5-09/210.12 - Aero Bureau Responsibility

An Aero Bureau unit shall attempt to become involved in every pursuit initiated by this Department or conducted in the Sheriff's Department's patrol jurisdiction. This Aero Bureau unit shall be under the command of the station/unit watch commander, who has overall responsibility for the pursuit. The Aero Bureau unit shall follow the directions of the watch commander, unless these directions jeopardize the safety of the Aero Bureau unit or ground units involved in the pursuit. In the event the Aero Bureau unit receives a directive which they cannot respond to or complete for reasons of safety, they shall immediately advise the station/unit watch commander.

At the time of initial visual contact and before engaging in the vehicle pursuit, the Aero Bureau unit shall broadcast:

- The total number of ground units visibly involved;
- The estimated vehicle speeds and traffic conditions; and
- When conditions permit, the Aero Bureau unit shall broadcast the rooftop numbers of all involved units.

Once the Aero Bureau unit is in a position to maintain visual contact with the pursued vehicle, they shall notify SCC. Radio broadcast responsibility and coordination of law enforcement activity on the ground then shifts to the Aero Bureau unit. All ground units, except the primary pursuit vehicle, and three back-up units, shall terminate all code 3 operations and obey the rules of the road. If it is not immediately clear which units are primary and back-up, the Aero Bureau unit shall designate the primary unit and the back-up units by rooftop numbers. All other units will immediately disengage from the pursuit unless specifically authorized to remain in the pursuit by the field supervisor or watch commander. It is recognized that sufficient personnel should be available to handle any tactical incident if the pursuit suddenly terminates. Although radio broadcast responsibility and tactical coordination have shifted to the Aero Bureau unit, overall command continues to rest with the station/unit watch commander.

In addition to Aero Bureau's responsibility to broadcast rooftop number of vehicles engaged in the pursuit, the watch commander may direct the Aero Bureau unit to broadcast this information when appropriate and feasible throughout the pursuit operation. Any non-designated unit which does not immediately disengage from the pursuit shall be identified by rooftop number and broadcast to the watch commander.

The Aero Bureau unit will broadcast the location of the suspect vehicle and advise ground units of upcoming traffic congestion, road hazards, suspect's actions, or any other information which may increase the margin of safety. This will not alleviate participating ground units from exercising due regard for the safety of themselves and the public.

Since the broadcast of law enforcement personnel's tactical positions could pose an officer safety risk, the Aero Bureau unit shall advise the watch commander and field units via Sheriff's radio when a news media helicopter is in the vicinity of the tactical operation.

The Aero Bureau unit shall remain with the pursuit operation, whether surveillance mode or actual pursuit, to its terminus, and shall adhere to the instructions of the watch commander and field sergeant. If the Aero Bureau unit is required to disengage, ground units shall reassume radio broadcast responsibilities for the pursuit and reassess the need to continue or terminate the operation.

Immediately upon conclusion of the operation, and when conditions permit, the Aero Bureau unit shall provide rooftop numbers for all Sheriff's vehicles in the immediate vicinity of the pursuit terminus. Authorization from either the watch commander or field sergeant shall be sought by the Aero Bureau unit prior to departing the scene.

If a watch commander or field sergeant orders the termination of a pursuit, the involved Aero Bureau unit shall discontinue further broadcasts of the pursued vehicle's location on any Sheriff's frequency. However, the Aero Bureau unit may request permission from the originating station/unit watch commander to continue monitoring the vehicle's location and notify adjoining Sheriff's stations/units and agencies that the previously pursued vehicle is entering their jurisdiction. Under MPP section 5-09/210.10, this notification is required of the watch commander; however, this task may be delegated to the Aero Bureau unit by the watch commander. If specific permission to follow the vehicle is not granted by the watch commander, the Aero Bureau unit shall terminate further attempts to follow or surveil the pursued vehicle. In no event shall the Aero Bureau unit begin rebroadcasting the location and direction of travel of the pursued vehicle without specific authorization from the originating station/unit or originating outside agency watch commander.