

Foot Pursuit Policy

458.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Foot pursuits are inherently dangerous and require common sense, sound tactics and heightened officer safety awareness. This policy sets forth guidelines to assist officers in making the decision to initiate or continue the pursuit of suspects on foot by balancing the objective of apprehending the suspect with the risk of potential injury to the officer, the public or the suspect.

458.1.1 POLICY

It is the policy of this department when deciding to initiate or continue a foot pursuit that officers must continuously balance the objective of apprehending the suspect with the risk and potential for injury to department personnel, the public or the suspect.

Officers are expected to act reasonably, based on the totality of the circumstances. Absent exigent circumstances, the safety of department personnel and the public should be the primary consideration when determining whether a foot pursuit should be initiated or continued. Officers must be mindful that immediate apprehension of a suspect is rarely more important than the safety of the public and department personnel.

458.2 DECISION TO PURSUE

Officers may be justified in initiating a foot pursuit of any individual the officer reasonably believes is about to engage in, is engaging in or has engaged in criminal activity. The decision to initiate or continue such a foot pursuit, however, must be continuously re-evaluated in light of the circumstances presented at the time.

Mere flight by a person who is not suspected of criminal activity shall not serve as the sole justification for engaging in an extended foot pursuit without the development of reasonable suspicion regarding the individual's involvement in criminal activity.

Deciding to initiate or continue a foot pursuit is a decision that an officer must make quickly and under unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. It is recognized that foot pursuits potentially place department personnel and the public at significant risk. Therefore, no officer or supervisor shall be criticized or disciplined for deciding not to engage in a foot pursuit because of the perceived risk involved.

If circumstances permit, surveillance and containment are generally the safest tactics for apprehending fleeing persons. In deciding whether to initiate or continue a foot pursuit, an officer should continuously consider reasonable alternatives to pursuit based upon the circumstances and resources available, such as the following:

- (a) Containment of the area.
- (b) Canine search.
- (c) Saturation of the area with patrol personnel.

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- (d) Aerial support.
- (e) Apprehension at another time when the identity of the suspect is known or there is information available that would likely allow for later apprehension, and the need to immediately apprehend the suspect does not reasonably appear to outweigh the risk of continuing the pursuit.

458.3 GUIDELINES FOR FOOT PURSUIT

Unless the officer reasonably believes that exigent circumstances exist (e.g. a serious threat to the safety of personnel or members of the public), officers should consider alternatives to engaging in or continuing a foot pursuit under the following conditions:

- (a) When directed by a supervisor to terminate the foot pursuit. Such an order shall be considered mandatory
- (b) When the officer is acting alone.
- (c) When two or more officers become separated, lose visual contact with one another, or obstacles separate them to the degree that they cannot immediately assist each other should a confrontation take place. In such circumstances, it is generally recommended that a single officer keep the suspect in sight from a safe distance and coordinate the containment effort.
- (d) The officer is unsure of his/her location and direction of travel.
- (e) When pursuing multiple suspects and the pursuing officers do not reasonably believe that they would be able to control the suspect should a confrontation occur.
- (f) When the physical condition of the officers renders them incapable of controlling the suspect if apprehended.
- (g) When the officer loses radio contact with the Dispatch Center or with backup officers.
- (h) When the suspect enters a building, structure, confined space or a wooded or otherwise isolated area and there are insufficient officers to provide backup and containment. The primary officer should consider discontinuing the pursuit and coordinating containment pending the arrival of sufficient officers.
- (i) The officer becomes aware of unanticipated or unforeseen circumstances that unreasonably increase the risk to officers or the public.
- (j) The officer reasonably believes that the danger to the pursuing officers or public outweighs the objective of immediate apprehension.
- (k) The officer loses possession of his/her firearm or other essential equipment.
- (l) The officer or a third party is injured during the pursuit, requiring immediate assistance, and there are no other emergency personnel available to render assistance.
- (m) The suspect's location is no longer definitely known.

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- (n) The identity of the suspect is established or other information exists that will allow for the suspect's apprehension at a later time, and it reasonably appears that there is no immediate threat to department personnel or the public if the suspect is not immediately apprehended.
- (o) The officer's ability to safely continue the pursuit is impaired by inclement weather, darkness or other conditions.

458.4 RESPONSIBILITIES IN FOOT PURSUITS

458.4.1 INITIATING OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Unless relieved by another officer or a supervisor, the initiating officer shall be responsible for coordinating the progress of the pursuit. When acting alone and when practicable, the initiating officer should not attempt to overtake and confront the suspect but should attempt to keep the suspect in sight until sufficient officers are present to safely apprehend the suspect.

Early communication of available information from the involved officers is essential so that adequate resources can be coordinated and deployed to bring a foot pursuit to a safe conclusion. Officers initiating a foot pursuit should broadcast the following information as soon as it becomes practicable and available:

- (a) Unit identifier
- (b) Location and direction of travel
- (c) Reason for the foot pursuit
- (d) Number of suspects and description
- (e) Whether the suspect is known or believed to be armed

Officers should be mindful that radio transmissions made while running may be difficult to understand and may need to be repeated.

Absent extenuating circumstances, any officer unable to promptly and effectively broadcast this information should terminate the pursuit. If the foot pursuit is discontinued for any reason, immediate efforts for containment should be established and alternatives considered based upon the circumstances and available resources.

When a foot pursuit terminates, the officer will notify the Dispatch Center of his/her location and the status of the pursuit termination (e.g., suspect in custody, lost sight of suspect), and will direct further actions as reasonably appear necessary.

458.4.2 ASSISTING OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Whenever any officer announces that he/she is engaged in a foot pursuit, all other officers should minimize non-essential radio traffic to permit the involved officers maximum access to the radio frequency.

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Any officer who is in a position to intercept a fleeing suspect or who can assist the primary officer with the apprehension of the suspect, shall act reasonably and in accordance with department policy, based upon available information and his/her own observations.

458.4.3 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY

Upon becoming aware of a foot pursuit, the supervisor shall make every reasonable effort to ascertain sufficient information to direct responding resources and to take command, control and coordination of the foot pursuit. The supervisor should respond to the area whenever possible; the supervisor does not, however, need not be physically present to exercise control over the pursuit. The supervisor shall continuously assess the situation in order to ensure the foot pursuit is conducted within established department guidelines.

The supervisor shall terminate the foot pursuit when the danger to pursuing officers or the public appears to unreasonably outweigh the objective of immediate apprehension of the suspect.

Upon apprehension of the suspect, the supervisor shall promptly proceed to the termination point to direct the post-pursuit activity.

458.4.4 THE DISPATCH CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon being notified or becoming aware that a foot pursuit is in progress, communication personnel shall, as soon as practicable, notify the field supervisor and provide available information. The Dispatch Center personnel are also responsible for the following:

- (a) Clear the radio channel of non-emergency traffic.
- (b) Repeat the transmissions of the pursuing officer as needed.
- (c) Relay all pertinent information to responding personnel.
- (d) Contact additional resources as directed by a supervisor.
- (e) Coordinate response of additional resources to assist with the foot pursuit.

458.5 REPORTING

The initiating officer shall complete the appropriate crime/arrest reports documenting, at minimum, the following:

- (a) The reason for initiating the foot pursuit.
- (b) The identity of involved personnel.
- (c) The course and approximate distance of the pursuit.
- (d) Whether a suspect was apprehended as well as the means and methods used.
 1. Any use of force shall be reported and documented in compliance with the Department Use of Force Policy.
- (e) Any injuries or property damage.

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Assisting officers taking an active role in the apprehension of the suspect shall complete supplemental reports as necessary or as directed.

In any case in which a suspect is not apprehended and there is insufficient information to warrant further investigation, a supervisor may authorize that the initiating officer need not complete a formal report.