

Amends or Supersedes SO 9502.03 SO 9703.14 SO 9706.28 SO 0106.15 SO 0107.22	HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CAL HENDERSON, SHERIFF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE	Number: 511.01 Page: 1 of 8 Date: 12/14/93 Revised: 07/16/01 Reviewed: 07/16/01
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SUBJECT: VEHICLE PURSUIT OPERATION

INDEX AS: PURSUITS; VEHICLE PURSUITS

- I. PURPOSE: The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure is to define guidelines for the safe operation of Sheriff's vehicles when engaged in pursuit operation.
- II. SCOPE: This shall apply to all Sheriff's Office personnel engaged in a vehicular/motorized vehicle pursuit while operating Sheriff's Office vehicles.
- III. DISCUSSION: It is the duty and responsibility of every deputy sheriff to enforce the laws of the state of Florida and apprehend persons in violation of these laws. The operation of Sheriff's Office vehicles during a vehicular pursuit is an area of concern to both law enforcement and civilian personnel. It is imperative that guidelines be established which will assist in the safe and effective operation of Sheriff's Office vehicles when engaged in vehicular pursuits.
- IV. DEFINITIONS:
 - A. **Sheriff's Office Vehicle** - Any vehicle owned or leased by the Sheriff's Office.
 - B. **Competent Authority** - Sheriff, Department Commanders, Division/District Commanders.
 - C. **Apprehension of Law Violators in a Motor Vehicle** - An active attempt by a law enforcement officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend the occupants of a moving vehicle.
 - D. **Vehicle Pursuit** - An active attempt by a law enforcement officer in an authorized pursuit vehicle to apprehend the occupants of a moving vehicle, providing that the driver of such vehicle is or should be aware of the attempt, increases his/her speed, takes other evasive action(s), or refuses to stop in an attempt to avoid apprehension.
 - E. **Primary Pursuit Unit** - Generally, the law enforcement unit which initiates the pursuit. If the initiating vehicle is not a marked car with emergency equipment, the primary unit status shall, when possible, be assumed by a marked car with emergency equipment.
 - F. **Secondary Pursuit Unit** - The law enforcement unit which trails the primary pursuit unit at a safe distance and which is available to assume the primary role or assist the primary unit if the fleeing vehicle is stopped.
 - G. **Emergency Equipment** - Siren and flashing and/or revolving blue/red lights which meet the requirements of Florida State Statutes.
- V. VEHICLE PURSUITS:
 - A. Authorized Pursuit Vehicles:
 - * 1. Marked patrol vehicles equipped with emergency lights and siren are authorized as primary pursuit vehicles.
 2. Unmarked Sheriff's vehicles equipped with emergency lights and siren may engage in

- pursuits until a marked vehicle can take over as the primary vehicle.
3. All other vehicles, such as vans, motorcycles, utility vehicles, and undercover cars, shall not become involved in pursuits.
 4. A Sheriff's Office vehicle engaged in pursuit operations shall utilize both emergency lights and siren.
- B. The initiation of a motor vehicle pursuit in furtherance of a recognized law enforcement duty is permitted under the conditions described below. However, in instances where immediate apprehension cannot be effected with reasonable safety and the inherent risk to the public outweighs the necessity of apprehension, the pursuit will not be initiated or continued.
- C. The below listed factors will be considered when determining whether any pursuit should be initiated, continued, or terminated:
1. The seriousness of the originating offense, and its relationship to the community's safety shall be the primary consideration for the initiation or continuation of any pursuit.
 - a. At no time will a pursuit be initiated when there only exists probable cause for misdemeanor crimes or traffic violations.
 - b. At no time will a pursuit be initiated for civil traffic infractions only.
 - * c. Exceptions to paragraph (a) include:
 - * (1) persons suspected of driving under the influence of an alcoholic beverage or controlled substance when at least three indications of impairment have been observed.
 - * (2) persons suspected of leaving the scene of a traffic crash involving death or serious bodily injury.
 2. The safety of the fleeing perpetrator must be considered.
 3. The volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic are factors which must be considered, such as:
 - a. Daytime vs. late night traffic.
 - b. Increased traffic during rush hours.
 - c. Potential traffic volume for special events (parades, sporting events, holidays, etc.).
 4. The geographical condition(s) of the location of the pursuit is an important factor.
 - a. Residential neighborhoods, especially high density multi-family housing areas, are not conducive to high speeds. In these areas pursuing vehicles will be restricted to a pursuit speed no greater than 20 mph over the posted speed limit.
 - b. Business districts have traffic congestion features which must be considered.
 - c. Because the pursuit can travel from one type of neighborhood to another, conditions may change that would alter the speed of the pursuit or cause it to be terminated.
 5. Weather conditions, such as rain, fog, or smoke, can contribute to adverse road conditions and/or affect visibility.
 6. Type of road, such as interstate or limited access highways, vs. two lane twisting and turning roads, will affect the driver's ability to control the vehicle.
 7. Road conditions, such as construction, may alter the surface of the road, narrow the lanes, or increase traffic volume.
 8. Speeds Involved:

- a. In accordance with Florida law, Sheriff's vehicles engaged in emergency operations may exceed the maximum speed limit so long as life or property are not endangered. Speed shall be limited by road and weather conditions and the exercise of good judgment.
 - b. It is important to consider whether or not the speed of the pursuit is safe for the condition(s). Generally, the higher the speed, the greater the risk for potential damage and/or injury.
 - c. It is also important to remember that the driving skills of the pursuing deputy may be better than those of the driver in the fleeing vehicle.
9. Another factor to consider is if the suspect being pursued is readily identifiable and can be apprehended at another time by other means.
- D. Deputies, when accompanied by non-sworn passengers shall not engage in pursuits without supervisory authorization. Non-sworn passengers include ride-along program participants, prisoners, and authorized family members.
- * E. Whenever a deputy initiates a pursuit **in violation** of S.O.P. 511.01, the deputy's direct supervisor (or any other supervisor) shall immediately terminate the pursuit. The deputy's direct supervisor (or any other supervisor) **shall initiate immediate disciplinary process** against the deputy for the S.O.P. violation. The disciplinary action may be initiated before the Vehicle Pursuit Critique is held.

VI. CONTINUANCE/TERMINATION OF PURSUIT:

- A. The decision of continuing a pursuit in which the fleeing vehicle refuses to stop will be evaluated continuously by the shift commander and/or patrol supervisor. This evaluation will include, but not be limited to, traffic conditions and speeds involved.
- B. If, after the initiation of a pursuit, it becomes apparent the pursuit cannot be continued in a manner which affords reasonable safety, the pursuit shall be terminated.
- * 1. **Any time** an order to terminate a pursuit is given and relayed to those involved, all deputies involved in the pursuit shall perform **all** of the following steps:
- a. immediately deactivate their vehicle's emergency equipment,
 - b. terminate the pursuit,
 - c. reduce the speed of their vehicle, and
 - d. cease to follow the vehicle.
- * 2. All deputies involved in the pursuit and any deputy in the vicinity of the pursuit shall take overt action and drive their vehicle in a direction **away** from the pursued vehicle. Patrol units previously involved in the pursuit shall, via voice, advise the Communication Center that they have reduced the speed of their vehicle, and shall state their location and direction of travel.
- C. If the supervisor determines that the pursuit needs to be terminated, he or she must have a means to convey this information to all involved. The trunked radio system format does not afford a supervisor in the field the ability to override a radio transmission on the selected "talk group." The only radio equipment capable of overriding a selected "talk group" is the dispatch console. Therefore, the following procedure shall be used to facilitate broadcasting the order to terminate a pursuit:

1. Once a deputy has initiated a pursuit, the affected voice dispatcher shall notify the dispatcher manning the command position for the respective District in which the pursuit has been initiated. The voice dispatcher shall continue to communicate with the deputy on the designated "talk group" and the dispatcher manning the command position shall begin to monitor the **Supervisor** "talk group" in the Patrol Fleet.
2. The patrol supervisor shall continue to monitor the pursuit on his or her portable radio. In addition, the supervisor shall switch his or her mobile radio to the **Supervisor** "talk group" in the Patrol Fleet. If the pursuit needs to be terminated, the patrol supervisor shall notify the dispatcher monitoring the **Supervisor** "talk group" at the command position to terminate the pursuit.
3. The dispatcher at the command position shall then notify the voice dispatcher to override the affected "talk group." The voice dispatcher shall key the **Selected Tx button**, thereby overriding any transmitting unit, and notify all units on the "talk group" to terminate the pursuit.
4. If a deputy is still transmitting on the "talk group" during the voice dispatcher's instructions, the deputy will not have received the voice transmission to terminate the pursuit. The voice dispatcher shall then continue to hold down the **Selected Tx button** until the deputy stops transmitting on his or her radio. Then, the voice dispatcher shall repeat the instructions to terminate the pursuit.
5. If necessary, the supervisor in the field may then provide additional instructions to the deputies or Communications Center personnel.

VII. PURSUIT COMMUNICATIONS:

- A. Primary Pursuing Officer's Responsibility - Upon initiation of a pursuit, deputies should immediately request assistance, notify the communications dispatcher of the pursuit, and furnish all pertinent details. The description of the vehicle and occupants, location and direction of travel, approximate speeds involved, reason for pursuing the vehicle, and any other information that could aid in identification, apprehension, or a determination to either continue or terminate the pursuit shall be provided.
- B. When possible, the second pursuing vehicle shall take over radio transmission, reporting all pertinent information, freeing the primary pursuit vehicle from radio operations.
- C. Dispatch/Communication Responsibilities:
 1. The radio dispatcher shall determine and assign the next closest unit as a secondary (back-up) unit and shall notify the shift commander and closest area supervisor of the pursuit and the assigned vehicles.
 2. Additional back-up units may be assigned **ONLY AS AUTHORIZED BY A SUPERVISOR** when necessary for the apprehension of violent fugitives, suspects in major felonies, multiple fleeing vehicles, or multiple occupants in a fleeing vehicle.
 3. Sheriff's deputies shall not leave their assigned work areas to engage in a pursuit unless assigned as the primary unit or as a back-up unit.
 4. The shift commander or area supervisor assigned to monitor the pursuit shall be responsible for enforcing pursuit procedures, making note of unauthorized units in the pursuit (or at the conclusion of the pursuit), and any breaches of radio discipline.
 5. The radio channel shall be cleared for emergency traffic, primarily for the pursuit unit(s) and the area supervisor. All other units shall refrain from reporting their locations unless requested. Dispatch shall remain silent unless transmissions are unclear, or when asked for clarification, or when a supervisor response or instruction is necessary.
- D. Patrol/Command Supervisory Responsibilities - Overall responsibility for the discretionary

decisions concerning continuance or discontinuance of a pursuit rests primarily with the shift commander or patrol supervisor.

E. Communications Conduct During Pursuit

1. During a pursuit, good communication between the pursuing unit(s), the dispatcher, the patrol shift commander, supervisor and other units is essential. The pursuing deputy shall:
 - a. Maintain radio contact with the dispatcher;
 - b. Keep radio transmissions as brief as possible;
 - (1) Keep radio transmissions pertinent to the chase and advise locations and changes in direction;
 - (2) Whenever a pursuit takes place during the operational hours of an aviation unit, a request shall be promptly made through communications for the aviation unit's assistance, especially if the pursuit appears that it may be of an extended nature.
 - (3) Once the aviation unit identifies the pursued vehicle, ground units shall drop back to a safer speed while continuing the pursuit. The aviation unit shall continue the pursuit and take over the communication responsibility of the primary officer.
 - (4) If a pursuit is terminated for any reason, a unit shall provide the location where the vehicle was last seen, it's speed, and last direction of travel.

VIII. CONDUCT OF THE PURSUIT:

- A. The initial pursuing Sheriff's Office vehicle (primary vehicle) and one back-up vehicle (secondary vehicle) shall normally be the only ground units necessary to pursue a fleeing vehicle. The primary vehicle or supervisor may request additional vehicles to assist. The secondary vehicle shall not follow too closely and will not attempt to pass the primary vehicle unless the primary vehicle is forced to drop out of the pursuit. Emergency lights and siren shall be used throughout the pursuit.
- B. Unless extenuating circumstances exist, "caravans" of vehicles during a pursuit situation are prohibited. A "caravan" is defined as more than two law enforcement vehicles following a fleeing vehicle.
- C. Paralleling - Units directed to "parallel" in the pursuit route will operate in emergency mode unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.
- D. Other Methods Used to Apprehend Moving Vehicles
 1. Vehicle Intercept Method: In an attempt to apprehend felony suspects operating a motor vehicle, the vehicle intercept method of containment utilizes strategic placement of authorized Sheriff's Office vehicles in such a manner as to prevent flight and deter vehicle pursuits. This method may be authorized when a deputy has knowledge or well founded suspicion that a vehicle is occupied by a felony suspect and probability exists that the suspect will flee in the vehicle when detected by law enforcement deputies. To avoid alerting the suspect of impending law enforcement action, no immediate overt action should be taken by the primary deputy after such a vehicle has been identified. The primary deputy shall notify the Communications Section of the location, direction of travel, and description of vehicle and suspects. The primary deputy or supervisor shall request additional units to respond to the area in a non-emergency mode. To ensure timely response after receiving the information on the vehicle intercept, the

Communications Section shall immediately notify support units such as canine and aviation. The primary deputy should wait until a canine and/or aviation unit arrives before attempting the intercept, if possible.

Once additional units and support units have arrived in the area, and the most optimum location has been selected, intercept procedures can be implemented. As the suspect vehicle stops at the selected intersection, the primary deputy should maneuver into position directly behind the suspect vehicle to prevent any backward movement while the secondary units moves into positions to block any avenue for forward movement. To ensure successful interception, these containment maneuvers should be completed simultaneously. Once vehicular motion has stopped, approach and apprehension of suspects can be completed.

In accordance with training procedures, the location for intercept and placement of containment vehicles should be strategically planned to provide optimal protection to all parties involved.

2. Tire Deflating Device (Stop Stick) - To terminate pursuits, a tire deflating device may be deployed by deputies who have completed the certified training course. The tire deflating device shall not be used on motorcycles or vehicles with less than four (4) tires.
 - a. The device should be strategically placed so the target vehicle can strike the device, and if possible, the device readily retracted. The deputy deploying the device shall retreat to a safe location, away from the oncoming target vehicle.
 - b. Sheriff's Office or civilian vehicles **shall not** be used to create a roadblock or "funnel" configuration to force the target vehicle onto the device.
3. The following shall be the prescribed course of action when a stop stick device has been used in a "hit" involving a suspect vehicle:
 - a. A supervisor (sergeant or corporal) shall complete a Stop Stick Pursuit Form, and fax the form to Stop Stick, Ltd. at (812) 537-1011. The fax will serve to expedite the shipment of the replacement Stop Stick(s) to the Sheriff's Office,
 - b. The damaged or used Stop Stick(s) and a copy of the completed Stop Stick Pursuit Form shall be transported to Warehouse Supply, located behind the Orient Road Jail. Warehouse Supply does not stock replacement Stop Sticks.
 - c. Warehouse Supply personnel shall log the date the Stop Stick(s) is returned to Warehouse Supply, along with the Stop Stick's serial number and the name of the supervisor due receipt of the replacement (new) Stop Stick.
 - d. Warehouse Supply personnel shall package and ship the damaged (used) Stop Stick(s) to:

Stop Stick, LTD.
11 East Center Street
Lawrenceburg, Indiana 47025
 - e. Upon receipt of the replacement (new) Stop Stick(s), Warehouse Supply personnel are responsible for notification of the respective supervisor. It is the supervisor's responsibility to obtain the replacement stop stick from Warehouse Supply.
4. Stationary Road-Blocking - This method is considered DEADLY FORCE if the road is completely blocked and should be utilized only under conditions where deadly force is

- permitted. This method shall only be authorized by a supervisor.
5. Ramming - Deputies shall not intentionally ram a suspect's vehicle. This method is considered DEADLY FORCE and should not be used because of airbags and mechanical kill switches which may be activated upon impact.
 6. Firearms - Deputies shall not discharge firearms at a moving vehicle or shoot a firearm from a moving vehicle unless the use of deadly force is justified under state law, Sheriff's Office policies and procedures, and is consistent with providing due care for the safety of the public.

IX. INTER-JURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS:

- A. When a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office pursuit leads toward and/or enters another agency's jurisdiction, that law enforcement agency will be notified as to the pursuit's nature, location, and last known direction of travel.
- B. The Communications Center will notify outside agencies if the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office is in pursuit close to, or within their jurisdiction. The informing person will specify that the call is either a request for assistance or merely a courtesy notification with no participation desired. This notification shall include:
 1. Vehicle and suspect descriptions.
 2. Details of any charges.
 3. Any available data on the pursuit, such as length, speeds, suspect driver skills displayed, etc.
- C. Notification from another jurisdiction of a pursuit in progress into Hillsborough County shall not be construed as a request for assistance. The caller from the outside department will be specifically asked if they are making a request for assistance or making a formal notification for information purposes.
- D. Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office personnel receiving notification of a pursuit by another agency shall carefully assess the circumstances to determine if the pursuit is likely to enter our jurisdiction. Prior to making any radio broadcast, the Communications Center will obtain from the notifying department the same information our primary pursuit unit would be expected to provide when initiating the pursuit.
- E. Deputies shall not become involved in another agency's pursuit unless specifically authorized by the field supervisor, or unless it is clearly demonstrated that a unit from an outside agency is unable to request assistance, or the emergency nature of the situation dictates the need for assistance. In these instances, all Sheriff's Office pursuit policies are in effect.

X. CONCLUSION OF THE PURSUIT:

- A. The supervisor of the primary pursuing deputy shall respond immediately to the termination point of the pursuit. The supervisor shall be responsible for controlling the scene and ensuring adherence to Sheriff's Office policies.
- B. The supervisor will be responsible for completing the Vehicle Pursuit Critique Form (SO[ENF] 266) through the "critique area." Any violations of policy or procedure shall be documented and brought to the District Commander's attention.
- C. Within forty-eight (48) hours, or as soon as immediately practical thereafter, a critique of the pursuit shall be held with the following persons in attendance: District Commander, Shift Commander, Shift Lieutenant, supervisor of the primary pursuing deputy and the pursuing

deputy. Any substitutions or addition of personnel in attendance shall be at the discretion of the District Commander.

- D. The District Commander shall ensure the “comments” portion of the Vehicle Pursuit Critique Form is appropriately completed.
- * E. Law enforcement districts/divisions shall forward the completed **original** Vehicle Pursuit Critique form and a copy of the incident report to the appropriate Department Commander. Photographs taken at the conclusion of a pursuit that are deemed evidentiary in nature shall be placed into evidence. Photographs shall not be attached to or sent with the original Vehicle Pursuit Critique form.

The Department Commander (or his/her designee) shall:

1. Forward the original Vehicle Pursuit Critique form and a copy of the incident report to the Training Bureau, and
 2. Send a copy of the Vehicle Pursuit Critique form to Internal Affairs.
- F. The Training Section will enter all Vehicle Pursuit Critique information in a computer database and prepare an analytical quarterly report for training needs. A copy of this report shall be forwarded to the Administration Department Commander.
 - G. The Training Section shall prepare an annual analytical report which shall be forwarded to the Sheriff.

Cal Henderson
Sheriff