



# Professional Reference Directory

**Chapter:** 13 Police Vehicles

**Section:** 13.1

**Date:** 01/14/20, 03/01/21

**Title:** Police Pursuits.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to protect the lives and safety of the public and police officers while those officers are attempting to enforce the law and apprehend violators. This policy is intended to guide police officer's discretion in matters of vehicular pursuit.

---

## I. POLICY:

This policy has been implemented to be consistent with the Uniform Statewide Pursuit Policy in accordance with the provisions of 14-283a-1 to 14-283a-4, inclusive and section 14-283a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Motor vehicle pursuits are potentially dangerous. Therefore, before deciding to pursue, the officer must reasonably believe that the offense for which the subject is pursued is more dangerous than the pursuit itself. Furthermore, whenever a pursuit has begun it shall be terminated whenever the risk to the public or the officer outweighs the danger to the community if the subject is not immediately apprehended.

- A. No officer or supervisor shall be criticized or disciplined for a decision to not engage in a vehicular pursuit or to terminate an ongoing vehicular pursuit based upon the risk involved even circumstances where this policy would permit the commencement or continuation of the pursuit.
- B. Police officers who conduct pursuits consistent with this policy will be supported by this Police Department in any subsequent review of such actions.
- C. Responsibility for compliance with this policy rests with the pursuing officer and his/her supervisor.

Situations in which a police officer is following a vehicle that is being operated so as to avoid apprehension by making evasive maneuvers such as increasing speed, weaving in and out of traffic, or violating motor vehicle laws will also be considered a pursuit requiring compliance with this policy.

## II. DEFINITIONS:

**Authorized emergency vehicle:** means a police vehicle equipped with operable emergency equipment, including audible siren and red or blue flashing lights, while such vehicle is being operated by a police officer.

**Boxing In:** The surrounding of a violator's moving vehicle with moving pursuit vehicles which are then slowed to a stop along with the violator's vehicle.

**Crime of Violence:** An offense in which physical force, the attempted use or threatened use of physical force, is used against another person(s) for the purpose of, injuring, damaging or abusing another person(s), or any offense that is a felony and that involves a substantial risk that physical force against another person may be used in the course of committing the offense.

**Divided Highway:** A road that includes a physical barrier between traffic traveling in opposite directions.

**Heading Off:** An attempt to terminate a pursuit by pulling ahead of, behind or toward a violator's moving vehicle to force it to the side of the road or to otherwise come to a stop.

**Officer:** Peace Officer as defined by Connecticut General Statute 53a-3(9).

**Paralleling:**

- A. ***Street Paralleling:*** Driving a police vehicle on a street parallel to a street on which a pursuit is occurring.
- B. ***Vehicle Paralleling:*** A deliberate offensive tactic by one or more patrol vehicles to drive alongside the pursued vehicle while it is in motion.

**Pursuit:** Means an attempt by a police officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend any occupant of another moving motor vehicle, when the driver of the fleeing vehicle is attempting to avoid apprehension by maintaining or increasing the speed of such vehicle or by ignoring the police officer's attempt to stop such vehicle.

**Pursuit Driving:** Pursuit driving is an active attempt by an officer operating a motor vehicle and utilizing emergency warning lights and an audible device to apprehend one or more occupants of another moving vehicle when the officer reasonably believes that the driver of the fleeing vehicle is aware of the officer's attempt to stop the vehicle and is resisting apprehension by increasing vehicle speed, ignoring the officer or otherwise attempting to elude the officer.

**Pursuit Vehicles:**

- A. ***Primary Unit:*** The police vehicle that engages in a pursuit or any unit that assumes control of the pursuit as the lead vehicle (the first police vehicle behind the fleeing suspect).
- B. ***Secondary Unit:*** Any police vehicle that becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance.
- C. ***Parallel Unit:*** Any police vehicle that becomes involved as an assisting unit by driving on streets parallel to the streets on which the pursuit is occurring.

**Roadblock:** A restriction or obstruction used or intended for the purpose of preventing free passage of motor vehicles on a roadway in order to effect the apprehension of a violator.

- A. ***Avenue of Escape:*** A gap in a roadblock that requires the violator to decrease the speed of the vehicle to permit the violator to bypass the roadblock. Tire Deflation Devices as issued to the officers, may be deployed across the avenue of escape.
- B. ***Blocking Vehicle:*** A motor vehicle, often a law enforcement vehicle, which is placed perpendicular to a roadway or angled in such a way as to create a roadblock.

**Supervisor:** An officer who, by virtue of rank or assignment, is responsible for the direction or supervision of the activities of other officers.

**Vehicle Contact Action:** Any action undertaken by the pursuing officer intended to result in contact between the moving police vehicle and the pursued vehicle.

**Tire Deflation Device:** A device (Stop Stick, Stinger or Barracuda) that, when driven over, causes one or more tires of a vehicle to safely deflate.

**Termination of a Pursuit:** Termination of a pursuit means that all emergency lights are shut off and the use of the siren is discontinued. In addition, the cruiser operator will immediately reduce speed to the posted speed limit and obey all traffic control signs and signals.

### **III. PROCEDURES:**

#### **A. DECIDING WHETHER TO PURSUE**

An officer has the authority, at all times, to attempt the stop of any person suspected of having committed any criminal offense or traffic violation. It is clear that while it is the officer who initiates the stop, it is the violator who initiates the pursuit. The decision to pursue will expose the officer and others to some degree of risk. The officer must weigh the need for immediate apprehension against the risk created by the pursuit.

1. A police officer may only engage another vehicle in a pursuit if the officer has reasonable suspicion to believe that the driver or occupant has committed or is attempting to commit a crime of violence, or there are exigent circumstances that warrant the need to apprehend the suspect in a timely manner because of the potential for harm to the public if the apprehension does not occur. The officers must be able to articulate the exigent need to apprehend the driver or occupant because of the potential harm or risk to the public.
2. Offenses that constitute infractions, property crimes, (to include stolen motor vehicles), non-violent misdemeanors and non-violent felonies shall not be justification to engage in a pursuit of another vehicle, absent articulable exigent circumstances.
3. The officers involved in the pursuit and their supervisor's shall continuously reassess the factors listed above to determine whether the pursuit shall continue or be terminated.

#### **B. PURSUIT OPERATIONS**

In the event that one of the authorization requirements is satisfied, a pursuit should not be automatically undertaken. An officer/supervisor must still consider the following factors:

1. Degree of risk created by pursuit.
  - a. Volume, type speed and direction of vehicular traffic
  - b. Nature of the area: residential, commercial, school zone, open highway, etc.
  - c. Population density and volume of pedestrian traffic
  - d. Environmental factors such as weather and darkness
  - e. Road conditions: construction, poor repair, extreme curves, ice, etc.
  - f. Driving skills
  - g. Familiarity with the roads
  - h. Condition of the Police vehicle
  - i. Imminent loss of radio communication
2. The likelihood of a successful apprehension.
3. Whether the identity of the violator is known to the point where later apprehension is possible.
4. The foregoing factors should continue to be considered during the pursuit.

### **C. ROLE OF THE PURSUING OFFICER**

1. The decision to engage in or continue a pursuit requires weighing the need to immediately apprehend the violator against the degree of risk to which the officer and others are exposed as a result of pursuit.
2. Upon the commencement of a pursuit, the pursuing officer will immediately activate emergency lights and siren.
3. Once the pursuit has been initiated the primary unit must notify the Dispatcher providing as much information as is known:
  - a. Unit designation and the reason for the pursuit.
  - b. Direction of travel and location or roadway.
  - c. Identification of the violator's vehicle: year, make, model, color, vehicle registration number and other identifying characteristics.
  - d. Number of occupants, ages, descriptions, weapons.
  - e. The speed of the pursued vehicle.
  - f. Other information that may be helpful in terminating the pursuit or resolving the incident, i.e. manner of operation, etc.
4. Maintain a zone of safety between him/herself and the vehicle being pursued.

### **D. ROLE OF ASSISTING UNITS**

#### **1. Secondary Units**

- a. Upon becoming engaged the officer will immediately activate emergency lights and siren.
- b. Notify the Dispatcher that he/she is now engaged as the secondary unit and will handle pursuit communications.
- c. Keep Headquarters informed of the pursuit progress and particularly all changes of direction.
- d. Maintain a zone of safety between him/herself and the primary unit.
- e. Act as the cover unit for the primary officer if the pursued vehicle stops.

#### **2. Parallel Units**

- a. Upon becoming involved the officer will immediately activate emergency lights and siren.
- b. As soon as practical, notify the Dispatcher as to his/her parallel route.
- c. Be prepared to control traffic to facilitate passage of the pursuit to ensure the public safety.
- d. Move in and assist the primary and secondary units if the pursued vehicle stops.

### **E. ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR**

Upon being notified or becoming aware of the pursuit, the supervisor shall decide as quickly as possible whether or not the pursuit should continue.

1. The supervisor shall permit a pursuit to continue only:

- a. When the supervisor reasonably believes that the violator has committed a felony involving violence or threat of violence, or
  - b. When the supervisor reasonably believes that the violator poses an immediate threat to the safety of the public or other officers.
2. The supervisor shall order a pursuit terminated at any time if he/she concludes that the danger to the pursuing officers or the public outweighs the necessity for immediate apprehension of the violator.
3. The supervisor shall order the pursuit terminated if the suspect's identity is established to the point where later apprehension may be accomplished and where there is no immediate threat to public safety.
4. The supervisor shall ensure, for the duration of the pursuit, that all officers follow this policy and department procedures.

#### **F. ROLE OF POLICE DISPATCHER**

The Police Dispatcher shall:

1. Immediately notify a police supervisor of a pursuit in progress if a supervisor has not already been otherwise notified.
2. Keep the supervisor apprised of the duration and progress of the pursuit.
  - a. When possible, a police supervisor shall determine whether there is a need to assume control over and coordinate pursuit related communications.
  - b. The Police Dispatcher shall request the speed, direction of travel, and reason for the pursuit if not immediately given by the pursuing officer.
  - c. Once a pursuit is terminated by the primary unit or a supervisor the Police Dispatcher shall request an acknowledgment from all engaged units that the pursuit has been terminated.

#### **IV. TERMINATING THE PURSUIT**

**Once a pursuit is terminated, all involved units will immediately turn off all emergency lights and sirens and obey all motor vehicle laws.**

1. Any pursuing officer shall terminate his/her involvement in the pursuit: Such decision shall be based on information known at the time of the pursuit.
2. If the officer believes that the danger to the pursuing officer or to the public outweighs necessity for immediate apprehension of the violator.
3. If instructed to do so by a supervisor, or
  - a. Instructions from the Dispatcher shall be deemed to come from the Commanding Officer.
  - b. Instructions from an F.T.O., or an officer temporarily assigned as an F.T.O., to a trainee shall be deemed to come from a supervisor.

5. If a person is injured during the pursuit and there are no police or medical personnel able to render assistance, or
6. If the violator's identity is established to the point where later apprehension may be accomplished and where there is not immediate threat to the safety of the public or officers, or
7. If the pursued vehicle's location is no longer known or the distance between the pursuing vehicles and the violator's vehicle becomes so great that further pursuit is futile, or
8. If the pursuit requires that the vehicle be driven in any manner which exceeds the performance capabilities of the pursuing vehicles or officers involved in a pursuit, or
9. If advised of any unanticipated conditions, events or circumstances which substantially increase the risk of public safety inherent in the pursuit.

## **V. VEHICULAR PURSUIT RESTRICTIONS**

- A. No pursuits will be conducted:
  1. In a direction opposite to the flow of traffic on a divided highway.
  2. In a police vehicle in which an individual who is not an officer is either the driver or passenger.
- B. No more than three police vehicles shall become actively involved in a pursuit unless otherwise specifically directed by a supervisor.
- C. A motorcycle officer will *not* become involved in a pursuit as either a primary or secondary unit.
- D. An unmarked police vehicle will not participate in a vehicular pursuit unless it is equipped with an emergency light and siren. The unmarked car shall relinquish primary unit status immediately upon the participation of a marked vehicle. Upon the participation of a secondary marked vehicle, the unmarked vehicle shall terminate their involvement in the pursuit.
- E. To diminish the likelihood of a pursuit, an officer intending to stop a vehicle for any violation of the law shall, when possible and without creating a threat to public safety and if such action is consistent with Connecticut General Statute 14-283, close the distance between two vehicles prior to activating emergency lights and audible device.
- F. Throughout the course of a vehicular pursuit, pursuing officers shall not attempt to overtake or pass the violators moving vehicle unless extraordinary circumstances exist or it can be accomplished with reasonable safety.
- G. Upon approaching an intersection controlled by traffic signals or signs, or any other location at which there is a substantially increased likelihood of collision, the operator of any pursuit vehicle shall, prior to entering the intersection, reduce the vehicle's speed and control the vehicle so as to avoid collision with another vehicle or a pedestrian. The officer shall observe that the way is clear before cautiously proceeding through the intersection.
- H. Officers involved in a pursuit will not engage in vehicle paralleling.
- I. A police unit that is parallel street pursuing shall not join or interfere with a pursuit unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.

- J. Boxing in or heading off a violator's moving vehicle is permitted only under extraordinary circumstances. These tactics substantially increase the inherent risk of the pursuit and shall only be employed:
  - 1. At low speeds, and
  - 2. With the approval of a supervisor, or
  - 3. In response to an imminent threat to the safety of the public or an officer.
  
- K. Roadblocks must only be employed as a last resort in circumstances where deadly force would otherwise be justified.
  - 1. The use of a roadblock must be authorized by a supervisor.
  - 2. At no time will a roadblock be established until all pursuing police vehicles are made aware of the roadblock and its location and have acknowledged this awareness.
  - 3. Once a roadblock has been established and a vehicle or barricade has been positioned in the roadway, there shall be:
    - a. Adequate distance to see the roadblock
    - b. An avenue of escape
    - c. No one in the blocking vehicle(s)
    - d. Tire deflation devices, as issued to the officers may be deployed across the avenue of escape.
  
- L. Except as a last resort to prevent imminent death or serious injury to the officer or another person where deadly force would otherwise be justified, officers involved in a pursuit shall not fire any weapon from or at a moving vehicle, nor engage in any vehicle contact action.
  
- M. Felony stop procedures shall be employed once the pursued vehicle stops.

## **VI. USE OF FIREARMS DURING A PURSUIT**

- A. Officers shall not discharge their firearms at a moving vehicle or its occupants, unless the occupants are using, or threatened the use of deadly physical force, against the officer or another person present, by means other than the vehicle.
  - 1. This does not preclude exigent circumstances such as, but not limited to, where the officer reasonably believes there are no other means available to avert the threat of the vehicle, or if such vehicle is being utilized as a weapon against the officer(s), or another person, such as in a vehicle ramming attack.
  - 2. No officer should intentionally position his or her body into the path of a fleeing motor vehicle, unless such action is a tactic approved by the law enforcement unit, that employs such police officer and in accordance with an established written policy. Whenever possible, the involved officer should make an effort to move to an area of safety if the vehicle becomes a threat, including retreating from the threat, if practical.

## **VII. REINSTATING PURSUITS**

Reinstatement of any previously terminated pursuit shall be undertaken consistent with the authorization criteria for originally initiating a pursuit.

## **VIII. INTERJURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS**

- A. The West Hartford Police Department shall provide timely notification of a pursuit in progress to any other jurisdiction into which the pursuit enters.
  - 1. Notifying another jurisdiction that a pursuit is in progress is not a request to join the pursuit. The West Hartford Police Department shall advise if assistance is necessary. Whenever the pursuing officers are unfamiliar with the roadways and terrain of the jurisdiction into which the pursuit has entered, the West Hartford Police Department shall, when possible, seek the assistance of, and be prepared to relinquish the pursuit to the other agency.
- B. If another law enforcement agency pursues into West Hartford there shall be no participation by personnel of the West Hartford Police Department except as is authorized by all of the provisions of this policy.
  - 1. The Police Dispatcher notified by another law enforcement agency of a pursuit entering or about to enter West Hartford shall, as soon as possible, ascertain sufficient information to determine whether a pursuit is authorized under this policy.
    - a. Refer to Section III. A
- C. The supervisor involved in the pursuit shall communicate with a supervisor within the other jurisdiction to determine the respective responsibilities of each police agency and to determine which agency will assume primary responsibility. The supervisor will also make sure that the other agency is also informed of any external conditions pertinent to the continued conduct of the pursuit.
- D. A pursuit into a bordering state shall comply with the laws of both states and any applicable inter-agency agreements.

## **IX. PURSUIT REPORTING**

- A. Officers' Responsibility:
  - 1. Each officer involved in the pursuit will submit a Case Incident Report detailing all actions taken, including, but not limited to, the deployment of tire deflation devices, blocking side streets, etc.
  - 2. The reports shall be completed prior to the end of the officer's shift. If the officer(s) are physically unable to comply, they should be interviewed by their immediate supervisor as soon as possible.
  - 3. Each police officer who initiates a pursuit is required by Public Act 18-161 to complete the adopted statewide pursuit tracking form and submit it through the chain of command to be forwarded to the state as required and included in the agency's annual pursuit reporting requirements. (See the attached Statewide Pursuit Tracking Form)
  - 4. Each form shall indicate whether the officer was the initiating/primary officer or a secondary unit.
- B. State of Connecticut Annual Reporting
  - 1. Pursuant to Public Act 18-161, the Chief of Police, or designee conducting the Administrative Review of each motor vehicle pursuit, shall forward the State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), Police Officer Standards and Training



Council (POSTC) Standardized Pursuit Tracking Form to the designated recipient following each pursuit. Additionally, and in conjunction with the annual pursuit analysis, the Chief of Police or designee shall forward the DESPP, POSTC Annual Pursuit Report to the recipient(s) designated by POSTC no later than January 31st of each year.

2. The pursuit tracking form shall be directed to the Assistant Chief of Police in charge of the Patrol Division before the end of the shift on which the pursuit occurred.

## **X. VEHICULAR PURSUIT REVIEW**

- A. All pursuit incidents shall be reviewed for compliance with applicable policy and departmental operating procedures. The review panel shall consist of:
  1. Assistant Chief of Police
  2. Training Division Supervisor
  3. A supervisor selected by the Chief of Police
- B. Pursuit incidents shall also be reviewed to identify the need for remedial training of individual officers or specific areas of emphasis in department wide training regarding pursuit situations and the application of pursuit policies and procedures.
- C. Periodic review of pursuit incidents and summary pursuit information should be conducted in order to identify any additions, deletions or modifications warranted in departmental pursuit procedure

## **XI. TRAINING**

- A. Police officers who drive police vehicles shall be given initial and periodic update training in the agency's pursuit policy and in safe driving tactics. The provisions of Section 14-283a-1 to 14-283a-4, inclusive, of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies shall be a part of the curriculum for all police basic recruit training and re-certification programs in Connecticut.
- B. Pursuit Training Programs shall consist of:
  1. Knowledge of applicable statutes
  2. Court decisions impacting police pursuits
  3. Department policy
  4. Supervisory and individual responsibilities in a police pursuit
  5. Reporting requirements
  6. Inter-jurisdictional considerations
  7. Pursuit driving skills and techniques.
- C. This policy shall be reviewed at least once each year by each West Hartford Police Officer.

## **XII. TIRE DEFLATION DEVICES**

- A. DEPLOYMENT
  1. Tire deflation devices may be deployed after an emergency vehicle has attempted to stop a suspect vehicle who then attempts to elude or fails to stop.
  2. The controlling supervisor will determine if the pursuit should continue and whether tire deflation devices should be deployed.

## B. EXCEPTION

Forced stop procedures utilizing the tire deflation devices must be reasonably and properly applied by police officers who have received appropriate training in their use and have received authorization from their supervisor, absent exigent circumstances involving a rapidly evolving commission of a violent crime.

C. Tire deflation devices, (Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas) are designed to be used on vehicles with four or more tires. **DO NOT USE ON MOTORCYCLES.** For optimum performance, "Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas" should be deployed on paved surfaces. During pursuit situations the following guidelines apply:

1. Regardless of the method of deployment, tactical considerations may include:
  - a. Deployment in a manner that limits the suspect's ability to avoid striking a "Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas".
  - b. If deploying at an intersection, ensure deployment is made on the side of the intersection from which the target vehicle is approaching. Deploying on the opposite side allows the opportunity for the target vehicle to turn and avoid striking the "Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas".
2. Make every effort possible to advise pursuing units when and where the "Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas" are being deployed.
3. Always use extreme caution when removing "Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas" from the road especially after being driven over.
4. Any member of the department who deploys a tire deflation device must remain with the device until it can be safely removed from the roadway unless extenuating circumstances exist.

## D. REMINDER OF IMPORTANT TRAINING INFORMATION

1. No member of the West Hartford Police Department will utilize or deploy any tire deflation device until they have been trained in the proper handling and use of the tire deflation device.
2. Any tire deflation device that was driven over or damaged will be sent to the Training Division to be reloaded and inspected. (Stop Stick, Stinger and Barracudas)
3. If the deploying device has a cord reel, do not wrap the cord reel around any portion of your body.
4. When practicable do not wait until the last possible second to deploy the "Stop Sticks, Stingers or Barracudas".
5. Warning: once you lock the "Stop Stick" sections together, do not pick them up unless you disconnect them.
6. It shall be the policy of the West Hartford Police Department to conduct annual training and review of all tire deflation devices and deployments in order to evaluate policy compliance.

## E. REPORTING

1. The deployment of any tire deflation device will require a "Tire Deflation Device Form" completed and submitted to the deploying officer's supervisor. (Tire Deflation Device Form is attached to this PRD)
2. The "Tire Deflation Device Form" will be forwarded to the Training Division for filing and retention.
3. The Training Division has the responsibility of acquiring replacement devices and issuing the equipment to the appropriate vehicles as required.
4. At the Chief or Assistant Chief's request, the Training Division will produce an annual report with review and analysis of tire deflation device usage.

## XIII. RELATED STATE STATUTES

All officers should be familiar with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 248, Section 14-283 regarding Rights of Emergency Vehicles.

