





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

	PURSUIT	
	POLICY NUMBER: 41-4	ISSUING AUTHORITY 
	EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2025	Christine A. Elow Police Commissioner

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The Cambridge Police Department places the highest value on the lives and safety of its officers and the community members they serve. In life-threatening circumstances, however, it may become necessary to apprehend a fleeing suspect who, if not apprehended immediately, represents an imminent threat of serious harm to the public. Ever mindful of the responsibility this entails, every officer's duty to apprehend violent offenders must always be tempered with the need to weigh the risks inherent in doing so.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department that:

- A. vehicle pursuits of motorists who are intentionally attempting to evade apprehension are strictly forbidden except when the suspect vehicle and its occupants have committed a corroborated violent felony, such as but not limited to murder, AMBER Alert kidnapping, attempted murder, or a terrorism-related incident;
- B. in all cases of vehicle pursuit, the circumstances must be continually re-assessed so that the need to apprehend a suspect who poses a threat of serious bodily harm or death outweighs the risks of such to the public, police officers, or the occupants of the suspect vehicle;
- C. the responsibility of an appropriate supervisor on the shift is to authorize a pursuit, if time allows, and/or to call off a pursuit if the circumstances indicate that the risks outweigh a potential good outcome;
- D. roadblocks, boxing in, intentional contact with the suspect vehicle, stop sticks, and other tactics to stop a fleeing vehicle that require specific training are strictly forbidden; and
- E. a pursuit of a fleeing vehicle that enters another jurisdiction shall be terminated immediately upon transfer of the pursuit to that jurisdiction's authorized agency.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Authorized Police Vehicle*: A fully marked police department-owned motor vehicle equipped with operable emergency warning equipment.
- B. *Boxing in*: The surrounding of a violator's moving vehicle with moving pursuit vehicles that are then slowed to a stop along with the violator's vehicle.
- C. *ECD*: Emergency Communications Department.
- D. *Forcible stopping*: Utilizing a police vehicle to physically obstruct and/or stop a vehicle that is being pursued.
- E. *Heading off*: An attempt to terminate a pursuit by pulling ahead of, behind, or toward a violator's moving vehicle to force it to the side of the road or to otherwise come to a stop.
- F. *Primary Unit*: An authorized police vehicle that is the first vehicle behind the pursued vehicle.
- G. *Pursuit*: An active attempt by an officer(s), in an authorized police vehicle, with emergency warning equipment activated, to apprehend one or more occupants of another moving vehicle, when the driver is intentionally attempting to evade apprehension and an occupant has committed a corroborated violent felony, such as murder, AMBER Alert kidnapping, attempted murder, or terrorism-related incident.
- H. *Secondary Unit*: An authorized police vehicle that is actively involved in the pursuit behind the primary unit as backup.
- I. *Shift Commander or Supervisor*: An officer of the Cambridge Police Department assigned as a sergeant or higher rank in charge of a patrol shift.
- J. *Street Paralleling*: Driving a police vehicle on a street parallel to a street where a pursuit is occurring.
- K. *Vehicle Paralleling*: A deliberate offensive tactic by one or more police vehicles to drive alongside the pursued vehicle while it is in motion.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Evaluating Circumstances
 - 1. The decision to initiate a pursuit must be based on the pursuing officer'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.
 - 2. Other factors that shall be considered when deciding to initiate or continue a pursuit include but are not limited to the following.

- a. The safety of the public in the area of the pursuit, including the type of area, time of day, the amount of vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic, and the speed of the pursuit relative to these factors.
 - b. The pursuing officers' familiarity with the area of the pursuit, the quality of radio communications between the pursuing vehicles and the dispatcher/supervisor, and the driving capabilities of the pursuing officers under the conditions of the pursuit.
 - c. The weather, traffic, and road conditions that unreasonably increase the danger of the pursuit when weighed against the risks resulting from the suspect's escape.
 - d. The identity of the suspect has been verified and there is comparatively minimal risk in allowing the suspect to be apprehended later.
 - e. The performance capabilities of the vehicles used in the pursuit in relation to the speed and other conditions of the pursuit.
 - f. Vehicle speed.
 - g. Other persons in the pursued vehicle, such as passengers, co-offenders, and hostages.
 - h. The availability of other resources.
 - i. The pursuing vehicle is carrying passengers other than on-duty police officers. Pursuits should not be undertaken with an arrestee in the pursuit vehicle unless exigent circumstances exist, and then only after the need to apprehend the suspect is weighed against the safety of the arrestee in transport. A vehicle containing more than a single arrestee shall not be involved in a pursuit.
- B. Compliance with M.G.L. c. 89, § 7B and M.G.L. c. 90, § 14
1. The law provides that "a driver of a police vehicle or recognized protective department or the driver of an ambulance, in an emergency and while in the performance of a public duty... may drive such vehicle at speeds in excess of the applicable speed limit if the operator of the vehicle exercises caution and due regard under the circumstances for the safety of the persons and property, and may drive such vehicle through an intersection of ways contrary to any traffic sign or signals regulating traffic...if the operator first brings such vehicle to a full stop and proceeds with caution and due regard for the safety of persons and property unless otherwise directed by a police officer regulating traffic at such intersection."
 2. Officers shall not pass a school bus with flashing red lights.
- C. Defining Criteria Under Which Pursuit Can Be Initiated
1. An officer shall not engage in a vehicle pursuit unless the officer confirms that:
 - a. an occupant of the vehicle has committed a violent felony, such as murder, AMBER Alert kidnapping, attempted murder, terrorism-related incident; and
 - b. an occupant of the vehicle poses an on-going immediate threat of serious bodily harm or death to another person and/or police officer; or

- c. there is a reasonable belief of a threat that an occupant of the vehicle will attempt to commit a violent felony, such as murder, amber alert kidnapping, or terrorism-related incident.
 - 2. Vehicle pursuits shall only be conducted using authorized department emergency vehicles that are equipped with emergency lights and siren as required by law.
- D. 42.2.2c (M) Initiating Personnel Responsibilities
- 1. The officer initiating a pursuit shall, in all cases, notify the sector sergeant or patrol supervisor and ECD as soon as reasonably possible and provide the following information.
 - a. Police unit identification.
 - b. Reasons for engaging in the pursuit.
 - c. Location and direction of travel.
 - d. Vehicle description, including the license plate number, year, make, model, color, and other identifying characteristics of the vehicle, if known.
 - e. Number of occupants in the vehicle, if known.
 - f. The speed(s) of the pursued vehicle.
 - g. Identity of the operator or other passengers, if known.
 - h. Any other information that may be relevant in determining the appropriateness of engaging or terminating the pursuit.
 - 2. The primary unit may maintain a pursuit if it is safe to do so, or until directed to terminate the pursuit by a supervisor or the suspect's vehicle is stopped.
 - 3. The officer operating the primary unit shall continually reevaluate and assess the pursuit. The officer shall terminate the pursuit, even in the absence of an order to terminate by a supervisor, when that officer reasonably believes that the foreseeable risks to the officer, the public or others arising from a continued pursuit are greater than the threat to public safety should the pursued vehicle be allowed to escape.
 - 4. Upon receipt of a notice to terminate the pursuit from a supervisor, the primary unit shall immediately discontinue the pursuit and verbally confirm acknowledgment of the termination of the pursuit, providing the location of where the pursuit was terminated.
 - 5. The pursuing officer shall notify the ECD when it is likely that a pursuit will continue into a neighboring jurisdiction.
- E. Secondary Unit Responsibilities
- 1. Immediately notify the dispatcher of his/her entry into the pursuit.
 - 2. Remain a safe distance behind the primary pursuit vehicle unless directed to assume the role of primary pursuit vehicle or if the primary pursuit vehicle is unable to continue the pursuit.

3. Broadcast information that the primary pursuing officer is unable to provide.
4. Broadcast the progress of the pursuit, updating known or critical information, and providing changes in the pursuit, unless the situation indicates otherwise.
5. Identify the need for additional resources or equipment as appropriate.
6. Serve as backup to the primary pursuing officer once the suspect has been stopped.

F. Role of Marked, Unmarked, or other Vehicles

1. Unmarked police vehicles may not engage in a pursuit unless exigent circumstances dictate otherwise or unless directed to do so by the Shift Commander. The unmarked vehicle shall relinquish its primary position as soon as a marked vehicle is available.
2. An officer operating an authorized motorcycle may initiate a vehicular pursuit but may not exceed posted speed limits and must relinquish the pursuit immediately upon becoming aware of the participation of an authorized marked police vehicle.
3. No more than two police vehicles will become actively involved in a pursuit unless specifically directed to do so by the Shift Commander or Patrol Supervisor.

G. Pursuit Restrictions

1. Officers may not pursue a vehicle in a direction opposite to the flow of traffic on a divided highway. Officers may not pursue a vehicle the wrong way on interstates, other controlled access highways, divided roadways, or one-way streets unless specifically authorized by the Shift Commander or Patrol Supervisor.
2. Officers shall not fire any weapon from or at a moving vehicle, nor engage in any vehicle contact except as a last resort to prevent immediate death or serious injury to the officer or another person where deadly force would otherwise be justified. Firing a weapon for the purpose of disabling a vehicle is strictly prohibited.
3. Reckless or hazardous driving maneuvers by the suspect vehicle shall not be duplicated by any of the pursuing police vehicles.
4. No officer shall participate in a pursuit with a civilian or other non-sworn personnel in the authorized police vehicle.
5. Tactical maneuvers including boxing in, heading off, paralleling, and ramming or deliberate contact with the suspect vehicle are strictly prohibited.

H. Emergency Communications Department Responsibilities

1. Receive and record all incoming information on the pursuit and the pursued vehicle.
2. Immediately notify the Shift Commander and ensure a Sector Sergeant or Patrol Supervisor has assumed control and oversight of the pursuit, constantly keeping the supervisor apprised of the duration and progress of the pursuit.

3. Clear the radio channel of any unnecessary radio transmissions and advise all other units that a pursuit is in progress, providing all relevant information.
4. Perform relevant record and motor vehicle checks.
5. Control all radio communications during the pursuit.
6. Coordinate assistance under the direction of the Shift Commander or the Patrol Supervisor.
7. Continue to monitor the pursuit until it has been terminated.

I. Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Direct the pursuit and approve or order alternative tactics and maintain control until the pursuit is terminated. In the absence of adequate information from the primary or backup unit, the Patrol Supervisor may order termination of the pursuit.
2. Allow the pursuit to continue only if there is sufficient reason to believe that the criteria exist for engaging in a vehicular pursuit set forth in this policy.
3. Order a pursuit terminated at any time if they conclude that the danger to pursuing officers or the public outweighs the necessity for immediate apprehension of the suspect.
4. In recognition of the overall population density and volume of vehicular traffic, and the increased risk inherent to prolonged vehicular pursuits, a supervisor shall order the termination of any pursuit of protracted duration, unless that supervisor determines the continuation of any pursuit is justified to respond to an immediate threat to public safety.
5. For the duration of the pursuit, direct all officers and members of the department involved in any aspect of the pursuit to observe department policy and procedures.
6. Ensure that each officer who was engaged in the police pursuit completes a police incident report, documenting the officer's involvement and any information that is relevant to the incident. The officer initiating the vehicular pursuit will be responsible for completing the *Pursuit Evaluation Report* in addition to the initial incident report.
7. Initiate the internal review process for evaluating the vehicular pursuit.
8. Ensure that copies of the police report and all relevant documents shall be submitted to the Police Commissioner or designee for review.

J. When to Terminate a Pursuit

1. Pursuits shall be terminated whenever the totality of objective circumstances known to the officer or supervisor during the pursuit indicates that the present risk of continuing the pursuit reasonably appear to outweigh the risk resulting from the suspect's escape.
2. When a supervisor directs the pursuit to be terminated, officers shall immediately terminate the pursuit.
3. The factors listed in this policy on when to initiate a pursuit shall apply equally to the decision to terminate the pursuit. Officers and supervisors must objectively and continuously weigh

the seriousness of the offense against the potential danger to innocent motorists, themselves, and the public when electing to continue a pursuit.

4. In addition to the factors that govern when to initiate a pursuit, other factors should be considered in deciding whether to terminate a pursuit, including the following.
 - a. When ordered by the Patrol Supervisor, Shift Supervisor, or higher-ranking command staff.
 - b. The distance between the pursuing vehicle and the fleeing vehicle is so great that further pursuit would be futile or require the pursuit to continue for an unreasonable time or distance.
 - c. The pursued vehicle's location is no longer definitely known.
 - d. The pursuing vehicle sustains damage or mechanical failure that renders it unsafe to drive.
 - e. The pursuing vehicle's emergency lighting equipment or siren becomes partially or completely inoperable.
 - f. Hazards to uninvolved bystanders or motorists.
 - g. The danger that the continued pursuit poses to the public, the officers, or the suspect balanced against the risk of allowing the suspect to remain at large.
 - h. When the identity of the suspect is known, and it does not reasonably appear that the need for immediate capture outweighs the risks associated with continuing the pursuit.
 - i. When it has been determined by the pursuing officer(s) that the pursuit cannot result in apprehension.

K. Authority to Terminate Pursuit

1. At any time that the pursuing officer makes the judgement that the risks of continuing the pursue outweigh the likelihood of a good outcome, the officer has the authority to terminate the pursuit.
2. Likewise, any time a supervisor of any rank determines that the risks of continuing the pursuit outweigh the likelihood of a good outcome, the supervisor may order the pursuit to be terminated.

L. Jurisdictional Issues

1. Under no circumstance shall a pursuit extend beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Cambridge unless authorized by a supervisor. If it is anticipated that a pursuit may extend into another jurisdiction, the following steps should be taken.
 - a. Notifying the appropriate jurisdiction of the likelihood that the suspect vehicle may be headed in a certain direction.
 - b. Notifying the State Police if the suspect vehicle may attempt to use the interstate highway system.

- c. Providing pertinent information regarding circumstances leading up to the pursuit and the nature of the charges that may be lodged against the occupants.

M. Reports and Administrative Review

1. Whenever officers engage in a police pursuit, each of the officers involved in the incident shall submit a detailed Incident Report prior to the end of the shift.
2. The shift supervisor shall conduct the initial review of the pursuit reports and may interview the officers.
3. All reports shall be forwarded through the chain of command as indicated on the *Pursuit Evaluation Form* for further review.
4. The superintendent for that chain of command shall brief the Police Commissioner for a final review, who will take any action, if necessary, in response to the findings and recommendations of staff.
5. The Police Commissioner will forward final documentation to the Director of Professional Standards who will then determine the need for policy revision or training.

N. Documented Annual Analysis of Pursuits, Policy, and Reporting Procedures

1. Annually, the Director of Professional Standards shall complete a documented analysis of pursuit reports, to include a review of policy and reporting procedures.
2. The analysis shall be submitted to and approved by the Commissioner or designee.

O. Documented Initial Training on Pursuit Policy

1. It is the responsibility of the Training and Certification Unit to ensure that all new officers, whether recently out of the academy or upon transfer from another department, receive a copy of the pursuit policy and a briefing on its content.
2. The Training and Certification Unit shall document receipt of the policy by each new officer and the subsequent briefing.

P. Documented Annual Review of Pursuit Policy by all Sworn Personnel

1. Annually, all sworn personnel shall receive and review the department's pursuit policy.
2. Attestations of receipt and review of the policy shall be documented by the Training and Certification Unit.

Q. Roadblocks and Forcible Stopping

1. Roadblocks and forcible stopping are inherently dangerous; all forms of roadblocks and forcible stopping are strictly prohibited.
2. Tactical maneuvers including boxing in, heading off, paralleling, and ramming or deliberate contact with the suspect vehicle are strictly prohibited.