

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE: September 18, 1995	NO. 600-04
REFERENCE: Supersedes General Order 600-04, Dated, January 12, 1995	

SUBJECT: MOTOR VEHICLE PURSUITS

POLICY

The Houston Police Department places the highest value upon the life and safety of its officers and the public at large. These values must be accommodated within a police officer's duty to apprehend persons who have committed or are committing a violation of the law. The methods the department establishes to enforce the laws are intended to minimize the risk of injury to officers and citizens alike.

The Texas Motor Vehicle law states, "The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle will drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and is responsible for the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others."

DEFINITION

Motor Vehicle Pursuit. A motor vehicle pursuit occurs when an officer in a police vehicle attempts to apprehend a suspect in another motor vehicle. In this situation, the suspect is exhibiting one of the following types of conduct:

- a. A willful disregard for his safety or the safety of others in an attempt to avoid arrest.
- b. Compliance with the speed limit, but refusal to obey the officer's repeated signal to stop.

1 AUTHORIZED PURSUITS

Officers will only initiate or continue a pursuit when all the following are true:

- a. There is reasonable suspicion that the suspect has or is committing a violation of the law.
- b. The police vehicle is believed to be in sound mechanical condition, including but not limited to brakes, steering and police radio systems.

- c. Existing weather, roadway, and traffic conditions permit.

Officers must constantly evaluate the risk involved in initiating or continuing a pursuit. When there is a clear and unreasonably dangerous hazard to the officer or other persons, a pursuit should not be initiated. If a pursuit is already in progress, it should be discontinued. Whenever a pursuit is initiated, the police vehicle's emergency lights and siren will be activated and will remain in use during the pursuit.

Vehicles Eligible to Engage in Pursuits

Only police vehicles equipped with emergency lights and sirens will participate in the pursuit of a fleeing vehicle.

Wagons and three-wheeled motorcycles will not engage in pursuits.

Vehicles transporting prisoners, witnesses, suspects, complainants, or other non-police personnel will not engage in pursuits.

A pursuit initiated by a two-wheeled motorcycle will be assigned to the first arriving four-wheeled, marked unit. Officers in unmarked police vehicles who reasonably suspect that a criminal offense has occurred and that immediate action is warranted, may attempt to follow a fleeing vehicle until a marked police unit with operable emergency equipment arrives to initiate the pursuit.

2 RESTRICTIONS

Officers will NOT engage in the following conduct:

- a. Pursue a fleeing vehicle by driving the wrong way on a freeway.
- b. Pursue a fleeing vehicle while operating any vehicle without emergency equipment.

- c. Drive along the side of or in front of a fleeing vehicle in an attempt to force the vehicle from the roadway.
- d. Bump or ram a fleeing vehicle in an attempt to force it from the roadway.
- e. Pursue a fleeing vehicle if the primary unit, on-scene police helicopter, or any supervisor orders the pursuit discontinued.

- b. The primary unit is unable to continue the pursuit, and the dispatcher has been informed that the unit is terminating its involvement. Then the secondary unit becomes the primary unit.

3 NOTIFYING DISPATCHER

Officers initiating a pursuit will notify the dispatcher that a pursuit situation exists. All other officers will immediately refrain from non-emergency radio transmissions. The information transmitted to the dispatcher should include:

- Unit number
- Present location
- Where the pursuit began
- Direction of travel
- Reason(s) for the pursuit
- Description of the fleeing vehicle (e.g., make, model, color, license-plate number)
- Description and number of occupants in the fleeing vehicle
- Estimated speed of the fleeing vehicle

4 PARTICIPATING UNITS

When notified of a pursuit, the dispatcher will designate the initial pursuing vehicle as the primary unit. A secondary unit and a field supervisor unit will also be designated by the dispatcher. These units will be the only police vehicles to pursue the fleeing vehicle, unless the field supervisor approves additional units. A field supervisor will approve additional units in the following situations:

- a. There is not a sufficient number of officers in the primary and secondary units to safely arrest the suspect.

5 POLICE HELICOPTER

The dispatcher will assign a police helicopter to all police pursuits. If there is no helicopter in service, the dispatcher will contact the Helicopter Division to dispatch a helicopter to the scene. When a police helicopter is involved in a pursuit, the following procedures will be adhered to:

- a. When the helicopter crew has informed the dispatcher that the suspect vehicle is in view, the ground units will reduce their speed but maintain use of their emergency equipment.
- b. The helicopter, under the direction of the field supervisor, will assume control of the pursuit and will transmit the suspect vehicle's location and approximate speed.
- c. To aid in the coordination of a pursuit, the helicopter crew will relay roof numbers of the involved police vehicles to the dispatcher.

6 FIELD SUPERVISOR

The designated field supervisor will:

- a. Be in command of the pursuit.
- b. Monitor all radio communications related to the pursuit and ensure only authorized units participate in the pursuit.
- c. Order any response which is necessary, appropriate, and within department policy to conclude the pursuit.
- d. Become involved in the pursuit if in close proximity, provided the supervisor's police vehicle has emergency equipment.

At the conclusion of every pursuit, the supervisor will go to the scene and will take command.

The *Houston Police Department Vehicle Pursuit* form will be completed at the conclusion of each pursuit by the supervisor assigned to the pursuit. This form will be completely filled out and submitted, regardless of the duration of the pursuit. The completed form will be immediately faxed to the Command Center Division and a copy will be kept by the division. The original form will be forwarded through the chain of command to the division's assistant chief.

7 STOPPING TECHNIQUES

The following stopping techniques may be used, if necessary, provided they have been authorized by the field supervisor:

- a. **Standard Roadblocks.** Barricades or other obstructions placed across a roadway to stop or prevent the escape of a fleeing vehicle. Under no circumstance will officers use private or occupied vehicles in a roadblock.
- b. **Rolling Roadblocks.** Moving police units placed in front of and behind the fleeing vehicle in an attempt to stop it. This method will only be used if the suspect is not speeding but is refusing to stop.
- c. **Tire Deflation Devices.** Devices such as Stingers and Stop-Sticks designed to cause the controlled deflation of a fleeing vehicle's tires.

Tire deflation devices will only be deployed by supervisors who have been certified by the Training Division to use such devices. Deflation devices must be utilized in accordance with current department training and procedures. The Training Division will conduct all deflation device training.

8 INTERJURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS

The Emergency Communications Division, with the approval of the field supervisor, will notify outside agencies when this department is involved in a pursuit in their jurisdiction. The person notifying the other agency will specify whether the call is a request for assistance or a courtesy notification with no participation requested.

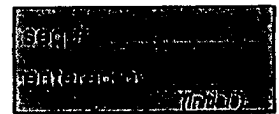
Officers will not become involved in another agency's pursuit unless specifically authorized by a field supervisor, or unless it is clear that the other agency's unit is unable to request assistance, or the emergency nature of the situation dictates the need for assistance. In these instances, all departmental pursuit policies are in effect.



Sam Nuchia
Chief of Police

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT VEHICLE PURSUIT

Fax this form to the Command Center at 247-4904 as soon as it's complete.
Forward the original through your chain of command to your Assistant Chief.



Command Center use only

Form completed by: _____
PRINT name rank work phone shift hours & days off

CHASE DESCRIPTION

PURSUIT DATE: ____/____/____ START TIME: ____ (military time) END TIME: ____ (military time)

START LOCATION: _____

END LOCATION: _____

LENGTH OF CHASE

(est. miles)

HIGHEST SPEED

(mph)

TRAFFIC CONDITION: none light medium heavy (circle one)

ACCIDENT INFORMATION

Was a collision involved in this chase? Yes No

Describe Who Involved: (circle a number)

- 1 = suspect & citizen
- 2 = suspect & fixed object
- 3 = HPD & citizen
- 4 = HPD & fixed object
- 5 = HPD & suspect (accidental)
- 6 = HPD & suspect (intentional)
- 7 = HPD & HPD
- 8 = HPD & other law enforcement
- 9 = suspect & other law enforcement
- 10 = multiple accidents: describe in 'comments'
- 11 = other: describe in 'comments'

	Injuries	Deaths
HPD	_____	_____
Other Agency	_____	_____
In Pursued Vehicle	_____	_____
In Private Vehicle	_____	_____
Pedestrians	_____	_____
other	_____	_____

Total estimated property damage due to collision(s): \$ _____ (including vehicles)

OFFICERS INVOLVED

PRIMARY UNIT: Marked / Unmarked / Motorcycle / other _____ Unit #: _____ Shop #: _____

driver _____
name empl# age sex rank division yrs. HPD yrs. patrol

passenger _____
name empl# age sex rank division yrs. HPD yrs. patrol

SECONDARY UNIT: Marked / Unmarked / Motorcycle / other _____ Unit #: _____ Shop #: _____

driver _____
name empl# age sex rank division yrs. HPD yrs. patrol

passenger _____
name empl# age sex rank division yrs. HPD yrs. patrol

PRIMARY SUPV: Marked / Unmarked / Motorcycle / other _____ Unit #: _____ Shop #: _____

driver _____
name empl# age sex rank division yrs. HPD yrs. patrol

SECONDARY SUPV: Marked / Unmarked / Motorcycle / other _____ Unit #: _____ Shop #: _____

driver _____
name empl# age sex rank division yrs. HPD yrs. patrol

List other unit numbers involved: _____

Did primary supervisor make the scene? Yes No If no, explain: _____

Was HPD helicopter involved? Yes No If so, unit # _____ How long until Fox involved?: _____

OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

- Agency _____
- 1 = initiated pursuit / HPD joined
 - 2 = joined in HPD pursuit
 - 3 = initiated pursuit / HPD assumed
 - 4 = assumed pursuit from HPD

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HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT VEHICLE PURSUIT

page 2

REASON FOR CHASE

How did the primary unit become aware of the reason for this chase?

(circle one (1) number)

- 1 = on-view
- 2 = dispatcher
- 3 = info from citizen
- 4 = crime analysis bulletin
- 5 = other: describe in 'comments'

What was the APPARENT reason this chase began?

(from the officer's point of view)

(circle one (1) number)

- 1 = traffic violation
- 2 = traffic warrant(s)
- 3 = possession of illegal drugs
- 4 = hit & run
- 5 = DWI or DUID
- 6 = believed to be a stolen vehicle
- 7 = veh. occupant has misd. warrant(s)
- 8 = veh. occupant has felony warrant(s)
- 9 = other felony crime
- 10 = other misdemeanor crime
- 11 = other: describe in 'comments'

What turned out to be the REAL reason this chase began?

(from the suspect's point of view)

(circle one (1) number)

- 1 = traffic violation
- 2 = traffic warrant(s)
- 3 = possession of illegal drugs
- 4 = hit & run
- 5 = DWI or DUID
- 6 = driving a stolen vehicle
- 7 = veh. occupant has misd. warrant(s)
- 8 = veh. occupant has felony warrant(s)
- 9 = other felony crime
- 10 = other misdemeanor crime
- 11 = other: describe in 'comments'

ROAD CONDITION	1 = dry	2 = wet	3 = muddy	4 = icy	5 = other	(circle one (1) number for each)
WEATHER	1 = clear	2 = rainy	3 = foggy	4 = other		
LIGHTING	1 = sunny	2 = cloudy	3 = dawn/dusk	4 = street lights	5 = dark	6 = other

SUSPECT'S ACTIONS DURING CHASES

(check all that apply)

- speeding
- ran stop sign/light
- weaving
- drove without lights
- drove wrong way
- drove off road
- intentionally rammed vehicle(s)
- other significant action: put in 'comments'

FIREARMS INFORMATION

discharged by whom (check all that apply)	# shot Injured	# shot Killed
<input type="checkbox"/> HPD	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Agency	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Susp. Veh. Driver	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Susp. Veh. Pass.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizen	_____	_____

Was there a firearm in the pursued vehicle? Yes No

WHO or WHAT ENDED THIS CHASE?

(circle one (1) number)

- 1 = suspect voluntarily stopped
- 2 = suspect in a collision (accidental)
- 3 = suspect in a collision (intentional)
- 4 = suspect lost control (not caused by a collision)
- 5 = suspect abandoned vehicle & ran
- 6 = suspect boxed in (or roadblock)
- 7 = suspect escaped in vehicle
- 8 = terminated by primary unit
- 9 = terminated by primary supervisor
- 10 = terminated by other supervisor
- 11 = terminated by HPD helicopter
- 12 = tire deflation device used (e.g., STINGER)
- 13 = ended by other agency: describe in 'comments'
- 14 = other: describe in 'comments'

ARREST(S) and CHARGE(S)

Driver: race _____ sex _____ age _____
 arrested _____ escaped _____ (circle one)

Number of Passengers (excluding driver)

adult(s) _____ juvenile(s) _____

Charges filed: _____

HPD Case #: _____

SIGNATURES

 Field Supervisor payroll # _____ date ____/____/____

 Captain payroll # _____ date ____/____/____

 Lieutenant payroll # _____ date ____/____/____

 Assistant Chief payroll # _____ date ____/____/____

COMMENTS (describe 'other' entries, etc.)