blue Team entry.

5. Eluding Incidents Ending in a Vehicle Collision Trigger Notifications

Seattle Police Department Policy Manual

A sergeant will respond to the scene of any known collision that involves an eluding vehicle, regardless of whether a sworn employee has initiated pursuit or not, following a driver's refusal to stop.

A Blue Team Pursuit entry is still required if a pursuit results in a collision that results in serious injury to any party. The responding sergeant will notify the sergeant of the Traffic Collision Investigation Squad (TCIS) and the chain of command up to the Patrol Operations Bureau Chief.

13.031-PRO-1 Sending Damaged Stop Sticks to Quartermaster

Officer

1. **Gathers** damaged stop sticks after deployment.
2. **Completes** Stop Stick Deployment Form (Form 2.26).
3. **Sends** damaged stop sticks and a copy of the deployment form to Quartermaster.
4. **Sends** the original deployment form and copy of the incident report to the Training Unit.

Quartermaster

5. **Receives** damaged stop sticks and form.
6. **Notifies** the Training Unit that damaged stop sticks have been received.

Training Unit

7. **Receives** stop stick deployment form and copy of the incident report.
8. **Inspects** damaged stop sticks received by Quartermaster, if necessary.
9. **Arranges** disposition of the stop sticks with Quartermaster (destroy, return to manufacturer, etc.).