



# City of Groton POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE



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## Vehicle Pursuit

Index:

Vehicle pursuit  
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### 1. Policy

ISSR 1.3.1

Vehicular pursuit of fleeing suspects can present a danger to the lives of the police officers and suspects involved in the pursuit as well as the general public. It is the responsibility of the City of Groton Police Department to assist officers in the safe performance of their duties. To fulfill these obligations, it shall be the policy of the City of Groton Police Department to regulate the manner in which vehicular pursuits are undertaken and performed.

### 2. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for decision-making regarding vehicular pursuit(s) in accordance with § 14-283 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), Rights of Emergency Vehicles and § 14-283a CGS, Adoption of statewide policy for pursuits by police (§14-283a-1 to §14-283a-4) as amended by PA 18-161.

### 3. Definitions

#### i. Pursuit

Pursuit is defined as an attempt by a police officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend any occupant of another moving motor vehicle, when the driver of the fleeing vehicle is attempting to avoid apprehension by maintaining or increasing the speed of such vehicle or by ignoring the police officer's attempt to stop the driver.

#### ii. Authorized Emergency Vehicle

Authorized Emergency vehicle means any state or local police vehicle operated by a police officer answering an emergency call or in the pursuit of fleeing law violators that is equipped with operable emergency equipment, including audible siren and red/blue flashing lights.

#### Intervention Technique (Stop Sticks)

Any device, by its design, used to reduce the risks or dangers associated with police pursuits that, when deployed and contact is made, will cause the fleeing vehicle to sustain flattened tires and force it to slow down.

#### iii. Primary Unit

The police unit that initiates a pursuit or any police unit that assumes control of the pursuit.

- iv. Secondary Unit  
Any police vehicle that becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance or parallels the primary unit with the permission of the shift supervisor.
- v. Supervisor  
Supervisor means a person designated by the police agency to have supervisory control over the operation of the agency's vehicles during a pursuit.
- vi. Communications  
Communications means the central dispatch center of the police agency where the pursuit is occurring.
- vii. Rights of Emergency Vehicles (C.G.S. 14-283)
  1. A police cruiser becomes an emergency vehicle when it is operated by a police officer answering an emergency call or in pursuit of fleeing law violators.
  2. Emergency vehicles must use an audible warning device.
  3. The operator of an emergency vehicle may:
    - a. Proceed past any red light of a stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down or stopping to the extent necessary for the safe operation of such vehicle; and
    - b. Exceed the posted speed limits so long as he does not endanger life or property by doing so.
- viii. Police Agency  
Means the City of Groton Police Department, Division of the State Police within the Department of Public Safety, including local police officers serving in municipalities with a Resident State Trooper, or an organized Municipal Police Department.
- ix. "Crime of Violence"  
An offense in which physical force, the attempted use or threatened use of physical force, is used against another person(s), for the purpose of, injuring, damaging or abusing another person(s), or any offense that is a felony and that involves a substantial risk that physical force against another person may be used in the course of committing the offense.

ISSR 1.7.15

#### 4. Procedures

##### a. Initiation of Pursuit

- i. A police officer may only engage another vehicle in a pursuit if the officer has reasonable suspicion to believe that the driver or occupant has committed or is attempting to commit a crime of violence, or there are exigent circumstances that warrant the need to apprehend the suspect in a timely manner because of the potential for harm to the public if the apprehension does not occur. The officers must be able to articulate the exigent need to apprehend the driver or occupant because of the potential harm.

- ii. Offenses that constitute infractions, property crimes, (to include stolen vehicles), non-violent misdemeanors and non-violent felonies shall not be justification to engage in a pursuit of another vehicle, absent articulable exigent circumstances.
- iii. The officers involved in the pursuit and their supervisor(s) shall continuously reassess the factors listed above to determine whether the pursuit shall continue or be terminated.
- iv. A pursuit shall not be undertaken, even if allowable by other provisions of this policy, unless and until the officer, based upon the information available to him/her at the time, shall make an objectively reasonable determination that the threat of immediate death or serious physical injury to the officer, the public or both, created by the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public, should the suspects or occupants remain at large. A decision to engage in a pursuit shall be based on the following:
  1. Road, weather and environmental conditions.
  2. Whether or not the identity of the occupants is known, immediate apprehension is necessary to protect the public or police officers and apprehension at a later time is feasible.
  3. The relative performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle and the vehicle being pursued.
  4. The seriousness of the offense.
  5. The presence of other persons in the police vehicle.
  6. Geographic location - school zone, residential area, hospital zone, etc.
  7. Population density and vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
  8. Familiarity with the area.
  9. The immediate danger to the public and the officer created by the pursuit is less than the immediate danger to the public should occupants of the pursued vehicle remain at large.

**b. Pursuit Operations**

i. General

1. It is the policy of City of Groton Police Department that the safety of the general public, as well as that of the officer and the person being pursued, shall be the primary concern in all pursuits.
2. The objective of a vehicle pursuit is to apprehend a violator who refuses to voluntarily comply with the law requiring the operator to stop. A pursuit may be considered justified when the necessity of apprehension outweighs the danger of the pursuit.

ii. Vehicle Equipment

1. Lights and Siren - Any City of Groton Police vehicle entering into or engaged in a pursuit will activate both the siren and flashing lights. Such equipment shall remain activated for the duration of the pursuit.
2. Radio - Any City of Groton Police vehicle engaged in a pursuit must be equipped with a working police radio or portable radio capable of communicating with police headquarters. If

communications with headquarters is not possible, the pursuit will be terminated immediately.

- iii. All emergency vehicle operations shall be conducted in strict conformity with applicable traffic laws and regulations.
  - iv. Upon engaging in pursuit, the pursuing vehicle shall activate visual and audible warning devices.
  - v. Upon engaging in pursuit, the officer shall notify, and regularly update, communications of the location, direction, and speed of the pursuit, the estimated distance between the officer's vehicle and the suspect's vehicle, along with the description of the pursued vehicle and the violation or crime for which the pursued vehicle is being sought. Communications personnel shall immediately notify the shift supervisor of the pursuit, clear the radio channel of non-emergency radio traffic, and relay necessary information to other officers and jurisdictions.
  - vi. When engaged in pursuit, officers shall drive with due regard for the safety of persons and property.
  - vii. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, a pursuit shall consist of no more than three police vehicles, one of which will be designated as primary and one as secondary. All other personnel shall stay clear of the pursuit unless instructed to participate by a supervisor.
  - viii. The secondary unit will provide location, speed and condition updates to dispatch.
  - ix. The primary unit shall become the secondary unit when the fleeing vehicle comes under police air surveillance or when another unit has been assigned primary unit responsibility.
- c. **Supervisory Responsibilities**
- i. When made aware of a vehicle pursuit, the shift supervisor shall evaluate the situation and conditions that caused the pursuit to be initiated, the need to continue the pursuit, monitor all incoming information, coordinate and direct activities as needed to ensure that proper procedures are used, and shall have the discretion to terminate the pursuit. Once the shift supervisor orders the termination of a pursuit, all involved vehicles shall cease the pursuit and turn off emergency lights and audible warning devices.
  - ii. When possible, the shift supervisor or another supervisory officer shall respond to the location where a vehicle has been stopped following a pursuit.
- d. **Pursuit Tactics**
- i. Officers shall not normally follow the pursuit on parallel streets unless authorized by a supervisor.

- ii. When feasible, available patrol units having the most prominent markings and emergency lights shall be used to pursue, particularly the primary unit. When a pursuit is initiated by other than a marked patrol unit, such unit shall disengage when a marked unit becomes available.
- iii. All intervention tactics short of deadly force such as spike strips, low speed tactical intervention techniques, and low speed channeling (with proper advanced warning) shall be used. Such tactics should be used only when it is possible to do so with safety and when the officers utilizing them have received appropriate training in their use.
- iv. Firearms shall not be discharged from pursuit vehicles while such vehicles are in motion except to the extent necessary to protect the police officer or other person from the imminent use of deadly physical force.
- v. Roadblocks are prohibited unless specifically authorized by the shift supervisor or other supervisor after consideration of the necessity for applying deadly physical force to end the pursuit. A roadblock is prohibited if it presents an unreasonable risk to others.
- vi. Once the pursued vehicle is stopped, police officers shall utilize appropriate police officer safety tactics and shall be aware of the necessity to utilize only the force the police officer reasonably believes to be necessary to take occupants into custody.

**e. Use of Firearms during a Pursuit**

- i. Officers shall not discharge their firearms at a moving vehicle or its occupants unless, the occupants are using, or threatened the use of deadly force, against the officer or another person present, by means other than the vehicle.
  - 1. This does not preclude exigent circumstances such as, but not limited to, where the officer reasonably believes there are no other means available to avert the threat of the vehicle, or if such vehicle is being utilized as a weapon against the officer(s), or another person, such as in a vehicle ramming attack.
  - 2. No officer should intentionally position his or her body into the path of a fleeing motor vehicle. Whenever possible, the involved officer should make an effort to move to an area of safety if the vehicle becomes a threat, including retreating from the threat, if practical.

**f. Termination of Pursuit**

- i. The primary pursuing unit shall continually re-evaluate and assess the pursuit situation, including all of the initiating factors, and terminate the pursuit whenever the officer reasonably believes that the risks associated with continued pursuit are greater than the public safety benefit of making an immediate apprehension.
- ii. The primary pursuit unit may terminate the pursuit at any time. Officers will not be criticized for terminating a pursuit whenever they believe that the potential danger to the public outweighs the need for immediate apprehension.

- iii. The shift supervisor or other agency supervisor may order the termination of pursuit at any time and shall order the termination when the potential danger to the public outweighs the need for immediate apprehension. Such decision shall be based on information known to the shift supervisor or other agency supervisor at the time of the pursuit.
- iv. A pursuit shall be terminated if the suspect's identity has been determined; immediate apprehension is not necessary to protect the public or officers, and apprehension at a later time is feasible.
- v. A pursuit may be terminated when the police officers are prevented from communication with their supervisors, communications or other police officers.
- vi. A pursuit shall be terminated if the police officer knows or is reasonably certain, that the fleeing motor vehicle is being operated by a juvenile and the suspected offense is not a violent felony.

g. **Intervention Techniques**

Unless exigent circumstances exist, a supervisor must approve the use of any intervention technique for stopping a pursuit and must reevaluate the general considerations and guidelines in determining the best course of action.

h. **Tire Deflation Devices**

Tire Deflation Devices (i.e. Stop sticks) will be available in all patrol vehicles. Only officers trained in the use of stop sticks shall be authorized to deploy the devices. The use shall be consistent with such training.

Stop sticks are not designed to be used on a vehicle with four (4) or more tires, and shall **NOT** be used on motorcycles and all terrain vehicles (ATV's).

Stop sticks should be deployed on paved surfaces such as asphalt blacktop or concrete for optimal performance.

The deploying officer shall take into consideration the location, his/her own safety, the safety of the pursuing officer, the suspect and general public, road conditions, adequate line of sight for deployment, communication with the pursuing officer and seriousness of the offense, when deciding to deploy the stop sticks. The officer should deploy the stop sticks after considering the totality of the circumstances.

The deploying officer shall advise dispatch of the intent and location where the stop sticks shall be deployed. Dispatch personnel shall advise the pursuing units of the deployment location of the stop sticks so the pursuing unit(s) can slow down/avoid the stop sticks themselves.

Any deployment of the stop sticks shall be documented in the deploying officer's report and any additional forms as required. All used stop sticks shall be returned to the Patrol Commander for replacement.

i. **Inter-jurisdictional Pursuits**

- i. The pursuing officer shall notify communications when it is likely that a pursuit will continue into another police agency's area of law enforcement responsibility or across the state line. Communications will immediately notify such police agency by inter-agency radio or telephone and keep such agency updated as to the status of the pursuit.
    1. The reason for the pursuit, primary offense the driver or occupant(s) are believed to have committed.
    2. Location, speed and direction of travel.
    3. Vehicle and occupant(s) description
    4. The number of vehicles and agencies involved in the pursuit
    5. Whether assistance is requested/needed or not
    6. Other available information as to the conditions of the pursuit
    7. Whether or not the pursuit has been terminated or is leaving their jurisdiction.
  - ii. Pursuing officers entering another jurisdiction shall relinquish the position of primary unit to a police unit of that jurisdiction as soon as practical and follow the pursuit at a safe distance. The action of each officer shall be governed by the policy of that officer's own agency.
  - iii. Pursuit into a bordering state shall conform to the laws of both states.
  - iv. When a pursuit enters the City of Groton, the decision whether or not to engage in the pursuit is at the discretion of the duty supervisor based on the facts and circumstances known to the supervisor. City of Groton officers or officers from other than the initiating agency shall not join the outside pursuit unless:
    1. Directed by such duty supervisor; or
    2. The involved pursuit unit is unable to request assistance; or
    3. The situation demands immediate assistance. The supervisors of the respective police agencies involved in the pursuit shall communicate with each other to determine the respective responsibilities of each police agency and to determine which police agency will assume primary operational control of the pursuit. The supervisors shall also communicate with each other regarding external conditions pertinent to the continued conduct of the pursuit. Communications between police agencies shall be controlled by inter-agency radio systems, if they exist, or by telephone, or both.
  - v. The shift supervisor or another agency supervisor may terminate this agency's participation in pursuits entering the City of Groton.
  - vi. In all cases where the pursuit enters a municipality without a regularly organized police department, notification shall be made to the State Police troop responsible for that area. Such troop shall maintain radio communication with all local police officers serving in any such municipality.
- j. **Motor Vehicle Accidents Involving the Offending Vehicle or Police Vehicle**
- i. During the course of a pursuit, should the operator of a police vehicle become involved in a motor vehicle accident, the operator will cease the pursuit and immediately advise dispatch of the incident,

requesting any services necessary, and tend any injured. The investigation of the accident will be in accordance with Operations Directive LOG 13-13.

- ii. During the course of a pursuit, should the operator of the offending vehicle become involved in a motor vehicle accident, the first officer to notice the accident will immediately advise dispatch of the incident, requesting any services necessary, and tend any injured. Dispatch will immediately obtain necessary services and advise the supervisor who will advise the patrol commander. The patrol commander will, as soon as practical, advise the Chief or his designee.
- iii. Whether the pursuit and accident resulted from the actions of GCPD officers or another law enforcement agency, the GCPD supervisor will be assigned to investigate the accident – unless determined otherwise by the Chief. The other law enforcement agency may request to conduct their own accident investigation for administrative purposes. This request may be honored to the extent possible and assuming it will not interfere with the official GCPD investigation.

**k. Reporting Procedures**

- i. Whenever an officer engages in a pursuit, all officers involved shall file a written report detailing the circumstances by the end of the shift or, if not practicable, by the next workday. The duty sergeant will assure copies of these reports are forwarded to the Patrol Commander. A sergeant not involved in the pursuit (assigned by the Patrol Commander), the Patrol Commander and the Chief of Police shall critique the pursuit reports to determine compliance with this policy and to detect and correct any training deficiencies.
- ii. Each officer who engages in a pursuit shall also complete a DESPP/POSTC Pursuit Tracking Form (available in the Forms Library section of the GCPD intranet page) as required by PA 18-161(c)(2).
- iii. The Patrol Commander shall, each year during the month of January, analyze police pursuit activity and identify any additions, deletions or modifications warranted in this directive. The Patrol Commander shall file a report of his/her findings, no later than January 31<sup>st</sup>, to the Chief or his designee. Such report shall contain all required information listed in the DESPP/POSTC Annual Pursuit Report promulgated under PA 18-161(c)(1) & (3) and submitted to POSTC by January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year beginning in 2020.

ISSR 1.3.1m

**l. Training**

Officers who drive police vehicles shall be given initial and periodic review training in the City of Groton's pursuit policy and in safe driving tactics to include intervention techniques.

*David Burton*

*December 11, 2023*

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David Burton

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Date