


HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL		
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Section: Two – Law Enforcement Function		Chapter: One – Patrol Operations
Chief of Police: <i>John F. Viola</i>		

SUBJECT: VEHICLE PURSUIT

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Directive is to establish the guidelines governing the proper conduct, conditions and procedures under which a member of this Department shall initiate, continue or terminate a motor vehicle pursuit.

To give officers a clear understanding of when and how to conduct pursuits. To maintain the basic law enforcement mission to enforce laws and protect life and property. To minimize municipal liability for all parties involved in accidents that will still take place.

II. POLICY

Vehicular pursuit of fleeing suspects presents a danger to the lives of the public, officers and suspects involved in the pursuit. It is the policy of this Department to protect all person’s lives to the extent possible when enforcing the law. In addition, it is the responsibility of the Department to assist officers in the safe performance of their duties. To effect these obligations it shall be the policy of this Department to narrowly regulate the manner in which vehicular pursuit is undertaken and performed.

III. DEFINITIONS

Motor Vehicle Pursuit - An active attempt by a police officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend fleeing suspects who are attempting to avoid apprehension through evasive tactics, refusing to voluntarily comply to a police officer's visual and audible signal to stop.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Initiation of Pursuit

1. The decision to initiate pursuit must be based on the pursuing officer's conclusion that the immediate danger to the public created by the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public should the suspect remain at large.
(PLEAC 4.2.1 a)
 2. Haverford Township Police Officers in an authorized emergency vehicle may initiate a vehicular pursuit when ALL of the following criteria are met:
 - a. The suspect exhibits the intention to avoid arrest by using a vehicle to flee apprehension for an alleged felony or misdemeanor that would normally require a full custody arrest.
 - b. The suspect operating the vehicle refuses to stop at the direction of the officer; and
 - c. The suspect, if allowed to flee, would present a danger to human life or cause serious injury.
 3. The pursuing officer shall consider the following factors in determining whether to initiate pursuit:
 - a. The performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle;
 - b. The condition of the road surface upon which the pursuit is being conducted;
 - c. The amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area; and
 - d. Weather conditions.
- (PLEAC 4.2.1 a)

B. Pursuit Officer Responsibilities

1. The pursuing officer shall immediately notify communications center personnel that a pursuit is underway. The officer shall provide communications personnel with the following information:
 - a. Unit Identification

- b. Location, speed and direction of travel of the fleeing vehicle.
 - c. Provide a reason for pursuit.
 - d. Provide a description of the suspect vehicle including but not limited to color, make and registration of vehicle.
 - e. Provide, when possible, the number of occupants in the fleeing vehicle and description.
 - f. Communicate ongoing status of pursuit at regular intervals.
 - g. Activate all audio/visual warning devices until the pursuit is terminated.
 - h. Monitor all communications in order to coordinate other units.
 - i. Acknowledge approval/disapproval for pursuit from supervisor.
 - j. The officer shall terminate the pursuit when it becomes evident that the risks to life and property begin to outweigh the benefit derived from the immediate apprehension or continued pursuit of the vehicle.
2. Failure to provide this information to communications personnel may result in an immediate decision by the shift supervisor assigned to monitor the pursuit to order its termination.
(PLEAC 4.2.1 c)
 3. The primary pursuit unit shall reduce the level of pursuit to that of support or backup unit when another vehicle has been assigned primary pursuit responsibility.
 4. Any primary or backup unit sustaining damage to, or failure of essential vehicular equipment during pursuit shall not be permitted to continue in the pursuit. The unit shall notify communications so that another unit may be assigned to the pursuit.
(PLEAC 4.2.1 b)

C. Supervisor's Responsibilities During Vehicular Pursuit

1. Upon notification that a vehicular pursuit incident is in progress the Supervisor shall assume responsibility for the monitoring and control of the pursuit as it progresses.
2. The Supervisor shall continuously review the incoming data to determine whether the pursuit should be continued or terminated.

3. In controlling the pursuit incident, the Supervisor shall be responsible for coordination of the pursuit as follows:
 - a. Directing pursuit vehicle into or out of the pursuit;
 - b. Re-designation of primary, support or other backup vehicle responsibilities;
 - c. Approval or disapproval of the pursuit and coordination of pursuit tactics; and
 - d. Approval or disapproval to leave jurisdiction to continue pursuit.

4. The Supervisor may approve and assign additional backup vehicles to assist the primary and backup pursuit vehicles based on an analysis of:
 - a. The nature of the offense for which pursuit was initiated;
 - b. The number of suspects and any known propensity for violence;
 - c. The number of officers in the pursuit vehicles;
 - d. Any damage or injuries to the assigned primary and backup vehicle or officers;
 - e. The number of officers necessary to make an arrest at the conclusion of the pursuit; and
 - f. Any other clear and articulable facts that would warrant the increased hazards caused by numerous pursuit vehicles.

(PLEAC 4.2.1 d)

D. Responsibilities of Assisting Officers

1. Once the pursuit is engaged, assisting officers shall:
 - a. Use the radio (transmit) only out of absolute necessity. Assisting officers and units shall identify themselves and give the communications center a conservative estimate of the time of arrival at the scene and provide a status report as soon as possible. Officers will take into consideration the distance to travel, traffic and weather conditions.
 - b. Move into tactically advantageous positions to assist with the stop of the vehicle.

- c. Not caravan the pursuit; no more than one (1) police unit may actively pursue with exception to specific orders from the supervisor. A second vehicle may follow the pursuit to act as backup for the pursuing officer. However, safe operation is mandatory. The second vehicle may not actively pursue the suspect vehicle unless the primary pursuit vehicle becomes disabled or relinquished control.
- d. The second car shall be spaced appropriately and driven so as to allow for ample reaction time and distance in order to reduce the possibility of officer-involved accidents.
- e. Upon receipt of a termination notice, responding units shall discontinue emergency operation and return to their assigned area unless specifically requested to continue to the location under normal driving conditions.

(PLEAC 4.2.1 f)

E. Traffic Regulations During Pursuit

- 1. Each unit authorized to engage in vehicular pursuit shall be required to activate headlights and all emergency vehicle equipment prior to beginning pursuit.
- 2. Officers engaged in pursuit shall at all times drive in a manner exercising reasonable care for the safety of themselves and all other persons and property within the pursuit area.
- 3. Officers are permitted to suspend conformance with normal traffic regulations during pursuit as long as reasonable care is used when driving in a manner not otherwise permitted, and the maneuver is reasonably necessary to gain control of the suspect. Remember, all police officers engaged in a pursuit shall be guided by the applicable provisions of Title 75, in particular those relating to the privileges and responsibilities of drivers of emergency vehicles.

(PLEAC 4.2.1 e)

F. Pursuit Tactics

- 1. Unless expressly authorized by a Supervisor, pursuit shall be limited to the assigned primary and backup vehicles. Officers are not otherwise permitted to join the pursuit team, or follow the pursuit on parallel streets.
- 2. In the course of pursuit, deliberate contact between vehicles or forcing the pursued vehicle into parked cars or off of the roadway, into ditches, or other obstacles or boxing in or driving alongside the

pursued vehicle is prohibited. Reckless or hazardous driving maneuvers shall not be duplicated by any pursuing vehicles.

EXCEPTION: Ramming a vehicle, roadblocks or other means of stopping a vehicle after all other means of apprehension have been considered are prohibited unless the police officer and supervisor have reason to believe that the continued movement of the pursued vehicle would place others in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death. If it is determined that the use of a roadblock is necessary, the roadblock is to be apparent to the driver of the pursued vehicle and shall provide some means for the driver to avoid it.

(PLEAC 4.2.2 b)(PLEAC 4.2.1 g)

4. Departmental policy pertaining to use of deadly force shall be adhered to during the pursuit. Keeping in mind that all officers should be aware that the ramming, firing of weapons at moving vehicles or occupants of moving vehicles, roadblocks or other means of stopping a vehicle that involves the use of potential use of deadly force are governed by the provision of 18 PA C.S. 508 (relating to use of force in law enforcement).

a. Officers who drive police vehicles shall be given initial training and update training at least once every three years in the agency's pursuit policy and use of stop sticks.

(PLEAC 4.2.2 c)

4. Vehicles being pursued should not be passed or overtaken by the police unit as the maneuver is tactically ill-advised.

5. Officers shall not pursue suspects the wrong way on limited access highways or their associated exit or entrance ramps, except in exigent circumstances or if authorized by a supervisor.

6. Officers in unmarked police vehicles, police marked SUV's and marked police motorcycles may initiate a pursuit if the vehicle is equipped with audible and visual warning devices approved by the Department when they have probable cause to believe the suspects may be pursued according to standards outlined in this policy.

7. Operators of unmarked police vehicles, police marked SUV's and marked police motorcycles will relinquish the pursuit when a marked unit (as designated by the Department) is in a position to conduct pursuit.

8. At no time will sworn officers initiate or participate in a pursuit with non-sworn personnel in the police vehicles.

G. Personnel using Department issued "Stop Sticks" shall adhere to the

following guidelines:

1. “Stop Sticks” when properly used have the potential to save police officers and civilian lives, as well as property damage.
2. “Stop Sticks” are only to be used on motor vehicles that are cars or trucks. They are not to be used on motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), or similar vehicles.
3. “Stop Sticks” work best when used on paved surfaces.
4. Vehicle Placement:
 - a. The patrol vehicle will be placed on the side of the roadway, facing toward the pursuit with all emergency lights activated (but not headlights). The patrol vehicle may be angled slightly to narrow the roadway and force the suspect to drive over the “Stop Sticks”. If time or circumstances do not permit the above placement, the patrol unit may be positioned facing the same direction as the pursuit.
 - b. The patrol vehicle will not be occupied.
 - c. If possible, a second patrol vehicle with emergency lights activated, can be placed on the opposite side of the roadway to further create a funnel
5. Officer Position:
 - a. The officer should be 10 to 20 feet to the rear of the vehicle, if it is facing toward the pursuit, or 10 to 20 feet in front of the vehicle if it is placed facing in the same direction as the pursuit.
6. Deployment of “Stop Sticks”
 - a. The “Stop Sticks” will be pre-loaded in the black nylon sleeve with the cord reel attached in the storage position inside the trunk.
 - b. If possible, radio pursuing units that the “Stop Sticks” are being deployed.
 - c. Remove the “Stop Stick” unit along with the attached cord reel from the trunk and close the trunk, time permitting. The trunk should be closed so as to not block the visibility of the emergency lights.

- d. Time permitting, place the “Stop Stick” perpendicular to the roadway, on the shoulder and unreel the cord across the roadway to a position of safety. Do not attach the reel to yourself or wrap the line around your hand. If time does not permit the above, toss the “Stop Sticks” in front of the suspect vehicle.
- e. Time permitting, the officer should pull the “Stop Sticks” into position after the last vehicle prior to the suspect has driven over the cord.
- f. Immediately after the suspect has run over the “Stop Sticks”, if possible, the officer should pull the sticks out of the way of the following police units.
- g. After the successful use of the “Stop Sticks” the Stop Stick Pursuit Form will be completed.

(PLEAC 4.2.2 a)

H. Use of Firearms During Pursuit

- 1. Officers shall not discharge a firearm at, or from, a moving vehicle except as the ultimate measure of self-defense or the defense of another when the suspect is employing deadly force by means other than the vehicle. Department policy regarding deadly force shall be strictly followed.
- 2. Firing strictly to disable a vehicle is prohibited.
- 3. In every incident, the officer shall take into account the location of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and the potential hazard to innocent persons.

I. Termination of Pursuit

- 1. A decision to terminate pursuit may be the most rational means of preserving the lives and property of both the public, and the officer suspects engaged in pursuit. Pursuit may be terminated by the pursuing officer, the shift supervisor or the Command Officer of the Department.
- 2. Pursuit shall be immediately terminated in any of the following circumstances:
 - a. Weather or traffic conditions substantially increase the danger of pursuit beyond the worth of apprehending the suspect;

- b. The distance between the pursuit and fleeing vehicles is so great that further pursuit is futile; or
 - c. The danger posed by continued pursuit to the public, the officers or the suspect is greater than the value of apprehending the suspect(s).
 - d. The suspect's identity has been established to the point that later apprehension can be accomplished and there is no longer any need for immediate apprehension.
 - e. The pursued vehicle's location is no longer known.
3. The pursuing officer shall relay this information to communications personnel, along with any further information acquired which may assist in an arrest at a later date.
 4. If radio contact is lost, an officer may terminate the pursuit for his own safety. He shall immediately reestablish communications by the best means available with the communications center conveying location, status, and last known direction of travel of the pursued vehicle.

(PLEAC 4.2.1 i)

J. Inter-jurisdictional Pursuits

1. The pursuing officer shall notify communications when it is likely that a pursuit will continue into a neighboring jurisdiction, or across the state line.
2. The shift supervisor will advise the communications center of the approval or disapproval to proceed inter-jurisdiction and have radio communications notify the other jurisdictions of the pursuit instituted by this Department.
3. If an outside agency notifies this Department of a pursuit, the notification in itself shall not be construed to be a request to join the pursuit. Officers shall not become involved in another agency's pursuit unless specifically authorized by the supervisor. If another agency requests assistance in a pursuit and it is approved by our supervisor, the first unit to join the pursuit is designated as the backup, all other departmental units will discontinue.
4. This pursuit policy is tailor made to the perceived needs of our Township. It applies to all Haverford Township Police Department officers at all times.
5. Pursuit into a bordering state shall conform with his Department's inter-jurisdictional pursuit agreement and state law.

(PLEAC 4.2.1 h)

K. The shift supervisor shall prepare a comprehensive analysis of the pursuit, and forward it to the CO Patrol Division on Department Supplement. This report must address the following:

1. Reason the pursuit was initiated.
2. Deaths/Injuries of Police Officers.
3. Deaths/Injuries of other motorists and pedestrians.
4. Deaths/Injures of individuals in fleeing vehicle.
5. The number of police vehicles involved.
6. A detailed description of the route covered by this pursuit.
7. Approximate distance covered by pursuit.
8. Approximate time elapsed during the pursuit.
9. Identification numbers of officers involved in the pursuit.
10. Description of damage to property and any vehicles, including police vehicles, during the pursuit.
11. A list of pursuit-related offenses with which fleeing individual(s) were charged.
12. A list of any other non-pursuit-related offenses with which fleeing individual(s) were charged.
13. Whether the pursuit was voluntarily terminated by the Police Department.

Supervisors shall have the officer initiating the pursuit complete and forward to Staff Services Division, a Pennsylvania State Police Form SP7-0032 (9/99) on every vehicle pursuit. Supervisors shall review and initial this report prior to forwarding to the Staff Services Division.
(PLEAC 4.2.3)

L. Pursuit Reporting:

1. All pursuits shall be reported on the web-based Pennsylvania Police Pursuit Report System. These reports must be reported within 30 days following a pursuit. This internet reporting shall be completed by the Staff Services Division.
(PLEAC 4.2.1 j)

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE