20-001 Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT)

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

PURSUIT INTERVENTION TECHNIQUE (PIT)

PURPOSE

This Field Operations Directive is to provide deputies with guidelines and reporting procedures related to the use of the Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT), also referred to as the PIT maneuver. Pursuits are inherently dangerous and can place law enforcement officers and the community at risk. The PIT is a tool available to law enforcement to bring a potentially dangerous vehicle pursuit to an end. It is defined as the forced rotational stop of a non-compliant suspect's vehicle. The PIT maneuver is not intended as a replacement for a high-risk traffic stop, but is an option which can be utilized in specific situations by trained and certified sworn personnel.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Department for deputy personnel to utilize the PIT when the imminent danger caused by the suspect's actions and/or blatant disregard for the safety of motorists and pedestrians outweighs the potential risk of employing the PIT. The PIT is considered legal intervention. As defined by the Highway Patrol Manual section 110.5, Chapter 2-17, a legal intervention is an intentional act, in which injury or damage is caused by law enforcement intervention, usually resulting in apprehension or an attempt to apprehend.

PROCEDURE

The PIT may only be utilized by trained and certified sworn personnel when **all** of the following conditions exist:

- The risk of harm to deputies or the public outweighs the potential risk of implementing the PIT;
- Other reasonable means of apprehension (tire deflation devices, etc.) are not practical or were ineffective;
- A third unit has joined the pursuit and is in a position to support the primary and secondary units;
- The speed of both the primary (radio car) and the suspect vehicle is 35 miles per hour (mph) or less; and
- The primary unit's watch commander has given approval.

Once the watch commander approves the PIT maneuver, a PIT trained, and certified deputy shall take the primary position in the pursuit when feasible. Once a third unit joins the pursuit, the PIT trained deputy may

utilize the PIT on the suspect's vehicle whenever that deputy decides it would be both effective and safe. Once approval has been granted, the decision to employ the PIT remains with the primary unit involved unless withdrawn or canceled by the watch commander.

A significant concern for the deputy utilizing the PIT is the location. Site selection for the PIT is critical to safely and effectively employ the technique. In an effort to decrease the probability of injury or property damage, the following factors, if applicable, should be considered when selecting a PIT location:

- The presence of congested traffic and/or proximity to pedestrians;
- Road hazards, blind curves, nearby structures, or buildings;
- The nature of the surrounding area (residential or commercial); and
- When practical, the deputy may coordinate with Aero Bureau.

Additional Considerations

Unless exigent circumstances exist, the PIT shall not be employed on:

- Pursued vehicles traveling in excess of 35 mph;
- Vehicles where the suspect is known to be armed with a firearm;
- Vehicles transporting hazardous materials;
- Significantly heavier vehicles (i.e., buses, motorhomes, semi-trucks); and/or
- Vehicles with a high center of gravity.

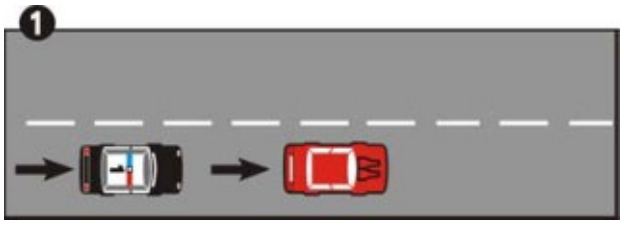
Deputy personnel should be aware that employing the PIT will cause them to be in close proximity to the suspect. In addition, implementing the **PIT on a motorcycle or vehicle with less than four wheels is considered deadly force**. Therefore, it should **only** be used on a motorcycle or vehicle with less than four wheels **when deadly force is justified**.

Employment of PIT

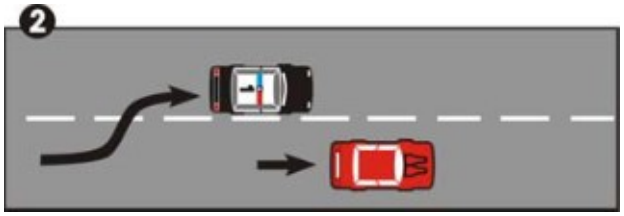
Prior to the PIT maneuver, the deputy should broadcast via Sheriff's radio their intention of conducting the PIT, to allow the second and third unit to adjust their positioning and distance for post-PIT tactics.

The PIT shall not be used when the speed of either vehicle is in excess of 35 mph. Higher speeds can result in over-rotation of the suspect vehicle. Conduct the PIT in the following order:

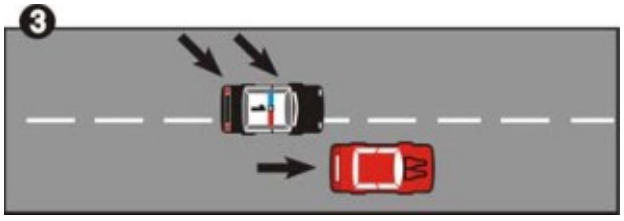
The patrol vehicle approaches the suspect vehicle from the rear (fig. 1).



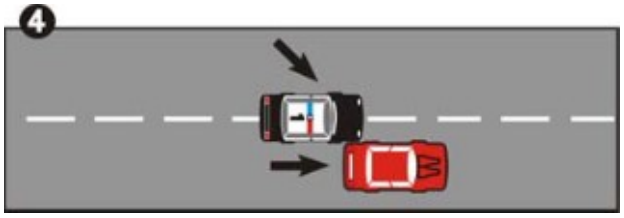
The deputy determines from which side to perform the PIT, accelerates, and matches the speed of the suspect vehicle (fig. 2). **The deputy can PIT from either side**; however, contact should generally occur on the side of the suspect vehicle with the most available roadway.



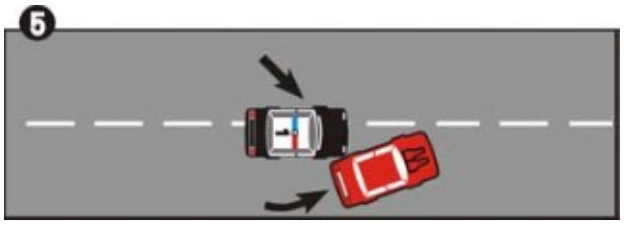
The deputy accelerates until the front quarter panel of the patrol vehicle is even with the rear quarter panel of the suspect vehicle (fig. 3). There should be minimal spacing between the two vehicles in order to reduce any ramming effect.



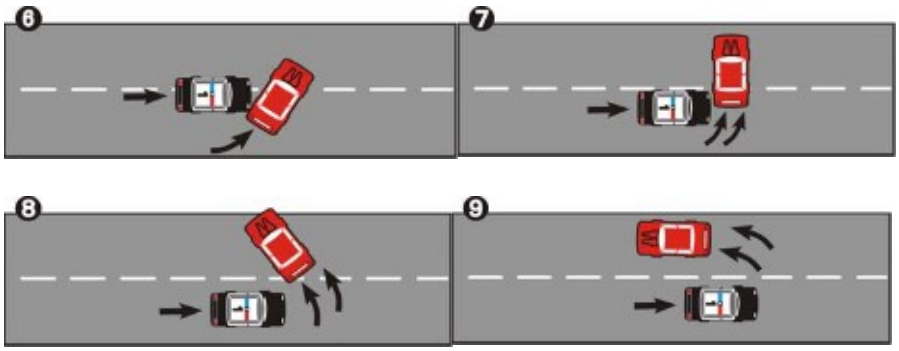
Once in position, the deputy steers the patrol vehicle until the front quarter panel makes **gentle** contact with the rear quarter panel of the suspect vehicle (fig. 4).



Once contact has been made, the deputy turns the steering wheel approximately ¼ to ½ turn toward the suspect vehicle while smoothly accelerating the patrol vehicle if necessary (fig. 5). The suspect vehicle should rotate to the side on which the PIT contact was made (i.e., if the PIT contact was made on the driver's side, the vehicle will rotate toward the driver's side).



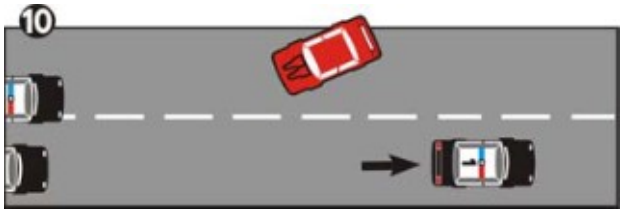
The PIT maneuver causes the rear wheels of the suspect vehicle to lose traction, causing the vehicle to spin from the rear approximately 180 degrees (figs. 6-9). The deputy must keep a firm, steady grip on their steering wheel and resist the urge to swerve or attempt to avoid the suspect vehicle once it has begun to rotate.



Once the rear of the suspect vehicle has been moved past 25-30 degrees from the original path of travel, the rotation is irreversible. The suspect vehicle will continue to rotate regardless of any action taken by its driver, including counter-steering, braking, or accelerating.

The natural momentum of the suspect vehicle should carry it out of the patrol vehicle's path of travel. However, as the suspect vehicle rotates in front of the patrol vehicle, there may be secondary contact between the front of the patrol vehicle and the side of the suspect vehicle. This contact is usually minor and should not cause the patrol vehicle to lose control.

As the suspect vehicle rotates, the deputy should gently accelerate out of its path and avoid stopping in a potential crossfire situation. The second and third units should approach the suspect vehicle (fig. 10).



After a successful deployment of the PIT maneuver, the second and third units in the pursuit may use, but are not limited to, the following options to detain the suspect. The coordination of these options shall be conducted over the duplex patch, and the chosen option should be based on the totality of the circumstances. The following options do not require a supervisor's approval:

Modified Felony Traffic Stop

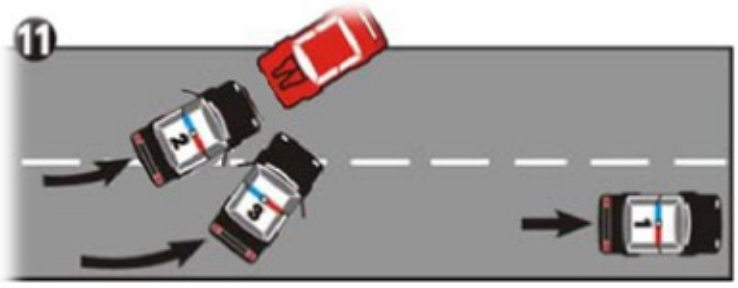
A modified felony traffic stop is an option where the second and third units position themselves in a “V” formation approximately 20 feet in front of the suspect’s vehicle. This configuration will help prevent a crossfire situation. The suspect(s) can then be ordered to exit the vehicle, one at a time, and directed to positions which increase the tactical advantage for deputies prior to being detained.

Deputies should continually evaluate their surroundings for suitable cover in the event a suspect attempts to continue driving their vehicle.

Pinning

The goal of pinning a suspect’s vehicle is to deter or prevent the suspect from continuing to use their vehicle to evade apprehension after a PIT maneuver is successfully employed. Pinning a suspect’s vehicle is first achieved by the second unit positioning their patrol car “headlights to headlights” within one to three feet of the front of the suspect’s vehicle.

The third unit then positions their patrol car within one to three feet of the suspect’s vehicle at an offset angle to the second unit, between the front quarter panel and the front vehicle door (passenger or driver’s side). (Fig.



11)

Deputies should then move to the rear of their patrol cars or a more advantageous position of cover, avoid crossfire, and increase distance and reaction time to threats posed by the suspect. The suspect(s) can then be ordered to exit the vehicle one at a time and directed to positions that increase the tactical advantage for deputies prior to being detained.

Deadly Force

Follow units are not authorized to intentionally ram or strike a patrol car against a suspect’s vehicle unless the suspect has met the threshold for deadly force. If the threshold for deadly force is met, the following deputies are authorized to ram or strike their patrol car against the suspect’s vehicle.

Ramming is considered deadly force, which should be based on independent justification of the driver deputy based on an imminent, capable threat by the suspect and objectively reasonable actions.

If the suspect vehicle is not immobilized after the PIT maneuver has been implemented, deputy personnel shall advise the watch commander of this and resume the pursuit. The watch commander shall ensure all PIT conditions exist prior to attempting additional PIT maneuvers.

Vehicle Damage vs. Traffic Crash

The greatest likelihood of damage to the patrol vehicle, or injury to the deputy, is from the loss of control of the patrol vehicle after the maneuver is executed. When the technique is properly executed, damage to the vehicles should be minimal but reportable. It is not considered a traffic crash, if any injury, or damage occurs to the patrol vehicle, suspect's vehicle, or other property including a third-party vehicle which is a direct result of the PIT maneuver or legal intervention. Contact Traffic Services Detail with any questions while determining if the incident should be documented as a Traffic Crash Report (CHP-555).

Any damage will be documented by the supervisor as a vehicle incident, and 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-AD 257) shall be completed.

If injury to any person or substantial property damage occurs as a result of the PIT maneuver, the station/unit traffic supervisor and Traffic Services Detail shall be notified immediately in accordance with MPP section 5-05/010.00, Traffic Collision Response Team.

Deputies driving patrol vehicles equipped with supplemental restraint system airbags should be aware of the airbag system and its operation. The effects of airbag deployment may cause friction burns, respiratory irritation, and visual impairment. This may impair the driver's control of the patrol vehicle. After an airbag deployment, the deputy should not continue to drive the vehicle, except to bring it to a safe stop. The vehicle shall be towed to a repair facility due to the expended airbag being attached to the steering wheel.

Reporting

Personnel who utilize the PIT shall document their actions on an Incident Report (SH-R-49) or Supplemental Report (SH-R-77). The following information shall be included:

- Rationale for PIT utilization;
- Name of the watch commander authorizing the PIT;
- The approximate speed of both the primary pursuit vehicle and the suspect's vehicle at the time the PIT was employed;
- Location and rationale for site selection where the PIT was employed (including the direction of travel);
- Location where the pursuit was terminated;
- Number of PIT attempts;
- Injuries to suspects, bystanders, other motorists, or deputy personnel;
- Any damage caused by the PIT (to property or vehicles); and
- All information relevant to the incident.

The watch commander, having overall command of the pursuit, shall ensure all documentation by involved personnel is completed and submitted within ten days in a timely manner. The watch commander shall also ensure the Pursuit Evaluation Form (SH-R-454) is completed and submitted to the unit commander for review. In addition, the watch commander shall submit a memorandum to the unit commander detailing the use of the PIT to determine whether it was utilized within Department policy. The following information shall be included in the memorandum:

- Rationale for the utilization of the PIT;
- Name(s) of the trained and certified deputy personnel that utilized the PIT;

- List of other reasonable means of apprehension, pursuit termination techniques or devices (i.e. tire deflation devices, etc.) that were utilized, attempted, or considered;
- Location/site selection of PIT employment;
- Number of PIT attempts;
- Injuries to suspects, bystanders, other motorists, or deputy personnel;
- Any damage as a result of the PIT (to property or vehicles); and
- All information relevant to the incident.

Training and Certification

Sworn personnel are required to complete PIT maneuver training through a POST-approved Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) to employ the PIT during a pursuit. Sworn patrol personnel not trained and certified shall not employ the PIT maneuver. Watch commanders should refer to the in-service roster code of “P” for personnel who are designated as and certified PIT trained.