

## Vehicle Pursuits

### 307.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for vehicle pursuits in order to protect the safety of involved officers, the public and fleeing suspects.

#### 307.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Blocking or vehicle intercept** - A slow-speed coordinated maneuver where two or more pursuing vehicles simultaneously intercept and block the movement of a suspect vehicle, the driver of which may be unaware of the impending enforcement stop. The goal is containment and preventing a pursuit. Blocking is not a moving or stationary road block.

**Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT)** - A low-speed maneuver designed to cause the suspect vehicle to spin out, stall and come to a stop.

**Ramming** - The deliberate act of contacting a suspect's vehicle with another law enforcement vehicle to functionally damage or otherwise force the suspect's vehicle to stop.

**Roadblocks** - A tactic designed to stop a suspect's vehicle by intentionally placing a law enforcement vehicle or other immovable object in the path of the suspect's vehicle.

**Terminate** - To discontinue a pursuit or stop chasing fleeing vehicles.

**Tire deflation device** - A device designed to puncture the tires of the pursued vehicle.

**Trail** - Following the path of the pursuit at a safe speed while obeying all traffic laws and without activating emergency equipment. If the pursuit is at a slow rate of speed, the trailing vehicle will maintain sufficient distance from the pursuit vehicles so as to clearly indicate an absence of participation in the pursuit.

**Vehicle pursuit** - An event involving one or more law enforcement officers attempting to apprehend a suspect, who is attempting to avoid apprehension while operating a vehicle by using high-speed driving or other evasive tactics, such as driving off a highway, turning suddenly or driving in a legal manner but willfully failing to yield to an officer's emergency signal to stop.

### 307.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this department to weigh the importance of apprehending suspects who unlawfully flee from law enforcement against the risks associated with vehicle pursuits.

### 307.3 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Vehicle pursuits shall only be conducted using authorized police department emergency vehicles that are equipped with and displaying emergency lighting or sirens as required by law. Whenever practicable, during an emergency call response the officer should continuously operate emergency lighting equipment and sound the siren (§ 61-9-402, MCA).

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Officers shall drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and property. However, officers may, when in pursuit of a suspect and provided there is no unreasonable risk to persons and property (§ 61-8-107, MCA):

- (a) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- (b) Exceed the speed limit.
- (c) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

#### 307.3.1 WHEN TO INITIATE A PURSUIT

Officers are authorized to initiate a pursuit when it is reasonable to believe that a suspect, who has been given an appropriate signal to stop by a law enforcement officer, is attempting to evade arrest or detention by fleeing in a vehicle.

An officer will not be criticized for not pursuing or for terminating a pursuit for safety concerns.

Factors that shall be considered, both individually and collectively, when deciding to initiate or continue a pursuit include, but are not limited to:

- (a) The seriousness of the known or reasonably suspected crime and its relationship to community safety.
- (b) The importance of protecting the public and balancing the known or reasonably suspected offense and the apparent need for immediate capture against the risks to officers, innocent motorists and others.
- (c) The safety of the public in the area of the pursuit, including the type of area, time of day, the amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic (e.g., school zones) and the speed of the pursuit relative to these factors.
- (d) The pursuing officers' familiarity with the area of the pursuit, the quality of radio communications between the pursuing vehicles and dispatcher/supervisor, and the driving capabilities of the pursuing officers under the conditions of the pursuit.
- (e) Whether traffic, weather and road conditions unreasonably increase the danger of the pursuit when weighed against the risks resulting from the suspect's escape.
- (f) Whether the identity of the suspect has been verified and whether there is comparatively minimal risk in allowing the suspect to be apprehended at a later time.
- (g) The performance capabilities of the vehicles used in the pursuit in relation to the speed and other conditions of the pursuit.
- (h) Emergency lighting and siren limitations on unmarked police department vehicles that may reduce visibility of the vehicle, such as visor or dash-mounted lights, concealable or temporary emergency lighting equipment and concealed or obstructed siren positioning.
- (i) Vehicle speeds.

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- (j) Other persons in or on the pursued vehicle (e.g., passengers, co-offenders and hostages).
- (k) The availability of other resources, such as air support assistance.
- (l) Whether the pursuing vehicle is carrying passengers other than on-duty police officers.

#### **307.3.2 WHEN TO TERMINATE A PURSUIT**

Pursuits should be terminated whenever the totality of objective circumstances known or which reasonably ought to be known to the officer or supervisor during the pursuit indicates that the present risks of continuing the pursuit reasonably appear to outweigh the risks resulting from the suspect's escape.

When a supervisor directs the pursuit to be terminated, officers will immediately terminate the pursuit.

The factors listed in this policy on when to initiate a pursuit will apply equally to the decision to terminate a 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.

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:

- (a) 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.
- (b) The pursued vehicle's location is no longer definitely known.
- (c) The pursuing vehicle sustains damage or a mechanical failure that renders it unsafe to drive.
- (d) The pursuing vehicle's emergency lighting equipment or siren becomes partially or completely inoperable.
- (e) Hazards posed to uninvolved bystanders or motorists.
- (f) 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.
- (g) 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.

#### **307.4 PURSUIT VEHICLES**

When involved in a pursuit, unmarked police department emergency vehicles should be replaced by marked emergency vehicles as soon as practicable.

Vehicle pursuits are limited to three police department emergency vehicles. If circumstances allow, one of the three vehicles should be a supervisor. However, the number of vehicles involved will vary with the circumstances.

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An officer or supervisor may request that additional vehicles join a pursuit if, after assessing the factors outlined above, it appears that the number of officers involved would be insufficient to safely arrest the number of suspects. All other officers shall stay out of the pursuit but should remain alert to its progress and location.

#### 307.4.1 MOTORCYCLES

When involved in a pursuit, police department motorcycles should be replaced by marked emergency vehicles as soon as practicable.

#### 307.4.2 VEHICLES WITHOUT EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Officers operating vehicles not equipped with emergency lights and siren are prohibited from initiating or joining in any pursuit. Officers in such vehicles may provide support to pursuing vehicles as long as the vehicle is operated in compliance with all traffic laws. Those officers should discontinue such support immediately upon arrival of a sufficient number of authorized emergency police department vehicles or any air support.

#### 307.4.3 PRIMARY PURSUIT VEHICLE RESPONSIBILITIES

The initial pursuing officer will be designated as the primary pursuit vehicle and will be responsible for the conduct of the pursuit unless he/she is unable to remain reasonably close to the suspect's vehicle. The primary responsibility of the officer initiating the pursuit is the apprehension of the suspect without unreasonable danger to him/herself or others.

The primary pursuing officer will notify the dispatcher, commencing with a request for priority radio traffic, that a vehicle pursuit has been initiated, and as soon as practicable provide information including, but not limited to:

- (a) The location, direction of travel and estimated speed of the suspect's vehicle.
- (b) The description of the suspect's vehicle including the license plate number, if known.
- (c) The reason for the pursuit.
- (d) The use of firearms, threat of force, violence, injuries, hostages or other unusual hazards.
- (e) The number of occupants and identity or description.
- (f) The road and traffic conditions.
- (g) The need for any additional resources or equipment.
- (h) The identity of other law enforcement agencies involved in the pursuit.

Until relieved by a supervisor or a secondary pursuing officer, the officer in the primary pursuit vehicle shall be responsible for broadcasting the progress of the pursuit. Unless circumstances reasonably indicate otherwise, the primary pursuing officer should, as soon as practicable, relinquish the responsibility of broadcasting the progress of the pursuit to an officer in a secondary pursuit vehicle to minimize distractions and allow the primary pursuing officer to concentrate foremost on safe pursuit tactics.

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#### 307.4.4 SECONDARY PURSUIT VEHICLE RESPONSIBILITIES

The second officer in the pursuit will be designated as the secondary pursuit vehicle and is responsible for:

- (a) Immediately notifying the dispatcher of their entry into the pursuit.
- (b) Remaining 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.
- (c) Broadcasting the progress of the pursuit, updating known or critical information and providing changes in the pursuit, unless the situation indicates otherwise.
- (d) Identifying the need for additional resources or equipment as appropriate.
- (e) Serving as backup to the primary pursuing officer once the suspect has been stopped.

#### 307.5 PURSUIT DRIVING

The decision to use specific driving tactics requires the same assessment of the factors the officer considered when determining whether to initiate and/or terminate a pursuit. The following are tactics for officers who are involved in the pursuit:

- (a) Officers, considering their driving skills and vehicle performance capabilities, will space themselves from other involved vehicles such that they are able to see and avoid hazards or react safely to unusual maneuvers by the fleeing vehicle.
- (b) Because intersections can present increased risks, the following tactics should be considered:
  - 1. Available officers not directly involved in the pursuit may proceed safely to controlled intersections ahead of the pursuit in an effort to warn cross traffic.
  - 2. Pursuing officers should exercise due caution and slow down as may be necessary when proceeding through controlled intersections.
- (c) Officers shall not pursue a vehicle driving the wrong direction on a roadway, highway or freeway. In the event the pursued vehicle does so, the following tactics should be considered:
  - 1. Maintain visual contact with the pursued vehicle by paralleling the vehicle while driving on the correct side of the roadway with all emergency lights and siren activated.
  - 2. Request other officers to observe exits available to the suspect.
- (d) Notify the Montana Highway Patrol or other law enforcement agency if it appears that the pursuit may enter its jurisdiction.
- (e) Officers involved in a pursuit should not attempt to pass other pursuing vehicles unless the situation indicates otherwise or they are requested to do so by the pursuing officer and with a clear understanding of the maneuver process between the involved officers.

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#### 307.5.1 PURSUIT TRAILING

In the event that initial pursuing officers relinquish control of the pursuit to another agency, the initial officers may, with the permission of a supervisor, trail the pursuit to the termination point in order to provide information and assistance for the arrest of the suspect and reporting the incident.

#### 307.5.2 OFFICERS NOT INVOLVED IN THE PURSUIT

Unless directed otherwise by a supervisor, officers not already involved should not become involved with the pursuit. Uninvolved officers are authorized to use emergency equipment at intersections along the pursuit path to clear intersections of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to protect the public. Those officers should attempt to place their vehicles in locations that provide some safety or an escape route in the event of an unintended collision or if the suspect intentionally tries to ram the police department vehicle.

Non-pursuing members needed at the pursuit termination point should respond in a non-emergency manner, observing the rules of the road, unless otherwise directed by officers on scene.

The primary pursuit vehicle, secondary pursuit vehicle and supervisor vehicle should be the only vehicles operating under emergency conditions (emergency lights and siren) unless other officers are assigned to the pursuit.

### **307.6 SUPERVISORY CONTROL AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Available supervisory and management control will be exercised over all vehicle pursuits involving officers from this department.

The on-duty shift supervisor will be responsible for:

- (a) Immediately notifying involved officers and the dispatcher of supervisory presence and ascertaining all reasonably available information to continuously assess the situation and risk factors associated with the pursuit. This is to ensure that the pursuit is conducted within established department guidelines.
- (b) Engaging in the pursuit, when appropriate, to provide on-scene supervision.
- (c) Exercising management and control of the pursuit even if not engaged in it.
- (d) Ensuring that no more than the required law enforcement vehicles are involved in the pursuit under the guidelines set forth in this policy.
- (e) Directing that the pursuit be terminated if, in their judgment, it is not justified to continue the pursuit under the guidelines of this policy.
- (f) Ensuring that assistance from canines or additional resources is requested, if available and appropriate.
- (g) Ensuring that the proper radio channel is being used.
- (h) Ensuring the notification and/or coordination of outside agencies if the pursuit either leaves or is likely to leave the jurisdiction of this department.
- (i) Controlling and managing Bozeman Police Department officers when a pursuit enters another jurisdiction.

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- (j) Preparing a post-pursuit review and documentation of the pursuit as required, and forwarding the report to the Parol Lieutenants.

#### **307.7 INTERJURISDICTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When a pursuit enters another agency's jurisdiction, the primary pursuing officer or supervisor, will coordinate with dispatch to ensure that notification is provided to each outside jurisdiction into which the pursuit is reasonably expected to enter.

##### **307.7.1 ASSUMPTION OF PURSUIT BY ANOTHER AGENCY**

Officers will relinquish control of the pursuit when another agency has assumed the pursuit, unless the continued assistance of the Bozeman Police Department is requested by the agency assuming the pursuit. Upon relinquishing control of the pursuit, the involved officers may proceed, with supervisory approval, to the termination point of the pursuit to assist in the investigation. The supervisor should coordinate such assistance with the assuming agency and obtain any information that is necessary for any reports.

The roles and responsibilities of officers at the termination point of a pursuit initiated by this department shall be coordinated with appropriate consideration of the needs of the agency assuming the pursuit.

##### **307.7.2 PURSUITS EXTENDING INTO THIS JURISDICTION**

The agency that initiates a pursuit shall be responsible for conducting the pursuit. Officers from this department should not join a pursuit unless specifically requested to do so by the pursuing agency and with approval from a supervisor. The exception to this is when a single vehicle from the initiating agency is in pursuit. Under this circumstance, an officer from this department may, with supervisor approval, immediately join the pursuit until sufficient vehicles from the initiating agency join the pursuit or until additional information is provided allowing withdrawal from the pursuit.

When a request is made for this department to assist or take over a pursuit that has entered the jurisdiction of the Bozeman Police Department, the supervisor should consider:

- (a) The public's safety within this jurisdiction.
- (b) The safety of the pursuing officers.
- (c) Whether the circumstances are serious enough to continue the pursuit.
- (d) Whether there is adequate staffing to continue the pursuit.
- (e) The ability to maintain the pursuit.

As soon as practicable, the Shift Supervisor should review a request for assistance from another agency. The Shift Supervisor, after considering the above factors, may decline to assist in or assume the other agency's pursuit.

Assistance to a pursuing agency by officers of this department will conclude at the City limits, provided that the pursuing agency has sufficient assistance from other sources. Ongoing participation from this department may continue only until sufficient assistance is present.

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In the event that the termination point of a pursuit from another agency is within this jurisdiction, officers shall provide appropriate assistance.

#### **307.8 PURSUIT INTERVENTION**

Pursuit intervention is an attempt to stop the suspect's ability to continue to flee in a vehicle through tactical application of technology, tire deflation devices, blocking or vehicle intercept, the PIT, ramming or roadblock procedures.

##### **307.8.1 WHEN USE IS AUTHORIZED**

Whenever practicable, an officer shall seek approval from a supervisor before employing any intervention to stop the pursued vehicle. In deciding whether to use intervention tactics, officers/supervisors should balance the risk of allowing the pursuit to continue with the potential hazards arising from the use of each tactic to the public, the officers and persons in or on the pursued vehicle. With this in mind, the decision to use any intervention tactic should be reasonable in light of the circumstances apparent to the officer at the time of the decision.

##### **307.8.2 USE OF FIREARMS**

The use of firearms to disable a pursued vehicle is not generally an effective tactic and involves all the dangers associated with discharging firearms. Officers should not utilize firearms during an ongoing pursuit unless the conditions and circumstances meet the requirements authorizing the use of deadly force. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit any officer from using a firearm to stop a suspect from using a vehicle as a deadly weapon.

##### **307.8.3 INTERVENTION STANDARDS**

Any intervention tactic, depending upon the conditions and circumstances under which it is used, may present dangers to the officers, the public or anyone in or on the vehicle being pursued. Certain applications of intervention tactics may be construed to be a use of force, including deadly force, and are subject to policies guiding such use. Officers shall consider these facts and requirements prior to deciding how, when, where and if an intervention tactic should be employed.

- (a) Blocking or vehicle intercept should only be considered in cases involving drivers who pose a threat to the public's safety, and when officers reasonably believe that attempting a conventional enforcement stop will likely result in the driver attempting to flee in the vehicle. Because of the potential risks involved, this intervention tactic should only be employed by properly trained officers and after giving consideration to the following:
  1. The need to immediately stop the suspect vehicle or prevent it from leaving substantially outweighs the risk of injury or death to occupants of the suspect vehicle, officers or others.
  2. All other reasonable intervention tactics have failed or reasonably appear ineffective.
  3. Employing the blocking or vehicle intercept maneuver does not unreasonably increase the risk of danger to those involved or the public.



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4. The suspect vehicle is stopped or traveling at a low speed.
  5. Only law enforcement vehicles should be used in this tactic.
- (b) The PIT is limited to use by properly trained officers with the approval of a supervisor and upon assessment of the circumstances and conditions presented at the time, including the potential for risk of injury to officers, the public and occupants of the pursued vehicle. The PIT will not be used to stop a pursuit with a motorcycle, ATV, or snowmobile unless deadly force is otherwise authorized for the situation. The use of the PIT for other vehicles at speeds in excess of 45 mph will also be considered a use of deadly force and must be justified in accordance with Montana Code Annotated 45-3-101 and BPD Use of Force Policy. The use of the PIT maneuver at speeds at, or below, 45 mph is not considered a use of deadly force.
- (c) Ramming a fleeing vehicle should be done only after other reasonable tactical means at the officer's disposal have been exhausted or would not be effective, and immediate control is necessary. Ramming should be reserved for situations where there does not appear to be another reasonable alternative method. If there does not reasonably appear to be a present or immediately foreseeable serious threat to the public, the use of ramming is not authorized. When ramming is used as a means to stop a fleeing vehicle, the following factors should be present:
1. The suspect is an actual or suspected felon and reasonably appears to represent a serious threat to the public if not apprehended.
  2. The suspect is driving with willful or wanton disregard for the safety of other persons or is driving in a reckless and life-endangering manner or using the vehicle as a weapon.
- (d) Tire deflation devices should be deployed only after notification of pursuing officers and the supervisor of the intent and location of the intended deployment, and in a manner that:
1. Should reasonably only affect the pursued vehicle.
  2. Provides the deploying officer adequate cover and escape from intentional or unintentional exposure to the approaching vehicle.
  3. Takes into account the limitations of such devices as well as the potential risk to officers, the public and occupants of the pursued vehicle.
  4. Takes into account whether the pursued vehicle is a motorcycle, a vehicle transporting hazardous materials or a school bus transporting children.
  5. The officer deploying the device is responsible for securing them immediately after their use. This will include searching the immediate area of deployment and collecting any detached deflation material, as well as preparing the device for reuse and storage.
- (e) Because roadblocks involve a potential for serious injury or death to occupants of the pursued vehicle if the suspect does not stop, the intentional placement of roadblocks in the direct path of a pursued vehicle is generally discouraged and should not be deployed without prior approval of a supervisor. If roadblocks are deployed, it should

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only be done under extraordinary conditions when all other reasonable intervention tactics have failed or reasonably appear ineffective and the need to immediately stop the pursued vehicle substantially outweighs the risks of injury or death to occupants of the pursued vehicle, officers or the public.

#### **307.9 CAPTURE OF SUSPECTS**

Unless relieved by a supervisor, the primary pursuing officer should coordinate efforts to apprehend the suspect following the pursuit. Officers should consider the safety of the public and the involved officers when formulating plans for setting up perimeters or for containing and capturing the suspect.

#### **307.10 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

All vehicle pursuits regardless of duration, will be documented by case reports and a Pursuit Tracking Form. The Patrol Lieutenant will review all vehicle pursuits. The Lieutenants assigned to conduct the review shall forward all findings in writing to the Patrol Division Commander. This review shall be to determine and document the following:

- (a) Whether the pursuit was within policy.
- (b) Tactical considerations.
- (c) Training considerations.
- (d) Vehicle or equipment concerns.
- (e) Actions of the supervisor.

#### **307.11 REGULAR AND PERIODIC PURSUIT TRAINING**

In addition to initial and supplementary training on pursuits, all officers will participate, no less than annually, in regular and periodic training addressing this policy and the importance of vehicle safety and protecting the public. Training will include recognition of the need to balance the known offense and the need for immediate capture against the risks to officers and others.

#### **307.12 POLICY REVIEW**

Officers of this department shall review this policy initially, and upon any amendments, and whenever training on the policy is provided.