

WOONSOCKET POLICE DEPARTMENT

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CHIEF OF POLICE



TYPE OF ORDER	NUMBER/SERIES	ISSUE DATE	EFFECTIVE DATE
General Order	320.01	2/7/2024	2/7/2024
SUBJECT		PREVIOUSLY ISSUED DATES	
Vehicle Pursuits		9/18/1997, 6/4/2002, 8/14/2012, 7/22/2014, 5/2/2017	
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INDEX		DISTRIBUTION	
Patrol Functions		Sworn Personnel Communications Personnel	

VEHICLE PURSUITS

I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for use during vehicular pursuits.

II. POLICY

In recognition of the dangers, the pursuit of fleeing suspect(s) presents to the public, officers, and suspects involved in the pursuit, this policy establishes guidelines to assist officers in the safe performance of their duties while enforcing the laws of the State.

III. DEFINITIONS

Attendant Circumstances: Those factors that might affect the decision to continue or discontinue a pursuit that *must* be communicated to the Officer in Charge (OIC) and/or Supervising officer:

- The reason for the pursuit
- Location and direction of travel
- Speed
- Traffic conditions

- Time of Day
- Pedestrians
- Weather Conditions

High-speed Pursuit: A pursuit above 15 MPH over the posted speed limit.

Lethal Force: Any use of force that is likely to cause death or serious bodily injury. Lethal Force is also referred to as deadly physical force.

Authorized Emergency Vehicle: All police vehicles including marked police cars, unmarked police cars, police vans, and police motorcycles provided each has a siren and some emergency lighting. A personally owned vehicle is not a police vehicle.

Pursuit: The active attempt by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend the occupants of a running motor vehicle who exhibit a refusal to stop the said vehicle at the officer's direction and attempts to avoid apprehension through speed or evasive tactics.

Roadblock: A physical blockage of a roadway with material, equipment, or vehicles to stop the operator of a vehicle who is attempting to elude an officer.

Termination of the Pursuit: The officer(s) operating the authorized emergency vehicle shall turn off the vehicle's emergency lights and siren, and immediately reduce their speed to no more than the posted or prima facie speed limit.

Vehicular Intervention: The deliberate striking or contact with a fleeing vehicle by an officer with an authorized emergency vehicle.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. **Initiation of Pursuit-** A pursuit shall be undertaken by an officer only after consideration is given to the following factors: [RI 7.3\(a\)](#)

1. **The type of crime or violation committed.** A high-speed pursuit or continuation of a pursuit that becomes a high-speed pursuit shall be limited to those situations which involve:
 - a. The attempted apprehension of persons wanted for the commission of felonious and/or misdemeanor acts that threaten, have threatened, or will threaten the health, life, or safety of a person or persons.
 - b. The pursuit of a motor vehicle operator who has committed moving motor vehicle violations that have endangered the lives and safety of others, was operating recklessly before the pursuit was initiated, and is continuing to

operate in a manner that recklessly endangers the lives and safety of others including, but not limited to, driving under the influence of liquor or drugs.

2. **The danger which is created by the following conditions:**

- a. Amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
 - b. Location;
 - c. Weather conditions;
 - d. Condition of road surface upon which pursuit is being conducted;
 - e. Time of the day;
 - f. The officer's knowledge of the road and surrounding area;
 - g. Performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle and the vehicle being pursued;
 - h. Any other conditions that are known to the officer which may be potentially hazardous.
3. A reasonable assessment has been made regarding the potential advantage to law enforcement of apprehending the fleeing operator versus the potential danger to the officer, other users of the highway, innocent bystanders, and the occupant(s) of the fleeing vehicle.

B. Personnel Responsibilities

1. **Pursuit Officer's Responsibilities** [RI 7.3\(b\)](#) [RI 7.4\(c\)](#) – The pursuing officer shall notify the dispatcher and/or OIC/supervisor that a pursuit has commenced as soon as practicable. The pursuing officer shall also advise the dispatcher and/or OIC/supervisor of:
 - a. The attendant circumstances supporting the pursuit;
 - b. The license plate number (if known) and description of the fleeing vehicle;
 - c. The number of occupants, with descriptions, in the fleeing vehicle;
 - d. It shall likewise be the pursuing officer's responsibility to keep the dispatcher and/or OIC/supervisor updated about the ongoing status of the pursuit including any significant change in the attendant circumstances or other factors that may affect the decision to continue the pursuit.
 - e. The pursuing officer may, based upon the attendant circumstances, terminate a pursuit at any time at his or her discretion.
2. **Back-up Officer's Responsibilities** [RI 7.3\(c\)](#) – The backup officer shall maintain a safe distance behind the primary unit sufficient to provide aid to the primary unit and shall assume the responsibility of keeping the dispatcher and/or OIC/supervisor informed of the attendant circumstances.
3. **Dispatcher Responsibilities** [RI 7.3\(d\)](#) – upon notification that a pursuit is in progress, the dispatcher shall:

- a. Immediately advise the OIC/supervisor of the attendant circumstances regarding the pursuit;
 - b. Control all radio communications and clear the frequency in use from all non-emergency radio traffic, except that of the pursuit;
 - c. Notify other units of the pursuit;
 - d. Notify other departments or jurisdictions via telephone or radio when appropriate;
 - e. Obtain criminal records and vehicle checks of the suspects;
 - f. Coordinate and dispatch backup assistance under the direction of the OIC/Supervisor.
4. **OIC/Patrol Supervisor** [RI 7.3\(e\)](#) [RI 7.4\(c\)](#) – Upon notification that a vehicular pursuit is in progress, the OIC or patrol supervisor shall assume responsibility for monitoring and controlling the pursuit as soon as possible.

In controlling the pursuit, the OIC or patrol supervisor shall be responsible for the coordination of the pursuit as follows:

- a. Directing vehicles or air support units into or out of the pursuit;
- b. Re-designation of primary, support, or other backup vehicle responsibilities;
- c. Approval or disapproval, and coordination of pursuit tactics;
- d. Approval or disapproval to leave the jurisdiction to continue the pursuit;
- e. The OIC patrol supervisor shall continually evaluate the attendant circumstances of a pursuit and, if judgment dictates that the potential and real dangers of the pursuit begin to outweigh the advantage of arresting the fleeing suspect(s), the OIC or patrol supervisor shall have the authority to override a pursuing officer's decision to continue a pursuit and shall order the termination of the pursuit.

C. Termination of Pursuit [RI 7.3\(f\)](#)

- 1. The decision to pursue a fleeing vehicle is not irreversible. The decision to terminate a pursuit may be the most rational based on rapidly evolving, unpredictable, and tense circumstances. The pursuit may be terminated by the pursuing officer, the OIC or patrol supervisor, or another ranking officer of the pursuing agency.
- 2. The pursuit shall be immediately terminated in any of the following circumstances:
 - a. Weather or traffic conditions substantially increase the danger of pursuit beyond the worth of apprehending the suspect;
 - b. The distance between the pursuit and fleeing vehicles is so great that further pursuit is futile;
 - c. The danger posed by the continued pursuit to the public, the officer(s), or the suspect(s), is greater than the value of apprehending the suspect(s).

3. The pursuing officer shall constantly evaluate the advisability of continuing the pursuit.

D. Accidents

1. During a pursuit when either a police vehicle or the pursued vehicle is involved in an accident with an unattended vehicle, fixed object, or highway fixture, the officer will communicate the incident and may continue the pursuit if, in their judgment, it is safe to do so, subject to the discretion of the OIC or patrol supervisor.
2. During a pursuit when either a police vehicle or the pursued vehicle is involved in a motor vehicle accident with an attended vehicle or any person, the police vehicle will stop to render aid unless another police vehicle can be immediately dispatched or is available to render aid, in which case the police vehicle may continue the pursuit if, in the pursuing officer's judgment, it is safe to do so, subject to the discretion of the OIC or patrol supervisor.
3. All other provisions of General Order [330.03 Traffic Crash Investigations](#) shall remain in effect.

E. Pursuit Tactics

1. Unless expressly authorized by an OIC or supervisor, based on tactical considerations, no pursuit will be conducted by more than two (2) authorized emergency vehicles, an assigned primary, and a backup vehicle. Officers are not otherwise permitted to join the pursuit team. Officers in the immediate area of the pursuit may position themselves to assist in limiting and/or terminating the pursuit. When the pursuit involves an assisting unit, the second vehicle shall maintain a safe distance behind the primary unit but close enough to provide aid and assume radio communications.
2. Whenever feasible, only marked police units shall participate in a pursuit. Unmarked cars, police motorcycles, and police special purpose vehicles that initiate a pursuit shall give way, if possible, to the first marked vehicle that joins the pursuit. This marked vehicle will then become the primary vehicle. [RI 7.3\(h\)](#)
3. The pursuing officers must have emergency lights and sirens activated at all times during a pursuit and adhere to the provisions of [R.I.G.L. § 31-12-6](#) through [§ 31-12-9](#). Officers engaged in a pursuit shall, at all times, drive in a manner exercising reasonable care for the safety of themselves and others within the pursuit area.
4. No officer will conduct a pursuit while transporting a civilian in a police vehicle.
5. Officers may not intentionally use vehicular intervention unless the use of lethal force is authorized.

F. Use of Lethal Force

Any use of lethal force must meet the criteria, and comply with the protocols established in General Order [300.01 Response to Resistance Policy](#).

G. Roadblocks

1. Roadblocks may be implemented in extraordinary circumstances and only when: [RI 7.4\(a\)](#)
 - a. The use of lethal force is authorized;
 - b. Permission has been received from the OIC or patrol supervisor;
 - c. All officers involved in the pursuit have been notified of the location of the roadblock; and
 - d. There is no civilian traffic in the immediate vicinity of the roadblock or between the roadblock and the vehicle being pursued.
2. Roadblocks may be established: [RI 7.4\(b\)](#)
 - a. Using governmental vehicles, fixed objects, or approved equipment, which is specifically designed to stop a moving vehicle;
 - b. In a line of sight which would provide approaching vehicles an adequate distance to come to a stop;
 - c. The emergency lights of the police vehicles involved in the roadblock are to be activated, to be visible to approaching vehicles; and
 - d. None of the blocking vehicles shall be occupied.
3. Reporting use of Roadblocks - A Post Pursuit Summary and a Response to Resistance report will be completed each time a roadblock is employed whether or not the tactic is successful. [RI 7.4\(e\)](#)

H. Tire Deflation Devices

1. Use of tire deflation device: [RI 7.4\(a\)](#)
 - a. The tire deflation device may be utilized only after permission has been received from the OIC or patrol supervisor;
 - b. Tire deflation devices **will not** be used to stop motorcycles, mopeds, or similar vehicles;
 - c. Tire deflation devices should not be used in locations where specific geographic features (e.g., sharp curves, alongside bodies of water, steep embankments, etc.) increase the risk of serious injury to the officer, violator, or public;
 - d. Deployment locations should have reasonable good sight distances to enable the officer to observe the pursuit and other traffic as it approaches; and
 - e. The officer deploying the system should not attempt to overtake and pass a high-speed pursuit to position the device.
2. Deployment of the tire deflation device: [RI 7.4\(b\)](#)

- a. The officer(s) deploying the device(s) should take a position of safety as the pursued vehicle approaches;
 - b. After all other traffic has passed over the device(s), and immediately before the pursued vehicle passes over the device(s), the device(s) shall be activated (exposing the spikes);
 - c. Immediately after the pursued vehicle goes over the device(s), the officer shall deactivate the device (retract the spikes);
 - d. The officer should immediately notify the dispatcher if the pursued vehicle impacted the device(s) if the officer observed any signs of deflation and the direction and operation of the pursued vehicle after the impact.
3. Removal of the device(s) – as soon as practical, the device(s) shall be removed from the roadway.
4. Report use of tire deflation devices – The following information will be included in the officer's Incident or Arrest Report: [RI 7.4\(e\)](#)
 - a. Date, time, and location of deployment;
 - b. OIC/supervisor who authorized the deployment of the device(s);
 - c. Officer(s) who deployed the device(s);
 - d. Officer(s) who activated the device(s) – if different from above;
 - e. Results of the use of the device(s) on the pursued vehicle;
 - f. Results of the use of the device(s) on any other vehicle or property; and
 - g. The actual performance of the device(s).
5. Storage/Maintenance of Tire deflation devices –devices will be stored in designated marked police cruisers. Officers are responsible for ensuring that devices are in place in designated cruisers. Officers are responsible for reporting missing devices, or damage to devices. Any device that is deployed and in need of replacement spikes will be brought to the Operations Captain for the necessary replacement or repairs.

I. Inter-jurisdictional Pursuit [RI 7.3\(g\)](#)

1. The pursuing officer shall notify Communications when it is likely that a pursuit will continue into a neighboring jurisdiction or across the state line.
2. Pursuit into a bordering state shall conform to that state's law.
3. If the pursuit enters another jurisdiction in Rhode Island, the pursuit policy of the entered jurisdiction shall apply and control and the entered jurisdiction shall have the authority, consistent with its policies, to terminate the pursuit.
4. When a pursuit initiated by another agency comes into the municipality, the procedures outlined in this policy shall apply. When a pursuit initiated by another agency leaves the municipality, and that outside agency's pursuing officer is alone, the OIC or patrol supervisor may allow other Woonsocket units to follow as a backup until another agency becomes available to provide backup.

5. When a pursuit enters an interstate highway system and State Police personnel become involved in the pursuit and become the primary pursuit vehicle, then the State Police shall have the authority, consistent with its policies, to terminate the pursuit.

J. Post-Pursuit Obligations

1. All officers involved in a pursuit shall complete a written report detailing the officer's involvement in the pursuit. The primary pursuing officer shall include the reason for initiation of the pursuit and, if applicable, the basis for terminating the same in the written report. The OIC or patrol supervisor shall document their factual basis for continuing or terminating the pursuit, as well as the factual basis for any decision made during the pursuit.
2. In addition to the reports listed above a Post Pursuit Summary Form will be completed by the primary pursuing officer.
 - a. The patrol supervisor and/or the OIC will review and approve all Post Pursuit Summary Forms.
3. Professional Standards will conduct an administrative review of each pursuit and/or use of roadblocks and tire deflation devices. [RI 7.3\(i\)](#) [RI 7.4\(f\)](#)
4. On an annual basis, the department will conduct a documented analysis of all pursuits, roadblocks, and implementation of tire deflation devices in which agency personnel were involved. The purpose of this analysis is to determine any training needs and or policy review/revision. [RI 7.3\(j\)](#)

K. Training

1. All affected personnel will receive initial training on this policy. [RI 7.3\(k\)](#)
2. The department will review this policy with all affected personnel on an annual basis. [RI 7.3\(l\)](#)
3. Before any officer is authorized to establish a roadblock or implement the use of any tire deflation device, they must be trained in the authorized use of these techniques. [RI 7.4\(d\)](#)

Per order,

Thomas F. Oates, III

Chief of Police

Written directives published within PowerDMS are in full force and effect on the referenced dates and have been approved by the Chief of Police.

TITLE 31
Motor and Other vehicles
CHAPTER 31-12
Applicability of Traffic Regulations
SECTION 31-12-6

§ 31-12-6 Emergency vehicles – Times when entitled to special privileges. – (a) The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an alleged violator of the law or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in § 31-12-7, but subject to the conditions stated in this section and in §§ 31-12-8 and 31-12-9.

(b) Upon establishment of the law enforcement agency accreditation council, the council shall adopt uniform rules and regulations to govern high speed pursuits in the state in accordance with the standards established by the National Law Enforcement Accreditation Agency. Until such rules are adopted, all police departments within the state shall submit to the department of the attorney general a copy of their high speed pursuit policies, which shall be available to the public.

History of Section.

(P.L. 1950, ch. 2595, art. 21, § 5; G.L. 1956, § 31-12-6; P.L. 1990, ch. 173, § 1; P.L. 2000, ch. 109, § 64.)

TITLE 31
Motor and Other vehicles
CHAPTER 31-12
Applicability of Traffic Regulations
SECTION 31-12-7

§ 31-12-7 Privileges allowed emergency vehicles. – The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle may:

- (1) Park or stand, irrespective of the provisions of any law;
- (2) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;
- (3) Exceed the prima facie speed limits so long as he or she does not endanger life or property;
- (4) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

History of Section.

(P.L. 1950, ch. 2595, art. 21, § 5; P.L. 1952, ch. 2937, § 11; G.L. 1956, § 31-12-7.)

TITLE 31
Motor and Other vehicles
CHAPTER 31-12
Applicability of Traffic Regulations
SECTION 31-12-8

§ 31-12-8 Warning signals given by emergency vehicles. – The exemptions granted in this chapter to an authorized emergency vehicle shall apply only when the driver of the vehicle while in motion sounds an audible signal by bell, siren, or exhaust whistle as may be reasonably necessary, and when the vehicle is equipped with at least one lighted lamp displaying a red light visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of five hundred feet (500') to the front of the vehicle, except that an authorized emergency vehicle operated as a police vehicle need not be equipped with or display a red light visible from in front of the vehicle.

History of Section.

(P.L. 1950, ch. 2595, art. 21, § 5; G.L. 1956, § 31-12-8.)

TITLE 31
Motor and Other vehicles
CHAPTER 31-12
Applicability of Traffic Regulations
SECTION 31-12-9

§ 31-12-9 Due care by emergency vehicles. – The provisions of this chapter shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall the provisions protect the driver from the consequences of the driver's reckless disregard for the safety of others.

History of Section.

(P.L. 1950, ch. 2595, art. 21, § 5; G.L. 1956, § 31-12-9.)

TITLE 31

Motor and Other vehicles

CHAPTER 31-27

Motor Vehicle Offenses

SECTION 31-27-4.2

§ 31-27-4.2 Minimal requirements. – (a) In any criminal action brought under § 31-27-4.1 or 31-27-4.2 in which a high speed pursuit occurs, the following definitions and minimal requirements of the high speed pursuit shall apply and shall be complied with by the charging police department.

(b) Any police department charging a suspect under the provisions of this chapter shall limit the use of continued high speed vehicular pursuits to those situations which involve:

(1) The attempted apprehension of persons wanted for the commission of felonious and/or misdemeanor acts that threaten, have threatened, or will threaten the health, life, or safety of a person or persons; or

(2) The pursuit of a motor vehicle operator who has committed flagrant moving motor vehicle violations which have endangered the lives and safety of others, and was operating in a reckless manner before the pursuit was initiated, and is continuing to operate in a manner that recklessly endangers the lives and safety of others, including, but not limited to, driving under the influence of liquor or drugs.

(c) *Definition.* A "high speed pursuit" is the active attempt by a police officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend the occupants of a running motor vehicle at speeds in excess of fifteen miles per hour (15 MPH) over the speed limit.

(d) *Responsibilities of pursuing officer(s).* Upon initiation of a high speed pursuit the officer(s) shall:

(1) As soon as practical communicate to his or her dispatcher his or her location and direction of travel.

(2) Provide the reason for the high speed pursuit.

(3) Communicate the ongoing status of the pursuit at regular intervals including any significant change of circumstances which might affect the decision to either continue or discontinue the pursuit.

(4) Activate all audio (sirens) and visual (emergency lights) warning devices until the high speed pursuit is terminated.

(5) Adhere to all the provisions of §§ 31-12-6 through 31-12-9.

(6) Terminate the high speed pursuit when in his or her judgment the dangers created by the pursuit outweigh the need for immediate apprehension.

(e) Responsibilities of the officer in charge and/or field supervisor. In all continued high speed pursuit situations, command responsibility rests with the officer in charge and/or the field supervisor. It shall be the duty of the officer in charge and/or the field supervisor to provide adequate supervision to the officer involved in the high speed pursuit and to:

(1) Track the location of the pursuit.

(2) Review and consider as many facts of the pursuit as are available.

(3) Consider the potential and real dangers of the continuation of the pursuit.

(4) Order the termination of the high speed pursuit when in his or her judgment the dangers created by the pursuit outweigh the need for immediate apprehension.

(f) Interjurisdictional pursuits. Whenever there exists the possibility of a high speed pursuit extending into another jurisdiction, the officer in charge shall order the surrounding jurisdictions to be notified of the high speed pursuit and of its potential for extending into their jurisdictions. If the high speed pursuit enters a jurisdiction different from the jurisdiction from which it began, then the high speed pursuit policy of the entered jurisdiction shall apply and control and the entered jurisdiction shall have the authority consistent with its policies to terminate the high speed pursuit. For purposes of this chapter, the state police shall have statewide jurisdiction.

(g) Reports. Whenever a high speed pursuit occurs, each officer involved shall submit a written report to be kept on file of his or her participation in the pursuit and the factual reasons justifying the officer's participation in the pursuit.

(2) The officer in charge shall also file a written report giving a complete account of the pursuit including his or her factual reason for continuing or terminating the pursuit.

(h) Each police department shall enact policies and procedures which are consistent with these minimum requirements and to provide copies of those policies to the attorney general's department.

(i) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to create any additional civil liability upon individuals or their employers who engage in high speed pursuits.

History of Section.

(P.L. 1997, ch. 193, § 3.)