5-09/220.50 - Foot Pursuits

It is the policy of the Sheriff's Department to assertively apprehend fleeing persons in a manner that maximizes both deputy and public safety, while giving due consideration to the Department's use of force and Tactical Incidents (section 3-10/150.00) policies. Depending on the circumstances of an incident in which a suspect flees, deputies are authorized to pursue and/or coordinate a containment.

Foot pursuits are inherently dangerous and require heightened officer safety awareness, keen perception, common sense, and sound tactics. It is the Department's position that, barring extenuating circumstances, surveillance and containment are the safest tactics for apprehending fleeing persons. The safety of Department personnel and the public is paramount and shall be the overriding consideration in determining whether or not a foot pursuit shall be initiated or continued. Any doubt by participating deputies or their supervisors regarding the overall safety of any foot pursuit shall be resolved in favor of communication, coordination, surveillance, and containment rather than pursuing on foot.

Each provision of this policy is subject to emergency exceptions, such as an active shooter incident and/or any other incident where an immediate threat to human life exists. This policy may not cover every situation. Any deviation from this policy shall be rigorously examined on a case-by-case basis. However, the deputy or supervisor who deviates from this policy shall be solely responsible for explaining their actions.

Definitions

Foot Pursuit - A foot pursuit is an effort by a deputy to pursue on foot a fleeing suspect who is attempting to avoid arrest, detention, or observation. Terms such as "chasing to follow," "moving containment," or other terms describing similar dynamic foot pursuits shall be subject to the provisions of this policy.

Partner Splitting - During a foot pursuit, "partner splitting" occurs when more than a brief loss of visual contact, distance, or obstacle separates partners to a degree that they cannot immediately assist each other should a confrontation take place.

For the purposes of this policy, "partner splitting" does not pertain to a lone deputy moving to and/or taking up a static containment position.

PROCEDURE

One Deputy Foot Pursuits

One deputy foot pursuits and the splitting of partners during foot pursuits present additional dangers to the deputies involved. Before engaging in a foot pursuit, the deputy must weigh the dangers of the pursuit against the necessity to apprehend.

Should the decision to initiate a one deputy foot pursuit occur, the deputy shall adhere to the following additional guidelines, unless circumstances require deviation from the guidelines:

- Do not attempt to close the distance and apprehend, but maintain visual contact only;
- Do not continue to pursue if visual confirmation is compromised;

- Do not chase a suspect into a building, structure, confined space, wooded, or otherwise isolated area; and

- Terminate pursuit once a containment is established and the suspect is within the containment.

No deputy or supervisor shall be criticized or disciplined for a decision not to engage in a foot pursuit if the deputy or supervisor assessed that the risk exceeded what is reasonably acceptable under the provisions of this policy.

Multiple Deputy Foot Pursuits

Multiple deputy, foot pursuits can be tactically appropriate and effective. Should partner splitting occur for any reason, deputies shall be subject to the provisions of the "one deputy foot pursuits" section.

Initiating Deputies' Responsibilities

Deputy personnel initiating a foot pursuit shall broadcast the following information over the SCC dispatch frequency within the first few steps or feet, or as soon as practical and tactically safe:

- Unit identifier or name of deputy in pursuit;

- Suspect location and direction;

- Reason for the foot pursuit;

- Suspect description; and

- Whether or not the suspect is armed, if known.

Barring extenuating circumstances, if a deputy is unable to promptly and successfully broadcast this information, the foot pursuit shall be terminated and containment immediately established. The initiating deputy shall be in field command and bears operational responsibility for the foot pursuit unless relieved by a supervisor.

If the deputy is assigned and/or working at Transit Services Bureau, Metrolink Bureau, Parks Bureau, Court Services Division, Custody Services Divisions, or County Services Bureau, the information shall be broadcast using their home radio frequency. Desk personnel shall coordinate communications between the deputies involved and the nearest field resource (LASD patrol station or police agency). If a unit’s home radio frequency is not monitored by SCC, their unit’s desk personnel shall relay the information over the SCC Access channel.

Terminating a Foot Pursuit

Unless there are exigent circumstances, such as an immediate threat to the safety of Department personnel or civilians, deputies shall not engage in or continue a foot pursuit under the following conditions:

- If a deputy is unable to properly and successfully broadcast the required information, an

acknowledgement is not received, or communication is lost with SCC;

- If the suspect enters a building, structure, confined space, wooded, or otherwise isolated area without sufficient backup and containment of the area;
- If the physical condition of a deputy renders him or her incapable of controlling the suspect if apprehended;
- If visual contact of the suspect is lost; or
- If deputies are unsure of their location or direction of travel.

Field Sergeant or Supervisor Responsibilities

As with any tactical incident, the sergeant or supervisor does not have to be physically present to assert control over the situation and may order the termination of the pursuit based upon information received. In subsequent reviews for policy compliance, supervisory personnel shall be prepared to clearly articulate the circumstances which supported their decision to terminate, or to allow the continuation of a foot pursuit.

The sergeant or supervisor shall immediately respond to the foot pursuit, oversee post-foot pursuit discipline, and assert control as needed. The sergeant or supervisor shall ensure compliance with all Department policies, specifically those relating to the use of force.

Watch Commander or Supervising Lieutenant Responsibilities

The watch commander or supervising lieutenant shall be in overall command of any foot pursuit operation. This command responsibility shall include all Department personnel involved in the foot pursuit. If the supervising lieutenant is not available, command responsibility shall be assigned to the next available individual who is below them in the rank structure.

The watch commander or supervising lieutenant is responsible for ensuring that an available supervisor is assigned to respond to the foot pursuit to oversee post-foot pursuit discipline and assert control as needed. The assigned supervisor shall ensure compliance with all Department policies, specifically those related to the use of force.

The station/unit watch commander shall immediately take command either by establishing "cold line" communications with the SCC watch sergeant or via station/unit transmitting capabilities. The station/unit watch commander shall make a decision based upon their assessment of the information received regarding the continuation or termination of the foot pursuit. In subsequent reviews for policy compliance, the watch commander shall be prepared to clearly articulate the circumstances which supported their decision.

Should the watch commander be in the field during a foot pursuit, they may authorize the watch sergeant to assume operational control of the incident from the desk or use radio communication directly from the field. This does not alleviate the watch commander's overall responsibility for the foot pursuit.

SCC Responsibility

Upon the initiation of a foot pursuit by a deputy, SCC shall immediately place the broadcasting deputy on the duplex patch and request an Aero Bureau Unit. Coordination of resources to assist the deputy is of paramount importance.

If deputy personnel not assigned to a patrol station initiate a foot pursuit, and the pursuit is within an area patrolled by the Sheriff's Department, the SCC watch sergeant shall notify the watch commander of the nearest station. If the pursuit is not in an area patrolled by the Sheriff's Department, SCC shall coordinate a response and notify the police agency who patrols the area where the pursuit is taking place. The sergeant or lieutenant from the unit of assignment of the pursuing deputy shall identify themselves via radio and continue command of the incident. If no supervisor is on scene, the watch commander of the closest station shall assume immediate command of the operation.

Detective Division Personnel or Sworn Non-Uniformed Personnel

Certain non-uniformed sworn personnel actively engage in surveillance and fugitive apprehension operations. This policy does not apply to counter-surveillance or detection avoidance activities by suspects or persons under surveillance. The policy does apply to situations in which a suspect is actively fleeing from immediate arrest, detention, or continued observation by such personnel. Said personnel shall take into account the fact that they are in plain clothes and often not easily identified as deputies, before engaging in a foot pursuit. If a decision is made to engage in a foot pursuit, personnel shall adhere to this policy and the Tactical Incidents (section 3-10/150.00) policy.

Should non-uniformed sworn personnel become involved in a foot pursuit, the team's designated radio operator shall advise SCC via a SCC-monitored frequency. SCC shall notify the watch commander of the nearest station who shall facilitate the response of assisting units. The team's sergeant or lieutenant on scene shall identify themselves via radio and continue command of the incident. If no team supervisor is on scene, the watch commander of the closest station shall assume command of the operation.

Evaluation and Reporting

All foot pursuits shall be debriefed. It shall be the responsibility of the watch commander or lieutenant supervising the foot pursuit to conduct a debriefing of the incident with all personnel involved. The debriefing may be conducted by the sergeant or supervisor and discussed with the watch commander or supervising lieutenant who shall document the debriefing in the foot pursuit database. The watch commander or supervising lieutenant shall ensure that sergeant supervisors discuss debriefed foot pursuits at regular unit briefings. The foot pursuit database printout shall be forwarded to the unit commander for their review. A foot pursuit evaluation form shall be completed on all foot pursuits and submitted to the unit commander for review within 60 days. **If the foot pursuit package is part of a force investigation, force package due dates will apply**. A determination shall be made regarding whether the foot pursuit was within policy. The unit commander shall write their "Disposition" at the bottom of the form. The unit commander shall forward the Foot Pursuit Evaluation Form, along with supporting documents and audio files, to their respective division for final review.

If the foot pursuit is an integral part of a force or shooting incident being handled by the Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) Force/Shooting Response Team, the Executive Force Review Committee (EFRC) shall be responsible for determining whether or not the foot pursuit was within policy. The watch commander or supervising lieutenant shall complete the Department's foot pursuit evaluation form and immediately submit the form and other pertinent documents and audio files to the IAB Force/Shooting Response Team handling the incident.