



Lake County Sheriff's Office

General Order 17 (B)

Gary S. Borders, Sheriff

Title: Motor Vehicle Pursuits	
Effective Date: June 15, 2009	Last Revision Date: June 15, 2009
Accreditation Standards: CFA: 17.06M	Scope: All Members

POLICY: The routine and emergency operation of sheriff's office vehicles is an area of prime concern to law enforcement and members of the general public alike. While the patrol vehicle is an effective tool for law enforcement purposes, the deputy must realize that it is his or her duty to operate the vehicle safely at all times, especially while in the act of pursuit. The fact that a deputy is engaged in a pursuit does not relieve nor protect that deputy from the consequences of a reckless disregard for the safety of others. Therefore, it is the policy of the Lake County Sheriff's Office that precautions are taken to protect other motorists and pedestrians because every driver engaged in a pursuit could possibly be subject to criminal indictment or to civil suit for damages for injuries inflicted if involved in a crash.

The purpose of this general order is to establish guidelines for the declared and active pursuit of vehicles and to specify when a deputy or supervisor should initiate or terminate a vehicle pursuit. This general order also sets forth the responsibilities of the initiating deputy, the supervisor, the dispatcher, and any other involved emergency vehicles.

A. General guidelines:

1. An active pursuit must be considered as a potentially dangerous act for the suspect(s), deputies, and the general public.
2. Deputies must avoid the tendency to consider only themselves and the suspect(s).
3. Delay may be considered when a person is known and poses no immediate threat to the community. However, it is not in the best interest of public safety to advocate a policy that would encourage the dangerous driver, car thief, or fleeing criminal to proceed without the possibility of imminent police intervention.
4. Each deputy must use common sense in deciding whether or not to engage in a pursuit. No deputy will be held accountable if he or she weighs the risks and chooses to not pursue a fleeing vehicle.
5. Deputies will not initiate or engage in a pursuit while transporting non-departmental persons (prisoners, witnesses, civilian observers, etc.), unless extenuating circumstances prevail.
6. The decision whether or not to pursue will also be based on known circumstances which include, but are not limited to the following [CFA: 17.06M (A)]:
 - a. The initiating deputy has probable cause to believe a crime has been or is being committed
 - b. The seriousness of the originating offense and its relationship to community safety

- c. The probability of apprehension
 - d. The geographic location, population density (vehicle and pedestrian), land use, etc.
 - e. Time of day
 - f. Traffic and road conditions
 - g. Weather conditions
 - h. Familiarity of deputies and supervisors with the area of the pursuit
 - i. Speeds involved
 - j. Quality of radio communications between the pursuing unit(s), the dispatcher, and supervisor.
7. During an active pursuit, the deputy will at all times maintain such a distance between his or her vehicle and the pursued vehicle so a sudden stop or change of direction will not result in a crash.
 8. The desirability of continuing a pursuit in which the fleeing vehicle refuses to stop will be evaluated continuously by a patrol supervisor.

B. Pursuit vehicles [CFA: 17.06M (D)]:

1. Marked patrol vehicles with emergency equipment, to include those vehicles assigned to the Street Crimes Unit, may engage in pursuits of fleeing vehicles.
2. Deputies on motorcycles or in unmarked vehicles with emergency equipment may pursue a fleeing vehicle, using due care and under the guidelines set forth in this general order, only until a marked vehicle with emergency equipment can take over the pursuit.

C. Initiating member's responsibilities [CFA: 17.06M (B)]: When a deputy initiates a pursuit, he or she will immediately activate all emergency equipment, make radio contact with the dispatcher, and communicate the following information:

1. Unit identification (call sign)
2. Exact location and direction of travel
3. Pursued vehicle description - year, make, model, and color, if known
4. Tag number and state, if known
5. Number of occupants in pursued vehicle along with race, sex, and age if possible
6. Reason for pursuing the vehicle

D. Dispatcher's responsibilities [CFA: 17.06M (E)]:

1. Upon notification by a deputy of a pursuit, the dispatcher will broadcast the following:
 - a. Emergency traffic only on frequency being used by the initiating deputy. All sheriff's office and immediate agencies' frequencies will be notified by simulcast.
 - b. Identify the unit in pursuit and relay information given by the pursuing unit
2. The dispatcher will immediately notify the appropriate supervisor, who will monitor the pursuit.

3. The dispatcher will request a K-9 unit when directed to do so.
4. The dispatcher will notify aviation when directed to do so.
5. Dispatch will then communicate on the air only when necessary
6. The dispatcher will notify the communication supervisor, who will be responsible for the following:
 - a. Immediately take the necessary actions to move the pursuit's communications to another frequency, if necessary
 - b. Monitor and supervise the dispatch function of the pursuit
 - c. Contact adjoining counties if the pursuit appears that it may cross jurisdictional boundaries (or designate another member to do so)

E. Secondary unit's responsibilities [CFA: 17.06M (C)]:

1. Pursuits involving traffic or non-violent misdemeanors will involve only one primary patrol unit in pursuit and no more than one secondary unit assisting unless directed otherwise by a supervisor.
2. Pursuits involving known felony or violent misdemeanor suspects may involve a maximum of three (3) pursuing vehicles unless directed otherwise by a supervisor.
3. The secondary back-up unit will remain at a safe distance during the pursuit. The secondary back-up unit's purpose will be to arrive shortly after the pursuit termination. Under no circumstances will back-up or additional vehicles go against the flow of traffic or parallel side by side with any vehicle involved in the pursuit.
4. The second car joining in the pursuit will immediately notify dispatch that there are two (2) police vehicles in pursuit. The second unit may take over radio responsibilities, allowing the primary unit to concentrate on driving. Dispatch will broadcast the fact that two (2) units are in the pursuit and identify those units. All other units should remain on patrol, but stay alert to the direction of travel in case help is needed.
5. Secondary units will yield the right of way to the chase vehicles, maintain a safe distance, and be available to assist in the apprehension.
6. A K-9 unit should take over as the secondary unit if possible.

F. Supervisor's responsibilities [CFA: 17.06M (F)]:

1. The supervisor of the initiating unit should assign the closest unit to assist in the pursuit and must be responsible for the following:
 - a. Monitoring the situation to ensure that no more than the authorized number of units is engaged in the actual pursuit
 - b. Determining whether more or less units are needed
 - c. Verifying that aviation assistance has been requested
 - d. Ensuring that the proper radio frequency is being used
2. The supervisor should terminate the pursuit if, in the supervisor's opinion, the pursuit is creating a hazard that is greater than the importance of stopping the violator.
3. **Administrative Review [CFA: 17.06M (J)]:** The patrol supervisor for the pursuit will respond immediately to the location where the pursuit ends and assume command at the

scene. The supervisor will ensure that an offense report is generated that documents all pertinent information regarding the pursuit. The supervisor will also complete an ***Administrative Review-Vehicle Pursuit*** form in its entirety for any fleeing vehicle pursuit and will forward same up the chain of command for review.

The shift lieutenant will review the documentation to ascertain whether or not the pursuit was within policy and to determine if any policy, training, equipment, or disciplinary issues should be addressed. The form shall then be forwarded to the bureau commander who will indicate on the form whether or not he or she agrees with the findings of the lieutenant. The bureau commander will then forward the form to the Chief Deputy for final approval.

Upon completion of the aforementioned review, copies of the ***Administrative Review-Vehicle Pursuit*** form will be sent to the Sheriff, the Office of Professional Standards, and the Training Bureau. The original form will be forwarded to the Records Department for inclusion in the related case file.

G. Conduct of the pursuit:

1. The primary pursuing vehicle (primary vehicle) and one backup vehicle (secondary vehicle) will normally be the only ground units necessary to pursue a fleeing vehicle. The primary vehicle or supervisor may request additional vehicles to assist, as outlined in section E., 2. of this general order. The secondary vehicle will not follow too closely.
2. Sirens and emergency lights will be used throughout the pursuit.
3. Caravanning of vehicles during a pursuit situation is prohibited.

H. Termination of the pursuit [CFA: 17.06M (H)]:

1. The deputy will terminate a pursuit when:
 - a. The danger involved in the pursuit is greater than the offense which was committed or believed to have been committed
 - b. Directed to do so by a supervisor
 - c. The suspect vehicle is no longer in sight
 - d. Other extenuating circumstances exist.
2. If the deputy receives communication from a supervisor to terminate pursuit, he or she will do so immediately, reporting to the dispatcher the last known location and direction of travel of the pursued vehicle.
3. If the decision has been made to terminate the pursuit, which is entering another county, it is the communications supervisor's responsibility to notify the county into which the pursuit enters and advise them of the decision to terminate the pursuit.
4. The deputy initiating the pursuit will submit a report documenting the circumstances of the pursuit to his or her immediate supervisor prior to the end of shift. Other deputies involved in the pursuit may be required at the discretion of the supervisor to complete a supplemental report detailing their involvement.

I. Pursuits from Lake County into another county [CFA: 17.06M (I)]: Pursuits which leave Lake County require the following:

1. The communications supervisor is responsible for promptly notifying the adjoining counties and informing them that a pursuit is leaving Lake County and entering their county. This notification will include:
 - a. Vehicle and suspect descriptions

- b. Details of the charges
 - c. Any available data on the pursuit such as length, speeds, suspect driver skills displayed, etc.
 2. The adjoining agency is responsible for determining if the pursuit will be continued within its county.
 - a. If the adjoining agency determines that the pursuit will be terminated, the Lake County Sheriff's Office will honor this decision and immediately terminate the pursuit.
 - b. If the adjoining agency determines that the pursuit is justifiable, it will assume command of the pursuit once an officer or deputy of the county joins the pursuit. Upon the arrest of a felony suspect, the requirements of F.S. 901.25 will be followed.
 3. Deputies engaged in a pursuit which leaves Lake County may continue the pursuit into another county provided the deputy has the approval of the patrol supervisor and proper authority of the adjoining county.
 4. Deputies of the Lake County Sheriff's Office engaged in a pursuit outside Lake County will continue to follow all written directives of the Lake County Sheriff's Office.
- J. Pursuits entering unincorporated areas of Lake County from a city within Lake County, or from another county [CFA: 17.06M (I)]:**
1. If a pursuit being conducted by a city police department within Lake County or an adjoining sheriff's office enters Lake County, the communications supervisor will attempt to obtain:
 - a. The reason for the pursuit
 - b. Details on the charges
 - c. Vehicle, suspect, and occupant information
 - d. Any available data on the pursuit such as length, speeds, suspect driver skills displayed, etc.
 2. The communications supervisor will as soon as possible inform the appropriate patrol supervisor of the pursuit. The patrol supervisor will determine the level of involvement, if any, of the Lake County Sheriff's Office in the pursuit.
 3. Once a decision has been made by the patrol supervisor, the communications supervisor will inform the pursuing agency.
 - a. If the decision is made to discontinue the pursuit, the communications supervisor will request the pursuit be terminated immediately.
 - b. If the decision is to assume the active pursuit, the communications supervisor will inform the pursuing agency that once the pursuit is in unincorporated Lake County, command of the pursuit is the responsibility of the appropriate Lake County sheriff's patrol supervisor.
 - 1) The pursuit should still be limited to a total of two (2) Lake County sheriff's vehicles, unless additional units are authorized in Section E., 2. of this general order.
 - 2) Unless officer safety or a specific request from the originating agency indicates otherwise, Lake County sheriff's deputies should terminate their participation when the outside agency's pursuit leaves Lake County.
 4. The patrol supervisor, once given the details surrounding the other agency's pursuit, will consider all factors set forth in this general order and determine if:

- a. The pursuit should be terminated, or
 - b. The Lake County Sheriff's Office will assume command of the pursuit and actively attempt to apprehend the violator.
5. If an arrest is made, F.S. 901.25 requirements and the Sheriff's Office arrest procedures will be followed.

K. Forcible stopping of a fleeing vehicle [CFA: 17.06M (G)]: While the preferred method of stopping a violator is to remain behind the vehicle until the driver stops of his or her own accord, other tactics may be used to stop a pursued vehicle when necessary. If it is reasonably believed that a delay in the apprehension of the pursued suspect represents an impending threat of grave injury or death to any person, the deputies involved might have to resort to the following methods:

- 1. **Shooting at the vehicle:** Deputies are prohibited from using firearms in an attempt to stop fleeing vehicles unless there is an imminent danger to life.
 - a. Firing at the suspect must be consistent with this agency's deadly force policy.
 - b. Shooting at or from a moving vehicle is generally a dangerous and ineffective practice. It should be done only as the ultimate measure of defense of life.

2. Precision Immobilization Technique:

- a. **The Precision Immobilization Technique will be used only by deputies who have received sheriff's office training in its execution. Deputies trained in the technique must receive re-training every two years.**
- b. Deputies should seek a supervisor's approval prior to utilizing the technique, situation permitting.
- c. The use of the Precision Immobilization Technique may only be used to apprehend a fleeing suspect who the deputy reasonably believes is committing or has committed a forcible felony and whose escape would create a substantial risk to the general public.
- d. The Precision Immobilization Technique shall only be used if it can occur at a time and place and in a manner that human life and property are not unreasonably endangered.
- e. The use of the Precision Immobilization Technique against motorcycles and vehicles having a high center of gravity (i.e. sport utility vehicles, trucks, and vans) is prohibited unless the use of deadly force is justified.
- f. Trained deputies operating sport utility vehicles, pickup trucks or similar vehicles may only use the technique with extreme caution and only under those conditions when it can be applied with relative safety to the deputy, suspect, and innocent parties.
- g. The use of the technique against vehicles with one or more deflated tires is prohibited unless the use of deadly force is justified.

3. Roadblocks: [CFA: 24.04M]

- a. The extreme danger inherent in the use of roadblocks mandates that they should be used only after lesser means of traffic control have either failed, or have been determined to be ineffective or impractical. At times, stationary or moving roadblocks may be utilized, but only when absolutely necessary and upon approval of a supervisor. [CFA: 24.04M (A, C)]
- b. Circumstances justifying the use of a stationary or moving roadblock may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Exigent circumstances, in which hazards or risks to the general public would be greater in the absence of a roadblock [CFA: 24.04M (B)]
 - 2) To terminate a fleeing vehicle pursuit, when deemed necessary by a supervisor [CFA: 24.04M (B)]
- c. When a stationary or moving roadblock is determined to be necessary, the following procedure shall be followed:
- 1) Obtain approval from a supervisor prior to establishing a roadblock. The deputy initiating the roadblock shall be in charge of the incident unless relieved by a supervisor. If a supervisor is present at the scene of a roadblock, then that supervisor shall assume command. [CFA: 24.04M (D)]
 - 2) Assemble the personnel and equipment necessary to establish the roadblock, as directed by the authorizing supervisor [CFA: 24.04M (E)]
 - 3) Emergency vehicle lighting will be in operation when a department vehicle is used in a stationary roadblock.
 - 4) Vehicles used as stationary roadblocks will not be occupied.
 - 5) Roadblocks will be set up where it will afford clear visibility to traffic in all directions and to all highway users.
 - 6) An escape route through the roadblock must be established in such a manner to be maneuvered through at a reasonable speed.
 - 7) Vehicles and persons not associated with the roadblock shall be cleared from the area.
 - 8) Rolling roadblocks are not recommended, but may be used in exigent circumstances where it is necessary to protect a third party.
 - 9) The ranking member who approved the roadblock shall continuously monitor the situation to ensure that it is fulfilling its function, meeting criteria and is not presenting unnecessary safety risks; however, if any of these situations occur, any supervisor is authorized to cancel it. [CFA: 24.04M(C)]

4. Stop Sticks:

- a. Members using department issued Stop Sticks in pursuit situations will adhere to the following guidelines:
- 1) Deputies should position their patrol vehicle off the roadway in which the fleeing vehicle will pass.
 - 2) Assemble and position the Stop Sticks in accordance with sheriff's office training.
 - 3) Stop Sticks should be cleared from the roadway in accordance with sheriff's office training.
- b. Use of "Stop Sticks" in stationary vehicle situations.
- 1) "Stop Sticks" can be used to prevent a vehicle (s) from being moved by a suspect attempting to flee a scene.
 - 2) "Stop Sticks" may be used to prevent movement of a vehicle (s) which is, or possibly will be, evidence.

L. Aircraft and watercraft assistance [CFA: 17.06M (D)]:

1. When an aircraft is available to assist, the following guidelines will be used:
 - a. When the aircraft has advised that the suspect vehicle is in view, the aircraft will continue the pursuit and take over the communication responsibility of the secondary unit.
 - b. The aircraft will continue to advise of the suspect vehicle's location, approximate speed, and the direction of travel.
 - c. Support units should attempt to be in a position to apprehend the suspect when the suspect vehicle stops.
 - d. The aircraft will maintain a safe height to allow the pilot or operator to observe the suspect vehicle.
 - e. The patrol supervisor may have the primary and secondary units turn off their emergency equipment and slow to a safe operating speed, while having the aircraft continue the pursuit.
2. Requests for Lake County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit assistance from a police department outside of Lake County must come through the other county's Sheriff's Office, unless there is a prior Mutual Aid Agreement with the municipality in question. This is necessary in order to meet the requirements of the Florida Sheriffs' Mutual Aid agreement.
3. Marine Unit members while operating a watercraft are restricted to assisting deputies in pursuit of a fleeing vehicle unless the fleeing suspect, intentionally or unintentionally, enters a waterway.

M. Definitions:

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW-VEHICLE PURSUIT FORM: A form that is completed by a supervisor at the conclusion of any fleeing vehicle pursuit. The form is used to facilitate a **mandatory** administrative review of each pursuit in order to determine whether policy, training, equipment, or disciplinary issues should be addressed.

FLEEING VEHICLE PURSUIT: A pursued vehicle increasing speed or taking evasive action to avoid apprehension by a deputy sheriff

PRIMARY PURSUIT VEHICLE: Generally, the marked unit which initiates the pursuit. If the initiating vehicle is not a marked car with emergency equipment, the primary unit status if available will be assumed by a marked car with emergency equipment.

SECONDARY PURSUIT VEHICLE: The emergency 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.

STOP STICKS – Tire-deflating device.

APPROVED:



Gary S. Borders
Sheriff of Lake County