



**VOLUSIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
Sheriff Ben F. Johnson

**Departmental Standards Directive**

**TITLE: MOTOR VEHICLE APPREHENSION**

**CODIFIED:** 41.2  
**EFFECTIVE:** 10-2001  
**RESCINDS/AMENDS:** 41.2/07-1999  
**ATTACHMENTS:** 1

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Directive is to provide guidelines and delineate responsibilities governing pursuit of motor vehicles.

**DISCUSSION**

The immediate apprehension of a violator is never more important than the safety of innocent motorists or the Deputy. When it becomes apparent that the immediacy of apprehension is outweighed by a clear and present danger to the Deputy or others, the pursuit shall be abandoned. (CALEA 41.2.2h)

The motor vehicle pursuit of suspects who have committed minor property crimes, traffic offenses or misdemeanors is not justifiable. The risks involved far outweigh the need for immediate apprehension.

For purposes of this Directive, "burglary" is defined as residential, business or commercial and does not include vehicles, outbuildings or curtilages. The pursuit of a burglary and arson suspect is justified, as these are not minor property crimes. The pursuit of a suspect for a purse snatch would not normally be justified, as it is a larceny. If, however, a suspect used force and/or violence when committing the offense, i.e., robbery, a pursuit may be justified.

If there is reason to believe the suspect might kill or injure someone if allowed to escape, then a pursuit may be justified depending on the circumstances involved. If an armed robbery has occurred as the result of a dispute between two individuals who know each other there should be no pursuit, since there is little danger to other citizens. However, an armed robbery to an individual, business or residence presents a clear and present danger; therefore, a pursuit may be justified.

The decision to pursue is not irreversible. Those involved with the pursuit must continually question whether the seriousness of the crime justifies continuing the pursuit. When there is a clear and present danger to the Deputy or others, the pursuit shall be discontinued. (CALEA 41.2.2h)

**POLICY**

It is not the intent of this Directive to prohibit all motor vehicle pursuits; however, it is the intent to restrict motor vehicle pursuits to those situations and circumstances in which the immediate apprehension of the violator outweighs the hazards generated to Deputies, the public, or the occupant(s) of the vehicle being pursued.

**PROCEDURE**

**PURSUIT CRITERIA (CALEA 41.2.2a)**

**41.2.1** A Deputy is justified in initiating a motor vehicle pursuit if the Deputy has reason to believe that the suspect has committed a serious felony involving an act of violence or the threat of serious injury or death, and has the apparent capability to carry out said act, i.e., robbery/attempted robbery, aggravated battery, firing into an occupied

dwelling, murder, attempted murder, sexual battery, [burglary of a dwelling](#), [arson](#), or [burglary of a business structure \(excluding curtilage and outbuildings\)](#).

**41.2.2** The criminal offense of drug trafficking as defined in F.S. 893 is considered a serious felony for which a pursuit may be initiated due to its potentially violent nature and consequences.

**PROHIBITED PURSUITS**

**41.2.3** Deputies shall not pursue or assist in the pursuit of vehicles fleeing from other agencies, unless the above criteria is met and is authorized by a supervisor. (CALEA 41.2.2a)

**41.2.4** Excluding the areas listed in 41.2.1 and 41.2.2 above, Deputies shall not pursue or assist in the pursuit of motor vehicles for property crime offenses or misdemeanor offenses. (CALEA 41.2.2a)

**41.2.5** Deputies shall not pursue or assist in the pursuit of motor vehicles if the suspect is identified and there is an expectation of apprehending the suspect within a reasonable amount of time. (CALEA 41.2.2a)

**TRAFFIC OFFENSES**

**41.2.6** Deputies shall not pursue or assist in the pursuit of motor vehicles for traffic offenses. This includes fleeing and eluding, driving under the influence and reckless driving.

**41.2.7** The period of time between observing a traffic violation and when the violator comes to a stop is the "apprehension phase" of the traffic stop. This is different from a pursuit. Although these two activities are worlds apart in importance, the speed and type of driving performed by the Deputy are often similar. It is critical, therefore, that a reasonable limit on speed is maintained as traffic violators are stopped.

**41.2.8** The "apprehension phase" of an attempted traffic stop becomes a pursuit whenever the violator knows that a Deputy is signaling him to stop and continues driving or attempts to elude the Deputy. If the violator has knowledge that they are being signaled to stop, and speeds up or does anything else to evade the Deputy, it then becomes a pursuit. When the traffic stop becomes a pursuit it shall be discontinued following the procedures of this Directive.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**DEPUTIES** (CALEA 41.2.2b)

**41.2.9** Deputies initiating a pursuit shall immediately advise communications of:

- The location
- Direction of travel
- Suspect and suspect vehicle description;
- The crime the suspect is believed to have committed.

**41.2.10** When engaged in the emergency operation of a motor vehicle, Deputies shall comply with all Directives concerning vehicle operation.

**41.2.11** Deputies authorized by a supervisor to conduct a motor vehicle pursuit shall provide the supervisor with all information requested.

**41.2.12** All Deputies involved will immediately terminate and disengage from a motor vehicle pursuit when they determine the pursuit is not within the guidelines of this policy or circumstances, as described in 41.2.23-.25, determine that course of action or when ordered to do so by the supervisor in charge.

**COMMUNICATIONS CENTER** (CALEA 41.2.2e)

**41.2.13** Upon notification of a pursuit in progress, the Communications Center shall initiate proper procedures in accordance with appropriate " Call Handling Guides", and will immediately notify the appropriate Shift Supervisor, [Air-1](#), and [K-9](#).

**41.2.14** Communications shall monitor the pursuit and provide communications assistance to those involved.

**SUPERVISOR** (CALEA 41.2.2f)

**41.2.15** The supervisor will take command of the pursuit and shall maintain command unless formally relieved.

**41.2.16** A pursuit entering into another District will continue to be commanded by the supervisor authorizing the pursuit.

**41.2.17** The supervisor will solicit and consider the information available to them and advise the Deputy who initiated the pursuit to continue or disengage.

**41.2.18** The supervisor will monitor the pursuit and direct additional assistance as required.

**41.2.19** Factors in the decision to assign additional assistance include, but are not limited to:

- The nature and circumstances of the offense
- The number of suspects
- The number of Deputies in the assigned and backup/secondary vehicle.

**41.2.20** It is the responsibility of the supervisor to coordinate pursuits entering neighboring jurisdictions.

**41.2.21** If the vehicle being pursued leaves Volusia County, the supervisor in charge shall request that the County being entered assume command of the pursuit. Units of this Department will act as support units.

**41.2.22** If the County being entered does not assume command, the supervisor will request that agency provide support units.

#### **DECISION TO INITIATE OR DISCONTINUE (CALEA 41.2.2a)**

**41.2.23** Before initiating a pursuit, Deputies shall evaluate the circumstances and make the decision to pursue in accordance with this Directive and the Vehicle Apprehension Decision-Making Matrix (see Attachment A).

**41.2.24** Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic
- Weather conditions
- Visibility
- Road conditions
- The type of unit being operated by the Deputy at the time of pursuit
- The nature and circumstances of the offense
- When the offense occurred. A pursuit for an in-progress crime may be more readily justified than one for a crime that occurred earlier in the shift.
- The identification of the vehicle and/or occupant, as well as the appropriateness and probability of apprehension at a later date.
- Type of neighborhood such as residential or school zone
- Manner in which the fleeing vehicle is being operated

**41.2.25** The initiating Deputy and the authorizing supervisor shall continuously evaluate the circumstances, factors and conditions during the pursuit. Whenever one of these factors changes the decision to continue the pursuit shall be reevaluated.

#### **TERMINATING THE PURSUIT**

**41.2.26** When there is a clear and present danger to the Deputy or other users of the highway, the pursuit shall not be initiated. If the pursuit is in progress it shall be discontinued. (CALEA 41.2.2h)

**41.2.27** The initiating Deputy or the authorizing Supervisor is justified in terminating the pursuit if, based on his judgment, the danger to Deputies and the public outweighs the need to stop the fleeing vehicle. (CALEA 41.2.2h)

**41.2.28** When a Deputy discontinues a pursuit he shall immediately notify Central Communications.

**41.2.29** Once a pursuit has been terminated, Deputies shall deactivate all emergency equipment and resume driving in compliance with all applicable traffic laws. Deputies may continue following the suspect vehicle route as long as they do so within the speed limit and obey all stop signs, traffic lights and other traffic control devices.

#### **CONDUCTING THE PURSUIT (CALEA 41.2.1)**

**41.2.30** Only two Department vehicles are authorized to actively pursue; the primary vehicle and the backup/secondary vehicle.

## **PRIMARY UNIT**

**41.2.31** The primary pursuit vehicle will handle all communications relating to direction of travel, suspects, descriptions and all matters relating to the actual pursuit, until the arrival of a backup/secondary unit or an aviation unit. This shall not restrict the supervisor from giving instructions or other information directly to either the primary vehicle, the backup/secondary vehicle, or the Communications Center.

**41.2.32** The primary unit shall not be passed during the pursuit unless authorized by the primary pursuit Deputy and/or the supervisor in charge.

**41.2.33** Unmarked units and motorcycle units may pursue motor vehicles as a primary unit only until the arrival of a marked unit. (CALEA 41.2.2d)

**41.2.34** The motorcycle or unmarked vehicle will continue as the secondary unit until an additional marked unit arrives. Upon the arrival of the marked unit, the operator of the unmarked vehicle or motorcycle shall terminate their active involvement in the pursuit. (CALEA 41.2.2d)

## **AVIATION UNIT**

**41.2.35** When an aviation unit arrives, it shall become the primary pursuit unit. The primary patrol unit and the secondary unit shall discontinue communications, decrease speeds and follow at a safe distance. (CALEA 41.2.2d)

**41.2.36** The aviation unit will advise the supervisor in charge of the direction of travel and other pertinent information, i.e., potential hazards or possible apprehension sites.

## **SECONDARY UNIT (CALEA 41.2.2c)**

**41.2.37** The secondary unit is authorized to pursue at a safe distance for back-up and communication purposes.

**41.2.38** Upon the secondary unit entering the pursuit, the secondary unit shall become responsible for handling all communications relating to direction of travel, suspects descriptions and all matters relating to the actual pursuit. This shall not restrict the supervisor from giving instructions or other information directly to either the primary vehicle, the backup/secondary vehicle, or the Communications Center.

## **SUPPORT UNIT PERSONNEL**

**41.2.39** Deputies not directly involved in the pursuit that are responding and being coordinated as additional support will drive their vehicles in a safe and prudent manner.

**41.2.40** Support units may be assigned active roles including but not limited to, paralleling the pursuit, being assigned to potential termination locations, and transferring equipment or personnel.

**41.2.41** Emergency operation is authorized to intercept, not overtake, the fleeing vehicle for the purpose of deploying Stop-Sticks.

## **PROHIBITED DRIVING**

**41.2.42** Primary and secondary units shall not drive parallel to each other during the pursuit, except during an authorized pass.

**41.2.43** Deputies shall not drive on the wrong side of an interstate or other controlled access highway, including on/off ramps.

**41.2.44** Deputies shall not drive on the wrong side of any divided highway.

**41.2.45** While pursuing, Deputies shall not ram, conduct rolling roadblocks or discharge firearms at a fleeing vehicle, except in extreme cases where deadly force is justified and the Deputy has received specific training for this exception. (CALEA 41.2.2g)

**41.2.46** Fleeing vehicles shall not be forcibly stopped, with exception to the Stop Stick System, deployed by properly trained Deputies (See Directive 61.11).

## **OTHER AGENCY ASSISTANCE (CALEA 41.2.2i)**

**41.2.47** Supervisors may authorize assistance to other agencies conducting vehicle pursuits; however, the pursuit of vehicles fleeing from other agencies shall not be authorized unless it meets the criteria established in this directive.

**41.2.48** When a pursuit involves other agencies, the following procedures apply:

- The supervisor shall ensure the notification of the agency into which the pursuit is entering.
- Unless otherwise advised, units involved will remain on their assigned frequencies.
- The supervisor will provide pertinent information to the agency into whose jurisdiction the pursuit is entering or has entered.
- The Communications Center shall relay all decisions relating to pursuit information, (radio frequencies, location, direction of travel, reason for the pursuit, speed, description and other pertinent information) to affected agencies. (CALEA 41.2.2e)

**41.2.49** The authority to discontinue an inter-jurisdictional pursuit rests with the supervisor authorizing the pursuit;

**41.2.50** Unmarked vehicles shall not be used in pursuits into other jurisdictions; (CALEA 41.2.2d)

**41.2.51** The agency initiating the pursuit is responsible for the arrest, booking, disposition and coordination of all reports, citations and criminal charges.

**41.2.52** No more than three (3) vehicles (2 VCSO, 1 other agency) shall be involved in the actual pursuit at any given time.

**41.2.53** Motorcycle units shall immediately withdraw from the active pursuit, upon the arrival of a marked patrol unit. (CALEA 41.2.2d)

### TRAINING

**41.2.54** No Deputy shall participate in a pursuit until successfully completing a VCSO approved Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC).

### REPORT AND REVIEW PROCESS (CALEA 41.2.2j)

**41.2.55** Immediately following a pursuit (including assistance to other agencies), all Deputies involved in the pursuit shall file a written report. (CALEA 82.2.1a)

**41.2.56** The primary deputy shall initiate the original report with all others filing supplements. (CALEA 82.2.1a)

**41.2.57** Each report will contain an account of the Deputies' involvement in the pursuit. A copy of the report shall be forwarded to the Internal Affairs Unit, which shall present the incident to the Sheriff's Staff for review.

**41.2.58** An administrative review of all pursuits, including assisting other agencies, shall be conducted by the Sheriff's Staff during the Sheriff's weekly staff meeting.

**41.2.59** The review shall be documented and will indicate whether policy, training issues, equipment or disciplinary issues should be addressed.

**41.2.60** Copies of all pursuit reports and the results of the administrative review shall be forwarded to the Professional Standards Section.

**41.2.61** The Professional Standards Section shall conduct a documented analysis of all pursuits annually. (CALEA 41.2.3)

### ATTACHMENTS

**ATTACHMENT A:** [Vehicle Apprehension Decision-Making Matrix](#)

**Revised by:** 6620

**Revised on:** 07-12-2001

**Approved:**

**Ben F. Johnson**  
Sheriff, Volusia County

## VEHICLE APPREHENSION DECISION-MAKING MATRIX

Degree of Seriousness ê	Decision Threshold	Decision Threshold	Decision Threshold
	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
<b>Felony Violent Crime</b>	<b>May pursue; continue to assess risks.</b>	<b>May Pursue; continue to assess risks.</b>	<b>May pursue; discontinue if risks exceed seriousness of the offense.</b>
<b>Felony Burglary or Arson of Occupied Structure</b>	<b>May pursue; continue to assess risks.</b>	<b>May pursue; continue to assess risks.</b>	<b>Do not pursue, or discontinue.</b>
<b>Felony Burglary or Arson of Structure</b>	<b>May pursue; continue to assess risks.</b>	<b>Do not pursue, or discontinue.</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>
<b>All Felony Property Crimes (except as noted above)</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>
<b>All Misdemeanors &amp; Traffic Offenses</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>	<b>Do Not Pursue</b>

**Definitions:**

**Felony-Violent Crime:** a “persons” crime in which the perpetrator and victim come face to face. (Examples: Homicide, Robbery, Sexual Battery, etc.)

**Felony-Property Crime:** a “property” crime, i.e., Burglary (involving curtilage or outbuilding), Theft, Forgery, etc.

**Tactical Parking:** The practice of moving close to a stationary suspect’s vehicle and parking in a manner that will allow no way to escape.

The Vehicle Apprehension Decision-Making Matrix balances safety and risk with the need for apprehension and seriousness of the offense. In keeping with professional policing and the directions being taken by the Courts, safety considerations must outweigh considerations for apprehension. This means that when the risk and danger to bystanders and innocent third parties are high, the vehicle apprehension must be terminated despite the heinousness of the offense or the violence associated with the act committed by the fleeing subject. To fail to make this decision would be unreasonable, and that is the test applied by the Courts. Furthermore,

Courts in some states have denied immunity to officers, indicated that officers had a duty to terminate vehicle apprehensions because of safety considerations, and that officers were at least partially the cause of any injuries that occurred during the vehicle apprehension (City of Pinellas Parks vs. Brown 17FLW530).

A tactic available to avoid, or minimize, vehicle apprehensions is the use of "Tactical Parking". This tactic permits containment of the suspect vehicle and the prevention of a vehicle apprehension. The "Tactical Parking" technique may occasionally result in damage to an agency vehicle. This damage is preferable to the potential death or serious injury which can result from a vehicle apprehension.

Agency issued "Stop Sticks" are vehicle immobilization devices designed to puncture vehicle tires through the use of sleeved pikes causing rapid deflation of the tire(s). The device is deployed in the path of the pursued vehicle by agency personnel. When utilized, agency personnel shall notify the Communications dispatcher of the location of the deployment. The deployment location will be broadcast to all vehicles/agencies involved in the vehicle apprehension. "Stop Sticks" may also be used during vehicle stakeouts to reduce the possibility of a vehicle apprehension. When used in this manner, the "Stop Stick" should be placed in a manner to ensure the vehicle is disabled in the event the vehicle is moved.

**Objective Risk Factors in Vehicle Apprehensions:**

When making the decision to pursue, no single factor should be used to evaluate the risk category. Multiple factors should be taken into consideration.

<b><u>LOW RISK</u></b>	<b><u>MODERATE RISK</u></b>	<b><u>HIGH RISK</u></b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Straight road, good surface, clear lines of sight., few intersections</li> <li>2. Good weather</li> <li>3. Few or no pedestrians</li> <li>4. Little to no traffic</li> <li>5. Speeds safe for conditions</li> <li>6. No hazardous maneuvers by violator</li> <li>7. Authorized number of law enforcement vehicles involved in the apprehension</li> <li>8. Deputy calm, in full control</li> <li>9. Helicopter involved</li> <li>10. DUI type driving patterns</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some intersecting streets (i.e., residential area)</li> <li>2. Mild weather</li> <li>3. Light pedestrian traffic</li> <li>4. Moderate traffic, little congestion</li> <li>5. Speeds greater than the posted limit</li> <li>6. Some hazardous, but not extreme, maneuvers (i.e., crossing center line to pass other vehicles, sudden lane changes) by the violator</li> <li>7. Authorized number of law enforcement vehicles involved in the apprehension</li> <li>8. Deputy generally calm, under control</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frequent intersecting streets (i.e., business district) blind curves, narrow roads</li> <li>2. Poor weather, slippery streets, low visibility</li> <li>3. Numerous pedestrians</li> <li>4. Heavy, congested traffic</li> <li>5. Speeds twice the posted limit, or greater than 80 MPH</li> <li>6. Extremely hazardous maneuvers (i.e., driving against on-coming traffic, "busting" red lights) by the violator</li> <li>7. Numerous law enforcement vehicles involved in the apprehension</li> <li>8. Deputy excited, not in full control of emotions</li> <li>9. Special circumstances, i.e., School District</li> </ol>

**ATTACHMENT A  
DIRECTIVE 41.2  
4<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**