

**GENERAL ORDER**

April 2016

Immediately

**III-17**

Distribution: All Employees

**Subject: PURSUIT OF A VEHICLE OR BOAT**

## Index as:

Boat Pursuit	Physical Intervention	Pursuit Vehicle Tracking System
Boxing In	PIT	Ramming
Caravanning	Police Boat Pursuit	Roadblock
Conducting the Pursuit	Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT)	Secondary Unit/Officer
Contact	Primary Unit/Officer	Terminating the Pursuit
Emergency Mode	Pursuit	Use of Force
Emergency Vehicle	Pursuit of a Vehicle or Boat	Use of Force Reporting
Field Supervisor	Pursuit Reporting Requirements	Vehicle Operation – Pursuit
Initiating the Pursuit	Pursuit Review	Vehicle Stop
Paralleling	Pursuits by Other Agencies	Violent Felony

Accreditation Standards: 41.1.3, 41.2.2 and 41.2.3

Cross Reference: G.O. II-42, Use of Force  
G.O. III-12, Police Vehicle Operation;  
§316.072, §316.126, §776.08, §843.18 and §901.25, F.S.S.

Replaces: G.O. III-17, Pursuit of a Vehicle or Boat (August 28, 2017)

This Order consists of the following sections:

- I. Policy
- II. Definitions
- III. Initiating the Pursuit
- IV. Terminating the Pursuit
- V. Conducting the Pursuit
- VI. Physical Intervention
- VII. Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT)
- VIII. Suspect Apprehension
- IX. Pursuits by Other Agencies
- X. Responsibilities of Personnel During a Pursuit
- XI. Police Boat Pursuit
- XII. Reporting Requirements
- XIII. Pursuit Review
- XIV. Training

**I. POLICY**

A. Pursuits are one of the most dangerous activities that a Law Enforcement Officer can engage in. Pursuits present a danger to the lives of the public, as well as to the Police Officers and suspects involved in the pursuit.

B. It is the policy of this Department to protect the lives of all persons and not to engage in vehicular pursuits, unless the action is necessary to apprehend a violent felony and, then, only when the need to apprehend clearly outweighs the

risks to the public, Officers, and suspect may be exposed to during the pursuit. Therefore, the apprehension of the suspect shall not be the sole deciding factor in determining whether to engage in the pursuit of a fleeing felony offender.

C. At no time shall this order or any provision of the Florida State Statutes relieve the driver of any emergency vehicle from "the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his or her reckless disregard for the safety of others" (§316.072, F.S.S.).

## II. DEFINITIONS

A. Boxing in – The surrounding of a vehicle with emergency vehicles which are then slowed to a stop.

B. Caravanning – During the course of a pursuit, the following or direct participation in the pursuit by unauthorized emergency vehicles.

C. Contact – The deliberate act of striking a violator's moving vehicle with a police vehicle for the purpose of disabling or forcing the violator's vehicle off the roadway.

D. Emergency Mode – The operation of an emergency vehicle, utilizing warning lights and audible warning equipment to alert others of the approach of an emergency vehicle.

1. The use of headlights during daylight hours, spotlights, and the air horn should be considered if they will help ensure safe movement of the emergency vehicle.

2. Hazard warning lights [4-way flashers] shall not be used as their use interferes with the normal display of the brake and turn signals.

E. Emergency Vehicle – A vehicle owned, leased or rented by the City of St. Petersburg which is either unmarked or conspicuously marked, as a police vehicle and is equipped with warning lights and audible warning equipment. A vehicle not equipped with visual/audible warning equipment is not considered an emergency vehicle.

F. Field Supervisor – A Sergeant or Lieutenant as used throughout this Order.

G. Paralleling – A tactic during the course of a pursuit where emergency vehicles follow the course of the pursuit in an emergency mode, on streets parallel to the actual pursuit.

H. Physical Intervention – The intentional act of forcing a moving vehicle to stop with or without intent to strike the vehicle. Examples of Physical Intervention include, but are not limited to, use of ramming, a roadblock, or boxing in.

I. Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT) – A pursuit tactic by which a pursuing car uses the inertia and weight of the police vehicle to contact a fleeing vehicle in a controlled manner, enabling the violator vehicle to be stopped. The PIT, when performed properly and in accordance with training, does not constitute the use of deadly force.

J. Primary Unit/Officer – An emergency vehicle which initiates a pursuit, or any other emergency vehicle which assumes control of the pursuit as the lead vehicle and is the first police vehicle behind the fleeing suspect.

K. Pursuit – An active attempt by an Officer, operating an emergency vehicle or police boat to apprehend a suspect operating a motor vehicle/boat in a manner to elude or evade apprehension.

L. Ramming – The deliberate act of striking the vehicle of a fleeing suspect, for the purpose of damaging or forcing the fleeing vehicle to stop. RAMMING IS CONSIDERED AN ACT OF DEADLY FORCE.

M. Roadblock – Any barricade, obstruction or partial obstruction used to prevent the free passage of motor vehicles in order to stop or prevent the escape of a fleeing vehicle.

N. Secondary Unit/Officer – An emergency vehicle which becomes involved in the pursuit to back up the primary Unit.

O. Terminating the Pursuit – Immediate actions taken by the pursuing Officers to include:

1. Slowing to the posted speed limit,
2. Notifying the Emergency Communications Center **that** the pursuit is terminated;
3. Turning off all emergency warning equipment; and
4. Altering the direction of travel as soon as practical by turning onto another roadway.

P. Vehicle Stop – The actions taken by an Officer, while operating an emergency vehicle, to stop a vehicle suspected of a traffic violation or offense, or any other purpose, when the driver's behavior is not giving any indication of an intent to elude or evade apprehension.

Q. Violent Felony – A felony involving the commission of a violent act or when there is reasonable cause to believe that serious physical injury or death might be inflicted upon another person.

### III. INITIATING THE PURSUIT

A. Whenever an Officer attempts to perform a vehicle stop and the operator of the suspect vehicle indicates by their actions an intent to elude or evade apprehension, the Officer must determine if there is reasonable cause to believe the person(s) in the vehicle has committed or is committing a violent felony as defined by this Order.

B. Pursuits ARE NOT PERMITTED unless necessary to apprehend a person(s) who has committed or is committing a VIOLENT FELONY.

C. The Pursuit SHALL BE TERMINATED if the hazards created by the pursuit outweigh the necessity for immediate apprehension of the suspect.

D. If the pursuit is necessitated by the suspect's participation in a violent felony, the pursuing Officer shall take the role of the primary unit, and:

1. Activate all audible and visual emergency warning equipment.
2. Determine whether the identity of the suspect is known and if the suspect can be apprehended later.
3. Evaluate the degree of risk created by the pursuit as it relates to existing conditions, such as:
  - a. Vehicle and pedestrian traffic;
  - b. Weather, road and lighting conditions;
  - c. Type of area, *i.e.*, residential, commercial, highway; and
  - d. Knowledge of the roads, the emergency vehicle's condition, and the Officer's skill level.

E. The Officer initiating a pursuit shall immediately inform the Emergency Communications Center on a primary radio channel monitored by a Dispatcher, and provide the following information:

1. The initiation of a pursuit;
2. The specific violation or suspected violation on which the pursuit is based;
3. The present location, direction of travel and approximate speed of the pursuit;
4. The description of the pursued vehicle and, if possible, the tag number; and
5. If known, the identification and description of the occupants.

F. The Officer initiating a pursuit shall obtain supervisory permission to continue the pursuit.

#### IV. TERMINATING THE PURSUIT

A. The Officer shall terminate the pursuit when:

1. No field Supervisor or higher authority can be contacted to approve continuation of the pursuit.
2. A Field Supervisor or higher authority directs the pursuit to be terminated.
3. The Officer loses visual contact with the pursued vehicle, or the distance between the vehicle and the primary Unit becomes so great that further pursuit is futile.
4. The pursuing Units lose radio contact with the Emergency Communications Center.
5. The suspect's identity has been sufficiently established to allow future apprehension, and there is a reasonable belief the need to immediately apprehend the suspect no longer exists.

B. During the course of the pursuit, the primary and secondary Officers shall continue to evaluate their ability to safely and successfully apprehend the suspect and shall, if circumstances warrant it, independently terminate the pursuit. Considerations include:

1. The danger to the public increases due to vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
2. Weather, visibility or road conditions decrease the likelihood of a successful apprehension.
3. The safe operation of the emergency vehicle is no longer probable.

C. When the decision is made to terminate the pursuit by the primary Unit or a Supervisor, the primary and secondary Units shall:

1. Immediately slow to the posted speed for the area.
2. Notify the Emergency Communications Center the pursuit is terminated.
3. Turn off all emergency warning equipment.
4. Alter their direction of travel as soon as practical by turning to another roadway.

#### V. CONDUCTING THE PURSUIT

A. The primary and secondary Units shall continuously operate their vehicles in the emergency mode during the pursuit.

B. The secondary Unit shall be operated at a safe distance behind the primary unit considering speed, roadway, and traffic conditions.

C. No more than two emergency vehicles shall engage in the pursuit. Caravanning is not permitted.

D. The Officers engaged directly in the pursuit may:

1. Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as it does not endanger life or property.
2. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
3. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions so long as it does not endanger life or property.

E. Officers shall not pursue a violator the wrong way on any divided roadway or interstate highway. If the violator enters any divided roadway or interstate highway against the flow of traffic, the pursuing Officer shall:

1. Terminate the pursuit, or
2. Maintain visual contact while operating on the lawful side of the highway.
3. Request other Units be assigned to observe exits available to the violator.

F. No police vehicle shall pass another emergency vehicle engaged in the pursuit, unless absolutely necessary and, then, only when the overtaking vehicle has received an affirmative acknowledgment from the lead vehicle that the lead vehicle is relinquishing the position of the primary Unit.

G. No Units other than the primary and secondary Units shall leave their assigned district in response to a pursuit, unless ordered to do so by a field Supervisor.

1. Paralleling in emergency mode is not permitted.

2. However, this does not preclude any Unit from moving safely within their assigned area to a location which may be advantageous should the pursuit terminate in that district.

H. Should a pursuit be initiated by an unmarked emergency vehicle which is equipped with warning lights and audible warning equipment, the unmarked vehicle shall relinquish any position in the pursuit to a marked vehicle as soon as possible.

I. The following vehicles shall not engage in a pursuit as either a primary or secondary Unit/Officer:

1. Motorcycle.
2. Golf cart or all-terrain vehicle.
3. Segway or Bicycle.

4. Unmarked vehicles, unless they are equipped with warning lights and audible warning equipment as detailed in this Order.

J. Continuous fresh pursuit may be continued outside of the City of St. Petersburg as provided by §901.25, F.S.S.

1. The Emergency Communications Center must be advised when pursuing Units leave the City.

2. If the apprehension is made outside of Pinellas County, the arresting Officer shall immediately notify the Officer in charge of the jurisdiction where the violator was arrested. The arrested person shall be taken before a county judge of that jurisdiction without unnecessary delay (§901.25, FSS).

K. Non-sworn employees shall not engage in a pursuit.

L. Sworn Officers operating Department vehicles may engage in a pursuit with Cadets/Trainees as passengers while they are participating in the Department's Ride-along program.

M. Officers shall not engage in a pursuit when transporting prisoners, witnesses, Explorers, Cadets or Trainees not participating in a Ride-along program, or any other non-sworn passenger.

N. K-9 vehicles shall not engage in a pursuit without considering the limitations of their vehicle, *i.e.*, weight, size, handling, etc.

## VI. PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

A. Physical intervention during a pursuit is not permitted.

B. The act of ramming during the course of a pursuit is considered deadly force. Ramming shall not be used to end a pursuit unless deadly force is justified.

C. All occurrences of physical intervention or ramming, performed by an employee of the Department which results in death, injury or property damage shall be investigated as required by [J:\Research\GeneralOrders\II Administrative General Orders\II-42 Use of Force.pdf](#), and [J:\Research\GeneralOrders\IV Rules of Conduct\IV-01 Rules of Conduct.pdf](#).

## VII. PRECISION IMMOBILIZATION TECHNIQUE (PIT)

A. The preferred technique to be used for contact shall be the Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT).

B. The PIT may be used to stop a fleeing vehicle if the Officer believes the suspect must be stopped immediately to safeguard life and preserve public safety.

C. The decision to utilize PIT will be made by the pursuing Officer who must take into account the safety of any persons, the location, and the risk of injury to the occupant(s) of the fleeing vehicle and to Officers.

D. The PIT is considered non-deadly force when properly executed at the maximum speed of fifty (50) miles per hour or less and is unlikely to cause serious bodily injury or death.

1. The PIT shall not be used on motorcycles unless the use of deadly force is justified.

2. The PIT should not be used on sport utility vehicles, vans, pickup trucks, etc...., or at speeds of greater than fifty (50) miles per hour.

E. There should be three (3) Units to deploy the PIT technique.

F. Authorized Use

1. Only those Officers who:

- a. Have successfully completed the prescribed training in the PIT technique, and
- b. Are assigned to an identified task force, or
- c. A Supervisor or higher gives authorization,

are allowed to utilize the Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT).

G. Training

Officers trained in the PIT technique shall be provided with documented refresher training at least every three years.

## VIII. SUSPECT APPREHENSION

A. If possible, a backup or non-driving Officer should physically take the suspect into custody.

B. A supervisor shall respond to the location of the apprehension and oversee the activities of all Officers present.

## IX. PURSUITS BY OTHER AGENCIES

A. Officers shall not participate in a pursuit initiated by another agency unless all the guidelines in this Order are met and, then, only with the approval of a field supervisor.

B. Officers participating in a pursuit initiated by another agency shall not continue the pursuit beyond the City limits without the expressed approval by a member who holds the actual rank of Lieutenant or higher.

C. St. Petersburg Police Department Officers may provide general support and assistance, as needed, if the pursuit terminates in the City.

#### X. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PERSONNEL DURING A PURSUIT

##### A. Officers engaged in a pursuit shall:

1. Continuously evaluate the safety of the pursuit and the likelihood of apprehension and discontinue if the pursuit presents more danger to persons than would the escape of the violator.
2. Maintain constant radio contact with the Emergency Communications Center, providing location, direction of travel, and other pertinent information. (Audible warning equipment and wind noise affect the quality of radio transmissions and should be kept in mind when making radio transmissions.)
3. Monitor instructions from the field supervisor.
4. Request the Emergency Communications Center to make notifications to other agencies, as required.
5. If air support is available and on the scene, fall back from the pursued vehicle or boat and relinquish surveillance and directing responsibilities to the air unit.

##### B. Emergency Communications Center personnel shall:

1. Immediately advise a field Supervisor of the initiation of a pursuit and ensure communications exist between the Supervisor and the primary Unit.
2. Ensure the pursuing Units have a clear radio channel to transmit and receive instructions.
3. Relay pertinent information to other Units and other channels as necessary.
4. Notify the Watch Commander of the pursuit, its status and termination location.
5. Notify other jurisdictions or make other notifications as necessary.
6. Contact the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and request air support if available.
7. When notified of a pursuit within or entering the City by another agency, determine the reason for the pursuit, description of the pursued vehicle and occupants, location and direction of travel, and notify the closest field Supervisor.

##### C. Field Supervisors shall:

1. Immediately monitor the initiation of any pursuit and evaluate the information from the primary Unit and:
  - a. Ensure the pursuit is for a violent felony.
    - 1) Have knowledge of or make specific inquiry regarding:
      - a) Weapon used by the suspect;
      - b) Extent of injury to the victim; and
      - c) The intent of the suspect.
    - 2) Great emphasis shall be given to the above when allowing the pursuit to continue.
2. Based on the information obtained, determine if the pursuit shall continue or be terminated, and advise the primary unit.
3. Provide follow-up direction as needed, to include:
  - a. If the pursuit is terminated, instructions regarding further investigation.
  - b. If the pursuit is continued, confirm and assign a secondary Unit.
4. Monitor and direct other police resources, ensuring compliance with all pursuit procedures.

5. Terminate the pursuit if its safe conduct can no longer be assured.
6. Specifically acknowledge and, if appropriate, allow the pursuit to go beyond the City limits.
7. Respond to the scene of apprehension and supervise activities as necessary.

## XI. POLICE BOAT PURSUIT

A. Marine Officers operating the police boat may engage in pursuits for felonies and, when engaged in a pursuit, they shall:

1. Ensure the boat is running in the emergency mode by the activation of all audible and visual emergency warning equipment.
2. Determine whether the identity of the suspect is known and if the suspect can be apprehended later.
3. Ensure that no conditions exist that would present a hazard to others, considering:
  - a. The presence of other boats, watercraft or persons;
  - b. Weather conditions and time of day, which may affect visibility and operation; and
  - c. The Officer's familiarity with the waterway in the direction of the pursuit; i.e., hazardous conditions, impediments to navigation, etc.
4. Pursuits are not permitted within a harborage or marina, in congested areas, or where two or more boating channels converge, and the operator of the police boat does not have an unobstructed view of all channels and any converging traffic.

5. Physical Intervention with a police boat is not permitted under any circumstances.

B. The Marine Officer initiating a pursuit shall immediately inform the Emergency Communications Center of:

1. The initiation of a pursuit;
2. The specific violation or suspected violation on which the pursuit is based;
3. The present location, direction of travel and approximate speed of the pursuit;
4. The description of the pursued craft and, if possible, the registration number; and
5. If known, the identification and description of the occupants.

C. The Officer initiating a pursuit shall obtain supervisory permission to continue the pursuit.

D. In addition to the request for air support from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, notification of a boat pursuit shall be made to the Coast Guard and other pertinent marine law enforcement agencies.

E. Land-based emergency vehicles may assist the police boat by acting as spotters at shore areas along the route. Land units are not authorized to leave their assigned district; however, this does not preclude units from moving safely within their assigned area to a location which may be advantageous should the pursuit terminate in that area.

## XII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Upon the conclusion of the pursuit, the Officer operating the primary Unit shall complete a [J:\Forms\AdministrativeInvestigations\Pursuit Memorandum Primary\\_02082016.docx](J:\Forms\AdministrativeInvestigations\Pursuit Memorandum Primary_02082016.docx), detailing the reason for, and the specifics of, the pursuit whether or not an apprehension was made.

B. Any Officer acting as a secondary Unit in a pursuit shall complete a [J:\Forms\AdministrativeInvestigations\Pursuit Memorandum Secondary\\_02082016.docx](J:\Forms\AdministrativeInvestigations\Pursuit Memorandum Secondary_02082016.docx), detailing their participation in the pursuit.



C. The Supervisor authorizing the continuation of the pursuit shall review the reports prepared by the primary and secondary Officers and prepare a [J:\Forms\AdministrativeInvestigations\Pursuit Memorandum Supervisor\\_02082016.docx](J:\Forms\AdministrativeInvestigations\Pursuit Memorandum Supervisor_02082016.docx), specifically identifying any unusual circumstances in a critique of the pursuit.

D. If the pursuit results in any application of force as defined in this Order or in <J:\Research\GeneralOrders\II Administrative General Orders\II-42 Use of Force.pdf>:

1. The pursuing Officer(s) shall complete and file a *Use of Force Report*, via Blue Team, prior to going off duty.
2. If the Officer is unable to complete the *Use of Force Report*, the immediate Supervisor shall prepare the report based on available information.
3. The Supervisor approving the *Use of Force Report* will ensure the Incident Summary portion is complete in the *Use of Force Report* before being routed it through the Officer's Chain of Command.
4. The *Use of Force Report* shall be sent electronically, via Blue Team, to be administratively reviewed by the Officer's Chain of Command through the rank of Major.
5. Following the administrative review, the respective Major shall electronically forward the *Use of Force Report* to the Office of Professional Standards via Blue Team.
  - a. The Office of Professional Standards will:
    - 1) Enter the approved *Use of Force Report* into IPro, and
    - 2) Send a PDF version to the Records and Identification Division
    - 3) If any report indicates additional training may be needed, the report will be forwarded to the Training Division for their review.
6. The *Use of Force Report* is a synopsis of the incident for statistical purposes and is in addition to any reports required by <J:\Research\GeneralOrders\III Operational General Orders\III-23 Incident Reports.pdf>.

### XIII. PURSUIT REVIEW

A. The Watch Commander shall review the documentation of the pursuit and forward all information, along with a recommendation, to the appropriate Assistant Chief.

B. The Assistant Chief of the respective Bureau shall review each pursuit to determine whether or not a violation of the pursuit policy has occurred. The Assistant Chief shall indicate their finding and recommendation and forward the reports to the Office of Professional Standards.

C. The Office of Professional Standards will:

1. Monitor all pursuit documentation to ensure compliance with this Order.
2. Maintain all pursuit-related reports for review and statistical purposes.
3. Conduct a documented annual analysis of pursuit reports.
4. Conduct a documented annual review of pursuit policies and reporting procedures.

D. The Chief of Police may direct the Office of Professional Standards to conduct additional investigation of a pursuit as deemed necessary.

## XV. TRAINING

### A. Initial Training

1. The Training Division will ensure that all newly appointed Sworn personnel will receive documented initial training on the Department's pursuit policy.

2. The Emergency Communications Division will ensure that all newly appointed Emergency Communications Division personnel will receive documented initial training on the Department's pursuit policy.

### B. Annual Review

1. The Training Division will ensure that all Sworn, and Emergency Communications Division personnel will review the Department's pursuit policy.

---

Anthony Holloway  
Chief of Police