



<i>Subject:</i> Vehicular Pursuits		<i>General Order Number:</i> 10.05
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Chapter 10

A. Policy

Vehicular pursuit of fleeing suspects presents a danger to the public as well as those involved in the pursuit. It is the policy of the Stark County Park District Ranger Department to protect all persons' lives to the extent possible when enforcing the law. To effect this obligation, the Ranger Department narrowly regulates the manner in which a vehicular pursuit is undertaken and performed.

Rangers shall interpret this policy in the more restrictive manner, citing caution, if, for any reason, this directive does not offer clear guidance for a specific set of circumstances.

B. Definitions

1. Vehicular Pursuit: An active attempt by a ranger in an authorized, marked vehicle to apprehend the occupant(s) of a moving motor vehicle who takes evasive action to avoid apprehension. Rangers involved in pursuit must continuously operate overhead lights and sirens.
2. Authorized Emergency Vehicle: A vehicle of this agency equipped with operable emergency equipment as designated by state law.
3. Primary Unit: The police unit immediately following the suspect vehicle at a reasonable distance and that assumes primary control of the pursuit.
4. Support Unit: Any police unit that becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance.
5. Trail or Trailing: The unauthorized following of a pursuit at any distance, to include paralleling, intercepting, or tracking.

6. Caravanning: Direct participation in, or following of, a pursuit by emergency vehicles other than the primary and authorized secondary units.
7. Initiation of Pursuit: The decision to initiate pursuit must be based on the pursuing ranger's conclusion that the immediate danger to the public created by the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public, should the suspect remain at large.
8. Violent Felony: A known or suspected crime in which the force attempted or used against a person was deadly or likely to cause serious physical harm as defined by the Ohio Revised Code. The crimes include murder, manslaughter, aggravated robbery, rape, sexual battery, arson, kidnapping, aggravated burglary, felonious assault on a law enforcement officer with a deadly weapon, and felonious assault on a law enforcement officer resulting in serious physical harm. An officer having to move from the path of a fleeing vehicle or incidental contact between the fleeing vehicle and a police vehicle does not constitute a violent felony for purposes of this order. Given the totality of the circumstances, the controlling supervisor shall determine if the pursued vehicle committed a violent felony pursuant to this order.
9. Controlling Supervisor: The supervisor that assumes all the responsibilities associated with the management of a pursuit, including pursuit initiation, continuation, and termination. The controlling supervisor shall be the immediate supervisor of the ranger initiating the pursuit. If the immediate supervisor of the ranger initiating the pursuit is unavailable, the supervisor assigned to the geographical area in which the pursuit was initiated shall be the controlling supervisor. If a supervisor initiates a pursuit, the next higher ranking supervisor will be the controlling supervisor. If there is not a higher ranking supervisor on duty, another on duty supervisor shall assume the responsibilities of controlling supervisor. If the only supervisor on-duty initiates a pursuit, the supervisor will assume the dual role of controlling supervisor and pursuing ranger, citing caution and the more restrictive interpretation of this policy in his/her decision to continue or terminate the pursuit.
10. Self-Dispatch: A term used to describe the actions of rangers taking it upon themselves to respond to a scene or incident without being requested by dispatch and not informing dispatch of the response to assist.
11. Pursuit Termination: Occurs when the pursuing ranger advises dispatch they are discontinuing the pursuit or when ordered to do so by a supervisor, and returns to normal vehicle operation, deactivates emergency lights and sirens, and changes direction away from the offender's last known location. The pursuing ranger must consider, but not be limited to, the following factors in determining whether to initiate or terminate a pursuit:
 - a. performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle;
 - b. condition and topography of the road surface;
 - c. amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area;
 - d. weather conditions (ie. rain, snow, etc.);
 - e. time of day;
 - f. light conditions (day/night);

- g. location of neighborhoods and schools; and,
- h. familiarity with the area and ability to communicate the direction of the pursuit;
- i. if the level of danger to life outweighs the need for immediate apprehension. Examples include the pursued driver not attempting to slow for red lights or stop signs, intentionally driving left of center, driving the wrong way on roadways, or blatant disregard for the safety of other vehicles or pedestrians.

C. Procedures

1. Pursuit Tactics

- a. Initiation of Pursuit: Rangers may initiate a pursuit when ALL of the following criteria are met:
 - i. The suspect operating the vehicle refuses to stop at the ranger's direction and flees apprehension for an actual or alleged:
 - 1. Violent Felony, or
 - 2. Operating a Vehicle Intoxicated (OVI), and
 - ii. The immediate danger of the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public if the suspect remains at large, and
 - iii. The ranger is operating an authorized emergency vehicle.
 - iv. If the suspect becomes known at any point the pursuit shall not be initiated or shall be immediately terminated unless the ranger has probable cause to believe the suspect's escape poses a significant threat of death or serious physical harm to officers or others.
- b. Number of Ranger Vehicles: No more than two marked ranger vehicles may be actively involved in a pursuit unless specifically directed otherwise by the supervisor controlling the pursuit. The ranger vehicles actively involved in the pursuit will be known as:
 - 1. Primary unit: this will generally be the initiating ranger, but in all cases will be the unit in closest proximity to the fleeing vehicle;
 - 2. Support unit: a ranger unit which trails the primary unit at a safe distance and is immediately available to assume the pursuit or assist the primary unit in the event the fleeing vehicle is stopped; and,
 - 3. Backup unit: all other vehicles aware of the pursuit become backup units and may position themselves at strategic sites along the probable pursuit route or parallel roadways for response to exigencies that may develop; however, these units do not operate in an emergency mode or become involved in the pursuit. Caravanning or trailing by field units not directly involved in the immediate pursuit is prohibited. ALL UNITS ACTING AS BACK UP UNITS WILL INFORM DISPATCH OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PURSUIT REGARDLESS OF THEIR ROLE. No rangers will "self-dispatch" to assist in a pursuit.

- c. Emergency Vehicle Operation: Pursuit must be conducted in strict compliance with existing statutes.
 - i. Initial contact: in order to diminish the likelihood of a pursuit developing, rangers intending to stop a vehicle must, when practicable, be within close proximity to the vehicle prior to activating the emergency lights and siren; and,
 - ii. Emergency equipment: rangers engaged in pursuit must continuously use all emergency equipment including siren and emergency lights.
- d. Initiating/Primary Pursuing Unit Notification Responsibilities: The ranger initiating a pursuit must in all cases immediately notify dispatch with the following information:
 - i. Ranger identification number;
 - ii. Location, speed, and direction of travel;
 - iii. The specific reason for the pursuit, including known laws violated;
 - iv. Vehicle description, including license number, if known; and,
 - v. Number and description of occupants if known, and traffic and weather conditions.
 - vi. An information regarding the use of firearms, threat of force, or other unusual hazards
 - vii. The ranger shall continuously update dispatch on the pursuit conditions, location, weather conditions, and presence of other traffic.
- e. Offensive Tactics: In the course of pursuit, deliberate contact between vehicles or forcing the pursued vehicle into parked cars, ditches, or any other obstacle, boxing in, heading-off, ramming, or driving alongside the pursued vehicle while it is in motion, is prohibited. Reckless or hazardous driving maneuvers must not be duplicated by any pursuing vehicle.
- f. Passing: There must be no attempt by the support unit to pass the primary pursuit unit unless the passing ranger receives specific permission from the primary officer or a supervisor. Involved rangers may not pass the vehicle being pursued without authorization from the supervisor-in-charge.
- g. Spacing: All units in pursuit must space themselves at a distance that will ensure adequate braking.
- h. Assistance: Backup units shall avoid intersecting the path of an oncoming pursuit, shall not parallel the pursuit at excessive speed or respond to a pursuit at excessive speed for the conditions.
- i. Traffic Regulatory Controls: Under Ohio state statutes, law enforcement officers, while engaged in a pursuit with emergency equipment activated, are not required to obey traffic regulatory controls; however, officers must slow down as may be necessary for safe vehicular operation and must at all times operate the vehicle in a manner so as to not endanger life or property.
- j. Road Blocks: Road blocks will not be utilized in pursuits.

- k. Radio Transmission: Dispatchers must notify the supervisor-in-charge and, if possible, neighboring police departments that a pursuit is in progress.
 - l. Civilians: Rangers with civilian passengers will not participate in pursuits.
 - m. Firearms: Rangers may not discharge their firearms from a moving vehicle.
 - n. It is the primary responsibility of the non-pursuing ranger on-duty to notify a supervisor that a pursuit is in progress.
2. Termination of Pursuit
- a. Pursuit will be immediately terminated under the following conditions:
 - i. The primary, support unit or a supervisor determines that the pursuit does not meet the criteria stated in this policy;
 - ii. The distance between the ranger and violator becomes so great that further pursuit is futile;
 - iii. The ranger loses visual contact with the violator;
 - iv. Equipment failure involving the emergency lights, siren, radio, brakes, steering or other essential mechanical equipment occurs; and/or,
 - v. When speeds dangerously exceed the normal flow of vehicular traffic or when continuation of the pursuit calls for duplication of dangerous maneuvers such as driving the wrong way down a one-way street or highway.
 - b. When a pursuit is terminated by the pursuing ranger or an order from a supervisor, the ranger shall, in this order:
 - i. Slow down to normal vehicle operation,
 - ii. Turn off all emergency equipment (lights and sirens),
 - iii. Confirm the pursuit is terminated by notifying dispatch and the controlling supervisor, and
 - iv. Change direction away from the offender's last known location.
3. Inter-jurisdictional Pursuits
- a. Primary Pursuing Agency Responsibilities:
 - i. When a ranger pursues a violator into another agency's jurisdiction, dispatch will notify that agency and specify that the call is a request for assistance. The following information will also be provided:
 - 1. Reason for pursuit and nature of offense;
 - 2. Location and direction of travel;
 - 3. Vehicle and occupant description, if known;
 - 4. Whether assistance is required;
 - 5. When the pursuit leaves that jurisdiction or the location of termination (when applicable).
 - ii. The Ranger Department will have control and be responsible for the pursuit. Other agencies will not participate unless requested to assist.

- iii. Rangers involved and supervisors will continually assess whether the seriousness of the incident justifies continuing the pursuit. The policies and procedures of the Ranger Department shall determine the criteria for the continuation or termination of the pursuit.
 - iv. The controlling supervisor will ensure that only authorized units participate in the pursuit.
- b. Responsibilities When Assisting Other Agencies
- i. Requests by other agencies for pursuit assistance will be immediately relayed to the supervisor-in-charge for evaluation and assignment.
 - ii. In pursuits by outside agencies, all provisions of this order govern action by rangers.
 - iii. The outside agency will be advised of the identity and location of ranger units who can assist in a non-pursuit, support role.
 1. The outside agency will be made aware of any potential hazards such as: large gatherings of pedestrians, disabled vehicles, construction zones, road closures, etc.
 2. Upon being made aware of an inter-jurisdictional pursuit in progress by another agency, dispatch will notify road units. Only the outside agency's supervisor may authorize more than two unit's active participation. If an outside agency requests ranger participation, it must be authorized by the Ranger Department's supervisor-in-charge. All other ranger units will remain aware of the direction and progress of the pursuit but shall not actively participate, and shall not respond or parallel the pursuit in an emergency mode on adjacent streets or grounds, unless specifically authorized to do so. Aerial support, when available, will be used to direct ground units in locating pursuit suspects.
 3. Rangers must not become involved in the other agency's pursuit unless one or more of the following applies:
 - it is authorized by a supervisor;
 - it is clear that a lone unit from an outside agency does not have sufficient backup;
 - it is clear that an emergency exists which dictates the immediate intervention and assistance by other units; and,
 4. Rangers must continually assess whether the seriousness of the incident justifies continuing the pursuit.
 5. The controlling supervisor is required to ensure that only authorized units participate in the pursuit.
 6. As in all pursuits, supervisors will continue to evaluate the nature and seriousness of the offense for which the

- suspect(s) are being pursued and assess the prevailing conditions and the potential for identifying the suspect(s) at a later time and will order a pursuit terminated when known circumstances or facts do not justify continuing the pursuit.
7. The communication and deployment of resources to stop the pursuit must be coordinated with the outside agency prior to use.
- iv. Re-initiation of an Inter-jurisdictional Pursuit
 1. In the event that a pursuit has been terminated and the suspect vehicle remains at large, any jurisdiction who comes into contact with the suspect vehicle should contact the agency of the original pursuit to evaluate whether or not to reinitiate the pursuit. If another jurisdiction reinitiates the pursuit, they will become the primary agency and the incident will be viewed as a new pursuit. If a ranger comes into contact with the vehicle, a supervisor must authorize the re-initiation prior to any pursuit action.
 - v. Investigative Responsibility
 1. The coordination of the criminal investigation surrounding the vehicular pursuit will be the responsibility of the originating agency. If during the pursuit an accident occurs, it will generally be the responsibility of the agency of geographic location. All administrative reviews and investigations will be the responsibility of each agency involved.
 - vi. Post Pursuit Review
 1. At the request of a participating agency in a pursuit incident, a debriefing of the incident may be held. The purpose of the debriefing will be to discuss, review, and evaluate any issues related to the pursuit, individual departmental policies and procedures, or the inter-jurisdictional protocol.
4. Tactics for Stopping the Fleeing Violator
 - a. Even under the best conditions, pursuit may be dangerous. Any tactic contemplated should take into consideration all of the factors surrounding the incident at hand; safety is the foremost object.
 - b. The following are some possible alternatives that may be considered in stopping the fleeing violator:
 - i. Use the outside speaker to communicate with the violator or other motorists;
 - ii. Focus a spotlight on the back window of the pursued vehicle; and,
 - iii. When air support is available and has visual contact with the pursued vehicle, the primary officer will become a secondary unit allowing the aircraft to continue the surveillance of the suspect

vehicle. The aircraft will assume the responsibility of directing the ground officers.

5. Re-initiation of Pursuit
 - a. If a pursuit has been terminated and the suspect vehicle remains at large, any ranger who comes into contact with the suspect vehicle must immediately advise a supervisor and must receive prior authorization to reinitiate any contact or pursuit action. If a pursuit is reinitiated, the incident will be viewed as a new pursuit.
6. Supervisor Responsibilities
 - b. The controlling supervisor must acknowledge that he/she is monitoring the pursuit and affirm approval to continue the pursuit.
 - c. The controlling supervisor shall not be directly involved in the pursuit. It is recommended that the controlling supervisor not operate a vehicle while managing the pursuit. The controlling supervisor should park their vehicle in a safe location from which to manage the pursuit.
 - d. The controlling supervisor will not permit more than two police vehicles to directly engage in the pursuit, except under unusual and well articulated circumstances.
 - e. The controlling supervisor will remain in command regardless of the area or jurisdiction the pursuit enters.
 - f. The controlling supervisor may place other units in the pursuit perimeter if needed.
 - g. The controlling supervisor should request assistance from other supervisors when needed to help monitor and manage the pursuit.
 - h. The controlling supervisor shall control the pursuit by monitoring and directing units into or out of the pursuit perimeter and rotating units in and out of the pursuit.
 - i. The controlling supervisor will monitor the pursuing ranger for suspected diminished critical thinking skills including radio transmissions becoming less coherent from changes in voice pitch, volume, and/or tone, and/or disregarding supervisor's orders.
 - j. The controlling supervisor is responsible for terminating the pursuit in accordance with this general order.
 - k. The controlling supervisor will complete an incident report for every pursuit initiated and indicate whether the involved rangers complied with the applicable General Orders of the Ranger Department and submit it to the Chief Ranger.
 - l. The controlling supervisor shall conduct an after pursuit debriefing as soon as possible after the pursuit.
 - m. The controlling supervisor is responsible for making or requesting notification to the Chief Ranger if the pursuit results in a traffic crash or injury pursuant to General Order 06.02.
 - n. For all incidents that result in death from ranger action(s), the Coroner's office will be notified as soon as possible by the assigned supervisor or detective. If a Coroner's investigator is responding to the scene, the body

will not be moved until the Coroner's investigator's arrival.

7. Investigation and Review of Vehicular Pursuit Reports
 - a. All Vehicular Pursuit Reports will be reviewed by the Chief Ranger.
 - b. Video recordings obtained from all pursuits will be reviewed by the Chief Ranger.
 - c. All pursuits that result in property damage, injury, or death shall be the subject of an investigation by an outside agency.
 - d. Annually, the Chief Ranger will conduct an analysis of all vehicular pursuit reports with the intent of observing patterns or trends that indicate training needs, policy modifications, or disciplinary concerns.
 - e. Annually, this General Order will be reviewed at the direction of the Chief Ranger.