


EL PASO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL

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Subject: VEHICLE PURSUITS		
Reference:	Standard: CALEA: 61.3.4	
Chapter: VII	Reevaluation Date: Annual	No. Pages: 5

I. PURPOSE: To provide Office members guidance on the Sheriff's Office policy concerning vehicle pursuits.

II. DEFINITIONS:

BOXING-IN: Surrounding a suspect vehicle with pursuit vehicles in an attempt to slow the suspect vehicle to a stop.

CONTROLLED TIRE DEFLATION DEVICE: These portable devices are commonly known as Spike Strips, Fangs, Spikes, or Stop Sticks. These items are available for deployment by patrol division personnel in accordance with SOP.

PURSUIT: The use of a police vehicle in a Code 3 (lights and siren) manner to pursue someone who willfully or knowingly uses illegal or evasive driving tactics in order to avoid detention, apprehension or arrest.

RAMMING: Deliberately steering a pursuit vehicle into a suspect vehicle to stop or force it off of the roadway.

ROADBLOCKS: Placing a barricade or other obstacle across the roadway to stop the suspect vehicle. Vehicles will **NOT** be used as roadblocks.

SHIFT LIEUTENANT: Any on-duty patrol lieutenant who becomes aware of the pursuit if the involved deputy's lieutenant is not available or aware of the pursuit.

UNIT SUPERVISOR: The on-duty field supervisor responsible for monitoring a pursuit. This supervisor is most commonly a sergeant or a deputy assigned as the acting supervisor in the absence of the sergeant.

III. POLICY: It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office to continually improve its policies in order to balance the safety of the community and our members against the demands and risks of official law enforcement action. Vehicle pursuits present hazards and risks, which could be life threatening and will be conducted only in accordance with the provisions of the Colorado Revised Statutes and this policy. Although it is the duty and responsibility of Deputy Sheriffs to apprehend violators, deputies must balance this need against the safety of the community and the involved deputies. Every pursuit will ultimately be judged upon the totality of the circumstances.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. WHEN PURSUITS ARE AUTHORIZED:

1. Deputies have the duty and responsibility to apprehend law violators. The Office does not intend, however, that pursuits of misdemeanor or traffic infraction violators be extended to the point that the lives of the community, deputies or suspect(s) are placed in jeopardy.
2. The Office expects deputies who initiate a pursuit to continually evaluate the pursuit itself and the circumstances surrounding it, weighing the seriousness of the offense against safety factors. A decision to pursue a violator is not irreversible and the Office expects deputies to use sound professional judgment in any decision to pursue a misdemeanor or traffic infraction violator.
3. Deputies may initiate pursuit of persons whom they have reason to believe have committed or are about to commit a felony. It is the responsibility of the pursuing deputy, the involved unit supervisor and the shift lieutenant to determine if the seriousness of the offense or the continued freedom of the offender warrants accepting the dangers/risks of the pursuit.
4. No Office vehicle shall be used to initiate or take part in any pursuit unless it has AT LEAST a siren and one RED emergency light capable of being mounted on the vehicle's dashboard, visor or roof and have both activated during the pursuit.
5. No more than two vehicles actively engaged in pursuit at one time unless authorized by an involved unit supervisor. The two vehicles actively engaged in the pursuit shall be designated as the primary pursuit vehicle (the vehicle directly behind the suspect vehicle) and the secondary pursuit vehicle (the vehicle behind the primary pursuit vehicle). Other vehicles may parallel pursuit obeying traffic laws unless otherwise directed.
6. Deputies shall consider the following prior to and during any vehicle pursuit:
 - A) The suspect exhibits the intention to avoid arrest by using a vehicle to flee apprehension.
 - B) The suspect operating the vehicle refuses to stop at the direction of the officer.
 - C) The suspect, if allowed to flee, would present a danger to human life or cause serious injury.
 - D) The performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle.
 - E) The amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area.
 - F) Weather conditions.
 - G) Road conditions.
7. If a pursuit is initiated by a motorcycle, semi-marked, or an unmarked unit, which meets the minimum emergency equipment criteria, that unit shall immediately become the secondary pursuit vehicle, once a fully marked patrol vehicle is in a position to take over the pursuit. Once a second fully marked patrol vehicle arrives it will assume the secondary pursuit position. The initiating vehicle shall then disengage from the pursuit, however, may follow while obeying all traffic laws, until the pursuit is terminated.
8. ***Only sworn deputies may engage in any pursuit. No pursuits will be allowed by a deputy who has a rider who is not a sworn member of this office. Deputies with prisoners on-board will not be allowed to engage in pursuits.***
9. Deputies will not use roadblocks, "ramming", or "boxing in" methods unless deadly force is deemed necessary as outlined in CRS 18-1-707 as amended. Traffic control at an intersection is authorized to direct a pursuit out of a congested area for the safety of the public, by limiting the driver's ability to turn in their direction of choice. The driver must be allowed an avenue of escape; i.e.: one or more roadways must remain open and available to the suspect driver.

B. WHEN TO INITIATE A PURSUIT:

1. The first consideration during any pursuit must be to weigh the seriousness of the crime or suspected crime against the possible hazards of the pursuit.
2. Deputies intending to stop a violator's vehicle should be near it before activating the overhead lights and siren. This will reduce a violator's temptation to evade contact.
3. Deputies involved in a daytime chase will turn on their headlights.
4. The initiating deputy shall immediately relay to the Communications Center the following information if a pursuit appears imminent:
 - A) Location.
 - B) License number and description of vehicle, if available.

- C) Description of offense or suspected offense.
- D) Direction of travel and speed.
- E) Traffic Conditions

C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER:

1. Radio transmissions from in-progress pursuits must take priority over all other radio traffic. Communications shall declare a "Code 1" status on the primary channel assigned to the Patrol Division and divert all radio traffic to an alternate channel. Communications shall immediately simulcast that a pursuit is in progress.
2. Upon the initiation of a pursuit, Communications shall be responsible for immediately notifying a unit supervisor to monitor the pursuit. If unable to locate a supervisor, communications will immediately notify any on-duty patrol supervisor, who is available by phone or radio and who has the capability to monitor and transmit by radio. Communications will also notify the Patrol Shift Lieutenant that a pursuit is in progress.

D. SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Upon communications advising of a pursuit in progress, the unit supervisor shall immediately begin to monitor the pursuit and evaluate all criteria until the pursuit is concluded. The supervisor will determine within a reasonable amount of time whether to allow the pursuit to proceed. A reasonable amount of time may vary based upon information gathering ability and the factors surrounding the pursuit.
2. The involved supervisor will proceed to the location where the chase ended and immediately assume command.

E. NUMBER OF UNITS IN PURSUIT:

No more than two Office vehicles shall actively engage in pursuit. This does not preclude the involved supervisor or shift lieutenant from ordering additional vehicles to take part in the pursuit or stationing additional vehicles in advantageous positions.

F. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY VEHICLES:

1. The conduct of the immediate pursuit shall be the responsibility of the primary pursuit driver, who is authorized to terminate the pursuit at any time.
2. The secondary pursuit vehicle shall be responsible for maintaining radio communications and transmitting locations, direction of travel, and traffic conditions. If the secondary pursuit driver loses communications ability, he/she shall advise the primary pursuit driver by dropping out of the pursuit. The primary driver shall assume communications responsibility until a secondary vehicle can join the pursuit.

G. TERMINATION OF PURSUITS:

1. Terminating an active pursuit requires an objective decision, which must be based on continual observation and evaluation, including weighing the seriousness of the offense against the dangers presented by the continuation of the pursuit.
2. The deputy in the primary pursuit position, the involved supervisor and the shift lieutenant are all authorized to terminate any pursuit. Pursuits shall immediately be terminated for the following reasons:
 - A) If the risk of property damage, injury or death to any person outweighs the seriousness of the committed or suspected offense.
 - B) If identification of the offender makes apprehension at a later time likely.
 - C) If the primary pursuit vehicle no longer has visual contact with the suspect vehicle.
 - D) If radio communication by the primary pursuit vehicle is lost and no other deputy is in position to immediately become the primary pursuit vehicle.
 - E) If the primary pursuit deputy, supervisor, or the shift lieutenant determines that an apprehension does not warrant the risk of pursuit.

H. INTER-JURISDICTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Deputies shall not become involved in pursuits originated by another agency unless that agency specifically requests assistance and advises our Office of the reason for the pursuit through our Communications. If such a request is made, the shift lieutenant, or designee, must approve participation. Deputies shall not leave El Paso County jurisdiction, unless directed by a supervisor.
 2. If a pursuit originates in El Paso County and continues into another county, the deputy must receive approval from a supervisor to continue the pursuit into the other county.
 3. In order to terminate pursuits in a quick, safe manner, the shift supervisor may request that any unit in position, whether a unit from the El Paso County Sheriff's Office or from another agency, use a Controlled Tire Deflation Device.
- I. CONDITION OF VEHICLE, DRIVER, ROADWAY, WEATHER:
1. If the primary or secondary pursuit deputy discovers any malfunction that would limit his/her vehicle's ability to maintain maximum efficiency, that deputy will immediately drop out of the pursuit as soon as he can do so safely.
 2. If the physical or mental condition of any deputy involved in a pursuit impairs his/her ability to function at a maximum level, he/she must immediately drop out of the pursuit as soon as it is safely to do so.
 3. When weather and roadway conditions prohibit maneuvering with reasonable safety, the pursuit shall be terminated.
- J. REPORTING AND POST-PURSUIT REVIEW:
1. The primary deputy involved in the pursuit shall be responsible for initiating a Vehicle Pursuit Memorandum through their chain-of-command to their bureau chief. They will detail the involvement of each involved deputy in their report. The primary deputy shall also ensure that an entry is made in the commander's log and is also responsible for completing a Pursuit Checklist, which includes, at a minimum, the following information:
 - A) Type of Offense
 - B) Location
 - C) Route
 - D) Duration
 - E) Weather Conditions
 - F) Traffic Conditions
 - G) Approximate Speeds
 - H) Any unusual occurrences or circumstances
 - I) Any use of Controlled Tire Deflation Devices
 - J) Any vehicle crashes (suspects and deputies)
 - K) Names of all deputies involved in the pursuit
 - L) Outcome of the pursuit, arrests made, termination of pursuit, etc.
- K. POST-PURSUIT ANALYSIS:
1. Upon the conclusion of any pursuit, the appropriate shift lieutenant will conduct a review of the pursuit and its context. He/she will ensure the following:
 - A) That the pursuit was properly monitored.
 - B) That the circumstances before and during the pursuit justified its conclusion.
 - C) That the appropriate documentation is assembled and forwarded.
 2. The shift lieutenant will brief the division commander on all pursuits occurring during the Shift.
 3. An annual review will be conducted by the Patrol Division Commander or his designee involving vehicle pursuits to reveal patterns or trends that may indicate any training needs or policy modifications.