



HERNANDO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines for the safe operation of Sheriff's Office vehicles.

II. SCOPE:

This Order will apply to all Sheriff's Office personnel in the routine and emergency operation of Sheriff's Office vehicles.

III. DISCUSSION:

The routine and emergency operation of Sheriff's vehicles is an area of prime concern to law enforcement and civilian personnel. It is imperative that guidelines be established which will assist in the safe, effective and cost efficient operation of all Sheriff's Office vehicles.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

- A. AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE** - For the purpose of this policy, an authorized emergency vehicle is a marked Sheriff's Office vehicle, (refer to S.O.P. 2037.50, *Marked Patrol Units*), equipped at a minimum with operable emergency lights and siren.
- B. AUTHORIZED PERSONS** - Any individual to whom a Sheriff's Office vehicle is permanently or temporarily assigned; fleet maintenance personnel and personnel of automotive repair agencies for purposes of vehicle maintenance.
- C. EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATION** - Operation of a Sheriff's Office vehicle when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law.
- D. SHERIFF'S OFFICE VEHICLE** - For the purpose of this policy, Sheriff's Office Vehicle shall refer to any vehicle owned or leased by the Sheriff's Office that is not considered a Special Purpose Vehicle.
- E. SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE** - Any vehicle, vessel or aircraft, which by function or design, is utilized for purposes other than routine patrol or investigative functions. Refer to G. O. 2037.60, *Special Purpose Sheriff's Office Vehicles*, for guidelines regarding the use and operation of special purpose vehicles.
- F. VEHICULAR PURSUIT** - An attempt by a law enforcement officer, in an authorized emergency vehicle, to apprehend a fleeing suspect who refuses to voluntarily comply with the law requiring drivers to stop upon command.

V. PROCEDURE:

A. ROUTINE VEHICLE OPERATION

- 1. Only authorized persons will be permitted to operate Sheriff's Office vehicles.
- 2. Sheriff's personnel will operate Sheriff's Office vehicles only when properly licensed to do so by the State of Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.
- 3. Operators of Sheriff's Office vehicles will be responsible for proper use and care of the vehicle and all accessories, equipment and tools assigned to the vehicle.
- 4. Wearing of seat belts is mandatory as prescribed by law.

B. ROUTINE TRANSPORTATION IN SHERIFF'S OFFICE VEHICLES

- 1. Sheriff's Office vehicles may be used to transport office personnel, auxiliary deputy sheriffs, citizens requiring law enforcement services, and others specifically authorized by the respective Division or Bureau Commander.
- 2. The member may also transport family members, but not while the member is performing duties which are directly related to enforcement of laws or public safety.

C. REQUESTS FOR SHERIFF'S OFFICE VEHICLES TO STOP

When in an unmarked vehicle, Sheriff's personnel will, when requested or commanded to stop by other law enforcement personnel, immediately and clearly identify themselves.

D. EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATION

Sheriff's personnel may engage in emergency vehicle operations in accordance with Florida law when responding to an emergency or when in pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law. The provisions of this procedure and Florida law do not relieve the operator of a Sheriff's Office vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the operator of a Sheriff's Office vehicle from the consequences of careless disregard for the safety of others.

1. Sheriff's Office vehicles engaged in emergency operations will utilize emergency lights. The siren will be used to warn vehicular and pedestrian traffic along the emergency route. Hazardous warning lights, the spotlight and public address system may be used as additional safety measures during emergency operations.
 - a. Lights (without siren) may be used when responding to a felony in progress when the siren would warn the suspect and/or endanger the lives of any victim or hostage.
 - b. Lights (without siren) may be used when responding to an emergency call through residential areas during the late night or early morning hours when there is no pedestrian or vehicle traffic in the area.
 - c. The vehicle-mounted spotlight is used whenever additional, directed lighting is necessary such as during traffic stops or locating street signs and house numbers.
 - d. The in-car public address (PA) system is utilized whenever it becomes necessary to amplify the human voice. These situations include, but are not limited to, routine and felony traffic stops, hostage/barricade situations, riots and civil unrest or when addressing persons or crowds outdoors.
2. When a deputy engages in an emergency response, they will notify the Communications Center that they are responding "10-18."
 - a. When a supervisor determines that an emergency response is not necessary, he/she will direct the unit to resume a routine response.
 - b. When a supervisor determines that an emergency response is warranted, he/she will direct responding unit(s) to respond "10-18."
3. When engaged in emergency operations, the operator of a Sheriff's Office vehicle will exercise extreme care. Wearing of seat belts is mandatory as prescribed by law.
4. In accordance with Florida Statute 316.072, Sheriff's Office vehicles engaged in emergency operations may:
 - a. Exceed the maximum speed limit so long as life or property is not endangered. Speed will be limited by road and weather conditions and the exercise of good judgment.
 - b. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing or stopping as necessary for safe operation.
 - c. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified direction, so long as life or property is not endangered.
 - d. Disregard regulations governing parking laws under normal circumstances, except that a Sheriff's Office vehicle will not block access to a fire hydrant at a fire scene, or in any way obstruct the passage of fire apparatus.
5. Sheriff's Office vehicles will not be parked in roadways or traffic lanes, except when necessary to protect accident scenes or injured persons.
 - a. Use of Sheriff's Office vehicles to protect accident scenes or injured persons will be signaled by the activation of emergency lights, flares or other appropriate warning devices.

- b. When use of Sheriff's Office vehicles for protection of accident scenes or injured persons is necessary, flares will be placed as soon as possible in the roadway between the Sheriff's vehicle and approaching traffic.
 - c. Sheriff's Office vehicles will be removed from the roadway as soon as is practicable after placement of flares or other appropriate warning devices.
 - d. Sheriff's Office vehicles will not be used to protect minor accident scenes.
 - Flares will be used to protect vehicles in roadways until vehicles can be removed.
 - Accident vehicles will be removed from roadways as soon as possible.
6. Operators of Sheriff's Office vehicles will immediately terminate emergency vehicle operation when ordered to do so by superior authority.

E. RESPONDING TO CALLS

1. Response to all calls shall be routine unless an emergency situation exists.
 - a. The responding deputy(ies) may determine that emergency response is necessary due to the nature of the call, or the officer may be dispatched by the Communications Center as an emergency response.
 - b. When emergency response is used, the procedures outlined in Section V, D. shall be followed.
2. Back-up units shall be dispatched as necessary.
 - a. At least one back-up unit shall normally be dispatched in response to the following, unless canceled by the primary unit:
 - All felony-in-progress calls
 - If a suspect is still on or near the scene
 - Disturbance calls involving intoxicated subjects, family, neighbors, physical violence, or weapons
 - All calls involving known or alleged mentally disturbed persons
 - Major disaster scenes involving crowd control or scene security
 - b. The first officer on a scene has the responsibility to notify the dispatcher of the situation, whether or not to cancel back-up or send additional units, type of response if additional unit(s) is requested, and if fire response or ambulance is necessary.
 - c. Nothing herein is intended to restrict the use of back-up or additional units at any scene. If there is any doubt as to an officer's safety, dispatchers should assign additional units. Patrol supervisors should be kept informed of back-ups sent or of problem scenes. An officer may request back-up whenever he/she feels it is warranted.
3. Restricted radio traffic (10-33) may be initiated by the deputy at a scene or the Communications Center. Refer to General Order 4040.00, Radio Procedures.

F. TRAFFIC STOPS

1. Sheriff's personnel making a traffic stop will inform the Communications Center in a manner that enables the appropriate telecommunicator to copy the information that a vehicle is being stopped. The deputy will provide the tag number and state, location and a brief description of the vehicle (color, model).
2. Operators of Sheriff's Office vehicles making a traffic stop will make every effort to direct the violator to a suitable stopping point where normal traffic flow will not be impeded.

3. Use of private driveways, gas stations (when open) or other areas providing access to business establishments will not be used for traffic stops when avoidance is possible. When private property is used for a traffic stop, care will be taken to avoid inconvenience to property owners or patrons.

G. EMERGENCY ESCORT OF CIVILIAN VEHICLES

Emergency escort of civilian vehicles is prohibited. Should a civilian request a medical emergency escort, the deputy will summon an ambulance for treatment and/or transporting of the injured or ill person.

H. EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

In an **extreme** (life or death) medical emergency, it may become necessary for a deputy to transport the injured or ill person to a treatment facility in a Sheriff's vehicle.

VI. VEHICLE PURSUITS:

A. GENERAL

1. Deputies will exercise good judgment, carefully weighing the necessity of pursuit and apprehension against the inherent risk involved.
2. A Sheriff's Office vehicle engaged in pursuit operations will utilize emergency lights and siren, and comply with the guidelines set forth in F.S. 316.072 (5).
3. Unmarked Sheriff's Office vehicles will not be engaged in high-speed pursuits except under extreme and extenuating circumstances. An unmarked Sheriff's vehicle involved in a pursuit will relinquish close pursuit to a marked Sheriff's vehicle as soon as possible.
4. Other pursuit vehicles will not pass the primary unit except when authorized to do so by the primary pursuit deputy.
5. Sheriff's deputies will not leave their assigned work areas to engage in a pursuit unless assigned as the principal unit or a backup unit.
6. The area supervisor assigned to monitor the pursuit will be responsible for enforcing pursuit procedures, making note of unauthorized units in the pursuit or at the pursuit terminus, and any breaches of radio discipline, and an administrative review of the pursuit.
7. The radio channel will be cleared for emergency traffic from the primary pursuit unit or the unit serving as pursuit coordinator, and the area supervisor. All other Sheriff's units will refrain from reporting their locations unless requested.
8. Sheriff's Office vehicles will not continue in pursuit if it becomes clear that the risk of collision with innocent motorists or pedestrians outweighs the seriousness of the violation.
9. When a Sheriff's Office aircraft is airborne and able to assist, it will assume the position of pursuit coordinator, advising ground units of direction of travel and possible intercept points.

B. PURSUIT JUSTIFICATION

The purpose of pursuit is the apprehension of a suspect who refuses to voluntarily comply with the law requiring drivers to stop upon command. Factors to consider when initiating a vehicle pursuit include:

1. Geographic location - residential or rural
2. Safety of the public in the area of the pursuit
3. Safety of the pursuing officer(s)
4. Time of day

5. Volume of vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic
6. Weather conditions
7. Road conditions
8. Availability of assistance
9. Speeds involved
10. Seriousness of offense

C. INITIATION OF VEHICLE PURSUIT

1. Pursuit may be initiated when the driver of a motor vehicle intentionally avoids apprehension by fleeing and eluding, and when the pursuing deputy has reason to believe that the pursuit can be successfully concluded within a short distance and time, with little or no risk to persons or property.
2. When pursuit is initiated, the pursuing deputy will exercise sound judgment in reaching a balance between apprehension of the violator and concern for the risks involved.
3. When a pursuit is initiated, it will be closely monitored by a field supervisor. Continued pursuit will be based on the supervisor's review of the situation.

D. PRIMARY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Notification of pursuit operation
The Communications Section will be immediately notified and provided with the following information when a pursuit is initiated:
 - a. That a pursuit has been initiated.
 - b. Location, direction of travel, and approximate speed.
 - c. Description of vehicle and occupants.
 - d. Nature of the incident and need for backup units.
2. The primary unit shall bear operational responsibility for the pursuit, unless relieved by a supervisor.
3. The primary unit should maintain pursuit as long as it is safe to do so, or until directed to terminate the pursuit.

E. ADDITIONAL UNITS RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The secondary unit is authorized to pursue at a safe distance, and to perform as pursuit coordinator by relaying location, direction of travel, and any other pertinent information.
2. The telecommunicator will determine and assign the next closest unit as a secondary (backup) unit and will notify the closest area supervisor of the pursuit and the assigned vehicles.
3. Additional backup units may be assigned **only as authorized by a supervisor** when necessary for apprehension of violent fugitives, suspects in major felonies, multiple fleeing vehicles, or multiple occupants in a fleeing vehicle.

F. INTER/INTRA-JURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS

1. Originates inside Hernando County Sheriff's Office jurisdiction
 - a. The pursuit coordinator will inform Communications when the pursuit leads toward and/or enters another agency's jurisdiction.
 - b. The telecommunicator will notify that law enforcement agency of the pursuit and its location.

- c. Hernando County units will become secondary units when another jurisdiction assumes the primary pursuit position.
2. Originates outside Hernando County Sheriff's Office jurisdiction
 - a. When information is received that a pursuit will be entering Sheriff's Office jurisdiction, the telecommunicator will notify the appropriate Patrol Supervisor.
 - b. Members will not engage in pursuits initiated by agencies outside the Sheriff's Office jurisdiction unless instructed to do so by a Patrol Supervisor or higher authority.
 - c. All guidelines and restrictions regarding pursuits set forth in this policy will be followed. Members will terminate their involvement if/when the pursuit leaves Hernando County and the affected jurisdiction has the opportunity to assess and/or assume command of the pursuit.

G. DISCONTINUANCE OR TERMINATION OF VEHICLE PURSUIT

1. The primary pursuing unit shall continually evaluate and assess the pursuit situation, including the initiating factors, and terminate the pursuit whenever he/she believes the risk associated with the pursuit is outweighed by the risk involved in attempting to stop or apprehend the violator.
2. The pursuit may be terminated by the primary unit at any time.
3. Vehicle pursuit will be immediately discontinued when ordered by a deputy sheriff of superior rank.
4. Vehicle pursuit will be terminated when other alternatives to apprehension are available (e.g., vehicle identification and recognition of driver, or visual contact and surveillance by helicopter support).

H. PURSUIT TACTICS

1. Intervention of a pursued vehicle will be at the discretion of the on-duty Patrol Supervisor when all other reasonable means of stopping the vehicle have failed. All intervention tactics short of lethal force should be used when possible to do so in safety, and when the deputies using them have received appropriate training.
2. Decisions to discharge a weapon at or from a moving vehicle, or to use roadblocks, shall be governed by the use of force policy, (G.O. 4020.00, *Use of Control*), and are prohibited if they present an unreasonable risk to others. Such decisions, whenever possible, should be authorized by a supervisor.
3. Refer to S.O.P. 4035.00, *Traffic Direction and Control*, for guidelines pertaining to the use of interventions (e.g. roadblocks, Stinger, etc.).

I. REPORTING AND REVIEW

1. All vehicle pursuits will be documented in an Incident Report by the primary unit.
 - a. The report shall include the reason for the pursuit, the outcome (termination, arrest, etc.), and, when applicable, a completed *Response to Resistance* form. Refer to G.O. 4020.00, *Use of Control*, Section V, F.
 - b. Additional units, if any, will submit a supplement report of their actions regarding the pursuit.
2. Members that engage in pursuits that originate in other jurisdictions will document their participation at the request of the initiating agency and/or the Patrol Supervisor.

ISSUING AUTHORITY:

RICHARD B. NUGENT, SHERIFF