



Kern County Sheriff's Office

Policies and Procedures

TITLE: FOOT PURSUITS			NO: H-1900
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: June 29, 2020	REVIEWED: 06/29/2020	REVISED: 06/29/2020	UPDATED: 06/29/2020

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines to assist deputies in making the decision to initiate or continue the pursuit of suspects on foot.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Kern County Sheriff's Office that deputies, when deciding to initiate or continue a foot pursuit, continuously balance the objective of apprehending the suspect with the risk and potential for injury to Sheriff's Office members, the public or the suspect.

Deputies are expected to act reasonably, based on the totality of the circumstances.

DECISION TO PURSUE

The safety of Sheriff's Office members and the public should be the primary consideration when determining whether a foot pursuit should be initiated or continued. Deputies must be mindful that immediate apprehension of a suspect is rarely more important than the safety of the public and Sheriff's Office members.

Deputies may be justified in initiating a foot pursuit of any individual the deputy reasonably believes is about to engage in, is engaging in or has engaged in criminal activity. The decision to initiate or continue such a foot pursuit, however, must be continuously re-evaluated in light of the circumstances presented at the time.

Mere flight by a person who is not suspected of criminal activity shall not serve as justification for engaging in an extended foot pursuit without the development of reasonable suspicion regarding the individual's involvement in criminal activity or being wanted by law enforcement.

Deciding to initiate or continue a foot pursuit is a decision a deputy must make quickly and under unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. It is recognized that foot pursuits may place Sheriff's Office members and the public at significant risk. Therefore, no deputy or supervisor shall be criticized or disciplined for deciding not to engage in a foot pursuit because of the perceived risk involved.

If circumstances permit, surveillance and containment are generally the safest tactics for apprehending fleeing persons. In deciding whether to initiate or continue a foot pursuit, a deputy should continuously consider reasonable alternatives to a foot pursuit based upon the circumstances and resources available, such as:

- Containment of the area.
- Saturation of the area with law enforcement personnel, including assistance from other agencies.
- A canine search.
- Thermal imaging or other sensing technology.
- Air support.
- Apprehension at another time when the identity of the suspect is known or there is information available that would likely allow for later apprehension, and the need to immediately apprehend the suspect does not reasonably appear to outweigh the risk of continuing the foot pursuit.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

When reasonably practicable, deputies should consider alternatives to engaging in or continuing a foot pursuit when:

- Directed by a supervisor to terminate the foot pursuit; such an order shall be considered mandatory
- The deputy is acting alone.
- Two or more deputies become separated, lose visual contact with one another, or obstacles separate them to the degree that they cannot immediately assist each other should a confrontation take place. In such circumstances, it is generally recommended that a single deputy keep the suspect in sight from a safe distance and coordinate the containment effort.
- The deputy is unsure of his/her location and direction of travel.
- The deputy is pursuing multiple suspects and it is not reasonable to believe that the deputy would be able to control the suspect(s) should a confrontation occur.
- The physical condition of the deputy renders him/her incapable of controlling the suspect if apprehended.
- The deputy loses radio contact with the dispatcher or with assisting or backup deputies.
- The suspect enters a building, structure, confined space, isolated area or dense or difficult terrain, and there are insufficient deputies to provide backup and containment. The primary deputy should consider discontinuing the foot pursuit and coordinating containment pending the arrival of sufficient resources.

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- The deputy becomes aware of unanticipated or unforeseen circumstances that unreasonably increase the risk to deputies or the public.
- The deputy reasonably believes that the danger to the pursuing deputies or public outweighs the objective of immediate apprehension.
- The deputy loses possession of his/her firearm or other essential equipment.
- The deputy or a third party is injured during the pursuit, requiring immediate assistance, and there are no other emergency personnel available to render assistance.
- The suspect's location is no longer definitely known.
- The identity of the suspect is established, or other information exists that will allow for the suspect's apprehension at a later time, and it reasonably appears that there is no immediate threat to Sheriff's Office members or the public if the suspect is not immediately apprehended.
- The deputy's ability to safely continue the pursuit is impaired by inclement weather, darkness or other environmental conditions.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN FOOT PURSUITS

INITIATING DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Unless relieved by another deputy or a supervisor, the initiating deputy shall be responsible for coordinating the progress of the pursuit. When acting alone and when practicable, the initiating deputy should not attempt to overtake and confront the suspect but should attempt to keep the suspect in sight until sufficient deputies are present to safely apprehend the suspect.

Early communication of available information from the involved deputies is essential so adequate resources can be coordinated and deployed to bring a foot pursuit to a safe conclusion. Deputies initiating a foot pursuit should, at a minimum, broadcast the following information as soon as it becomes practicable and available:

- Location and direction of travel
- Call sign identifier
- Reason for the foot pursuit, such as the crime classification
- Number of suspects and description, to include name if known
- Whether the suspect is known or believed to be armed with a dangerous weapon

Deputies should be mindful radio transmissions made while running may be difficult to understand and may need to be repeated.

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Absent extenuating circumstances, any deputy unable to promptly and effectively broadcast this information should terminate the foot pursuit. If the foot pursuit is discontinued for any reason, immediate efforts for containment should be established and alternatives considered based upon the circumstances and available resources.

When a foot pursuit terminates, the deputy will notify the dispatcher of his/her location and the status of the pursuit termination (e.g., suspect in custody, lost sight of suspect), and will direct further actions as reasonably appear necessary, to include requesting medical aid as needed for deputies, suspects or members of the public.

ASSISTING DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Whenever any deputy announces that he/she is engaged in a foot pursuit, all other deputies should minimize non-essential radio traffic to permit the involved deputy's maximum access to the radio frequency. Assisting deputies shall change to an alternate channel, if possible, to put themselves enroute to location of the foot pursuit.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon becoming aware of a foot pursuit, the supervisor shall make every reasonable effort to ascertain sufficient information to direct responding resources and to take command, control and coordination of the foot pursuit. The supervisor should respond to the area whenever possible; the supervisor does not, however, need to be physically present to exercise control over the foot pursuit. The supervisor shall continuously assess the situation in order to ensure the foot pursuit is conducted within established Sheriff's Office guidelines.

The supervisor shall terminate the foot pursuit when the danger to pursuing deputies or the public appears to unreasonably outweigh the objective of immediate apprehension of the suspect.

Upon apprehension of the suspect, the supervisor shall promptly proceed to the termination point to direct the post-foot pursuit activity.

THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon notification or becoming aware that a foot pursuit is in progress, the dispatcher is responsible for:

- Clearing the radio channel of non-emergency traffic.
- Coordinating pursuit communications of the involved deputies.
- Broadcasting pursuit updates as well as other pertinent information as necessary.

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- Ensuring that a field supervisor is notified of the foot pursuit.
- Notifying and coordinating with other involved or affected agencies as practicable.
- Notifying the Watch Lieutenant as soon as practicable.
- Assigning an incident number and logging all pursuit activities.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The initiating deputy shall complete appropriate crime/arrest reports documenting, at minimum:

- Date and time of the foot pursuit.
- Initial reason and circumstances surrounding the foot pursuit.
- Course and approximate distance of the foot pursuit.
- Alleged offenses.
- Involved vehicles and deputies.
- Whether a suspect was apprehended as well as the means and methods used.
 - Any use of force shall be reported and documented in compliance with DPPM F-200 Use of Force - Reporting.
- Arrestee information, if applicable.
- Any injuries and/or medical treatment for deputies, public, and/or the suspect.
- Any property or equipment damage.
- Name of the supervisor at the scene or who handled the incident.

Assisting deputies taking an active role in the apprehension of the suspect shall complete supplemental reports as necessary or as directed.

The supervisor reviewing the report will make a preliminary determination that the pursuit appears to be in compliance with this policy or that additional review and/or follow-up is warranted.

In any case in which a suspect is not apprehended and there is insufficient information to support further investigation, a supervisor may authorize that the initiating deputy need not complete a formal report.

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