

5-09/210.15 - Pursuit - Vehicle Operation and Tactics

In order to minimize the likelihood of a pursuit, deputies intending to stop vehicles shall, when practical and safe, be within close proximity to the vehicle prior to activating their red light and/or siren. Some individuals, who would not otherwise flee, may attempt to evade law enforcement when given several blocks warning of an intended stop. Deputies shall use red lights and siren as required by law to close their distance to a vehicle they are attempting to stop if necessitated by law, traffic, or road conditions. Unless the intended stop becomes a pursuit as described in MPP section 5-09/210.00, notification to Sheriff's Communication Center (SCC) is not required (refer to MPP section 5-09/200.00).

Wrong-Way Traffic

As a general rule, deputies shall not pursue a vehicle on the wrong-way of a freeway, nor the wrong-way on a one-way street (against opposing traffic). In the event the pursued vehicle travels against opposing traffic, the following should be considered:

- Maintain visual contact with the suspect vehicle by driving on the correct side of the freeway or roadway;
- Request other units observe the exits available to the suspect vehicle;
- Request an Aero Bureau unit to coordinate with the ground units; and
- Notify the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and other police agencies as appropriate.

Offensive Driving Tactics

Vehicle pursuits present a significant danger to the public, Department members, pedestrians, and other users of the highway. If during a pursuit, it is evident the use of an offensive driving tactic is a safer alternative than continuing the vehicle pursuit, the watch commander may authorize the use of an offensive driving tactic by trained and certified personnel.

The following are approved offensive driving tactics:

- Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT) - A low-speed maneuver designed to cause the suspect vehicle to spin out and terminate the pursuit (see MPP section 5-09/210.17);
- Pursuit Termination Technology/Devices - A device that extends across the roadway designed to puncture the tires of the pursued vehicle, and
- Boxing-in - A tactic designed to stop a suspect's vehicle by surrounding it with law enforcement vehicles and then slowing all vehicles to a stop.

If, during a prolonged slow-speed pursuit, it is apparent that the pursued vehicle may be safely "boxed in," the watch commander may authorize this maneuver. Personnel involved shall not use this maneuver if there is a likelihood that the suspect may have a firearm. Every "boxed in" tactic creates a cross-fire situation, therefore personnel must recognize this and make adjustments as necessary. Should a suspect evade a "boxing in" maneuver, it should not generally be attempted again.

An offensive driving tactic may be deployed when the deputies and/or watch commander believe the risk of allowing the pursuit to continue poses an imminent danger of death and/or serious injury to the public. The decision to deploy an offensive driving tactic should be considered when the risk of continuing the pursuit outweighs the potential hazard created by the use of an approved offensive driving tactic. This decision shall

be based on careful consideration in light of the circumstances confronting the deputies and/or watch commander at the time of their decision. Considerations shall include:

- The exigency of the circumstances;
- The immediate action was taken to prevent harm to the public or other deputies, and
- The immediate use of an offensive driving tactic was likely to end the pursuit.

There shall be no attempt to stop the suspect vehicle by heading off, ramming, or driving alongside of the pursued vehicle while it is in motion, unless the deputy is performing an approved offensive driving tactic. Pursuits shall be primarily following actions. However, a patrol car may be used to block a suspect vehicle which has stopped or is nearly at rest following an approved offensive driving tactic when injury is unlikely, and property damage would be minimal.

Vehicle Damage

The greatest likelihood of damage to the patrol vehicle, or injury to the deputy, is from loss of control of the patrol vehicle after the approved offensive driving tactic maneuver is executed. When the technique is properly executed, damage to the vehicles should be insignificant or negligible. If the PIT is employed and damage occurs to either the patrol vehicle or the suspect vehicle, it is not considered a traffic collision. However, any damage shall be documented by the supervisor as a vehicle incident by completing the Report of Vehicle Accident or Incident (SH-AD-665) and Supervisor's Report of Incident or Damage to County Vehicle or Permittee's Vehicle (SH-R-257) forms. If an unintended collision occurs between any vehicle and any other object or person, traffic collision reporting procedures shall apply.

Deputies driving patrol vehicles equipped with supplemental restraint system airbags should be aware of the airbag system and its operation.

- Deputies are cautioned that airbags are designed to deploy at an impact angle of 35 degrees or less and at impact speeds over 14 mph into a fixed object and 28 mph into a movable object; and
- When the airbag system deploys, it inflates and deflates in less than one second and should not cause any additional loss of control; however, the deputy's vision may be impaired. After an airbag deployment, the deputy should not continue driving the vehicle other than to proceed to a safe stop. Friction or chemical burns may result from the airbag deployment, and medical treatment should be provided as necessary. The vehicle shall be towed to the unit due to the expended airbag being attached to the steering wheel.

Roadblocks

Unless absolutely necessary, and then only in the absence of another viable alternative, deputy personnel shall not use their vehicles or place anything else in the roadway as roadblocks, since this tactic has generally been found to be ineffective and counter-productive.

Pursuit Termination Technology/Devices

Department members are authorized to deploy pursuit termination technologies (e.g., spike strips) in an attempt to terminate a pursuit; when appropriate and upon notification to the primary unit (prior to the watch commander taking command) or watch commander. Only Department-authorized pursuit termination technologies may be used by qualified Department members. Assisting agencies may deploy pursuit

termination technology approved by the agency in accordance with that agency's policy, if requested by the watch commander. Training Bureau shall maintain records of any training required by this section. A list of approved pursuit termination technologies shall be maintained by Training Bureau.

Passing

There shall be no attempt by deputies to pass other field units involved in the pursuit unless the passing deputy receives specific permission from the unit to be passed.

Surveillance Mode

Surveillance mode is the authorized aerial surveillance of a suspect vehicle by an Aero Bureau unit after ground units have ceased their vehicle pursuit operation. Surveillance mode is a separate tactical operation from the preceding ground pursuit and is not considered a continuation of the pursuit. However, it must be managed with the same diligence and priority as a pursuit. The duration of surveillance mode must be constantly evaluated against the reason for the pursuit and the resources committed to the operation.

In pursuits involving an Aero Bureau unit, wherein the pursuit becomes unreasonably dangerous because of the deputy's speed, the suspect's speed or other factors, the watch commander shall order all ground units to discontinue their pursuit. The primary unit in the pursuit, the Aero Bureau unit, or any supervisor may order surveillance mode. The Aero Bureau unit shall follow the vehicle until it stops and the suspect exits the vehicle or the operation is terminated by the watch commander.

Once surveillance mode has been established, all vehicles involved in the pursuit shall cease their pursuit, discontinue their Code 3 operation, reduce their speed, and allow the Aero Bureau unit to monitor the suspect vehicle. Surveillance mode operations should be initiated as a change of tactical strategy for the purpose of increasing public safety. The Aero Bureau unit shall advise the watch commander of the rooftop number of any unit that does not immediately reduce its speed and disengage from the pursuit, when requested. If the suspect vehicle does not slow to normal traffic speeds after a reasonably short time during surveillance mode, the watch commander shall communicate with the Aero Bureau unit to determine whether public safety would be enhanced by reinitiating the pursuit or by terminating the operation. Key facts in the decision making process include the necessity of immediate apprehension outweighing the degree of danger created by the pursuit, the imminent public danger posed by the suspect and/or their dangerous driving continuing regardless of being pursued, and public safety being enhanced by the presence of emergency vehicles with Code 3 to warn bystanders and other users of the highway. If the suspect vehicle stops, ground units will be advised and a tactical containment may be initiated unless prohibited by the watch commander. Refer to MPP section 3-10/150.00, Tactical Incidents. Once the suspect vehicle has stopped, the watch commander may allow a primary and an appropriate number of back-up units to respond Code 3 to the suspect vehicle. The determination of appropriate back-up personnel will be based on a reasonable assessment of the totality of the circumstances, based on factors such as the number of suspects, severity of crime, danger to the public or personnel, weapons involved, and/or other officer safety concerns.

The watch commander, Aero Bureau unit, field supervisor, or primary unit is encouraged to employ surveillance mode as an operational tactic to allow termination of a pursuit, whether or not "unreasonably dangerous" conditions exist.