
LAURENS COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP# P-280

PAGE # 1

SUBJECT: VEHICULAR PURSUIT

INDEX AS: VEHICULAR PURSUIT

EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/13/2005 REVISED DATE:

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to state the guidelines to be followed during a vehicular pursuit.

II. DEFINITIONS:

A. Vehicular Pursuit:

An active attempt by Deputies to apprehend a suspect operating a motor vehicle, while the suspect is trying to avoid capture by using high speed driving or other evasive tactics such as driving off a highway, making sudden or unexpected movements, or maintaining legal speed but willfully failing to obey the signal to stop.

III. POLICY:

Vehicular pursuits of fleeing suspects present a danger to the lives of the public, Officers, and suspects involved in the pursuit. It is the policy of this department to protect all persons' lives to the extent possible when enforcing the law. In addition, it is the responsibility of the department to assist officers in the safe performance of their duties. To effect these obligations, it shall be the policy of the department to narrowly regulate the manner in which vehicular pursuits are undertaken and performed.

NOTE: No Deputy or Supervisor will be disciplined for not electing to conduct a pursuit or for discontinuing a pursuit, even if justified to continue the chase.

LAURENS COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP# P-280

PAGE # 2

IV. INITIATION OF A PURSUIT: THE DECISION TO INITIATE A PURSUIT RESTS WITH THE OFFICER.

- A. In initiating any pursuit a Deputy must first be able to articulate that a violator is presenting a clear and immediate danger to the public. The violator's dangerous behavior must be present prior to the act of fleeing by virtue of either the violator's highly risky driving or preceding criminal behavior. The mere fact that an offender flees cannot be the single factor in the decision to initiate a pursuit.
- B. Pursuits can be justified when the officer has evaluated the circumstances and concludes 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 escape.
- C. In arriving at the decision to initiate or continue a pursuit, the officer must carefully consider all factors involved, the possible consequences, and most important, the safety of the public and law enforcement personnel.

V. CONTINUING A PURSUIT:

Once an Officer has initiated a pursuit, he/she must continually evaluate the circumstances. If at any point the risk created by the pursuit is greater than the risk originally presented by the violator, then the officer will terminate the pursuit. Upon terminating the pursuit, an officer may resume normal driving operations and follow the violator at a safe distance.

VI. TERMINATION OF PURSUIT:

The pursuit shall be terminated if, in the officer's opinion, the risk of continuing outweighs the danger of permitting the suspect to escape.

- A. Under most circumstances officers should exercise their discretion to stop a pursuit when:

LAURENS COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP# P-280

PAGE # 3

1. The suspect is positively identified and there is no longer a need for immediate apprehension;
2. The pursued vehicle's location is no longer definitely known;
3. Emergency equipment or radio of the officer's vehicle fails to work properly;
4. Traffic volume and/or road conditions dictate that it is too hazardous for the pursuit to continue; and
5. The officer knows that the fleeing vehicle is heading for a populated or high traffic area (i.e., a school area, especially during opening or closing periods; a business area, especially during morning or evening rush hour times; a shopping area during normal business hours; a location where a special event or community activity is taking place; etc.)

VII. PURSUIT OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. Each unit authorized to engage in vehicular pursuits shall be required to activate headlights and all emergency equipment prior to beginning the pursuit.
- B. The pursuing officer shall immediately notify communications center personnel that a pursuit is underway. The officer shall provide communications personnel with the following information:
 1. Unit identification;
 2. Location, speed and direction of travel of the fleeing vehicle;
 3. Description and license plate number, if known, of the fleeing vehicle;
 4. Number of occupants in the fleeing vehicle.

LAURENS COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

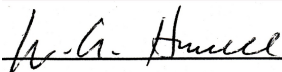
SOP# P-280

PAGE # 4

- C. Officers engaged in pursuit shall at all times drive in a manner exercising reasonable care for the safety of themselves and all other persons and property within the pursuit area.
- D. Officers are permitted to suspend conformance with normal traffic regulations during pursuit as long as reasonable care is used when driving in a manner not otherwise permitted, and the maneuver is reasonably necessary to gain control of the suspect.

VIII. FIELD SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. Upon notification that a vehicular pursuit incident is in progress, the field supervisor shall assume responsibility for the monitoring and control of the pursuit as it progresses.
- B. The field supervisor shall continuously review the incoming data to determine whether the pursuit should be continued or terminated.
- C. The field supervisor shall prepare a comprehensive analysis of the pursuit and forward it to the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency.


W. A. HARRELL
SHERIFF

4/13/2005

Effective Date: