

# Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board

## Police Pursuit Guidelines



Pursuant to P.A. 88-637  
Adopted 1994  
Revised 12/2024

## **PREFACE**

It is both the duty and obligation of responsible police officials to provide direction and guidelines to officers responsible for the capture of offenders attempting to evade the police with a motor vehicle. It is also imperative that standards designed to protect life and property be implemented statewide if the public is to be equally protected throughout Illinois. The Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board (Training Board) formally adopted the following Pursuit Guidelines. These recommended state standards meet the goal of providing criteria designed to maximize public safety under pursuit conditions.<sup>1</sup>

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the police pursuit guidelines is to provide a common set of standards for police agencies and their officers (to follow) throughout the State of Illinois. These guidelines are intended to help reduce the number of collision injuries and fatalities associated with pursuits within the state.

## **PRINCIPLES**

The overriding responsibility of police agencies in the State of Illinois is to protect human life and property. When the risks to human life and/or property begin to outweigh the benefits of capture, officers should refrain or disengage from pursuits. The threat of injury, death, and property damage is borne by innocent bystanders, the peace officers involved in the pursuit, the fleeing driver and the occupants of the escaping vehicle. Therefore, it is the responsibility of agencies to establish pursuit guidelines designed to best protect human life and property and to provide peace officers guidance and training in the safe operation of police vehicles involved in pursuits.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is both the duty and responsibility for police administrators to provide direction consisting of policy and procedure for officers within their command to assist in carrying out the responsibilities of their daily duties. As such, administrators responsible for supervision and direction should complete Vehicular Pursuit Management: Balancing Risks and Enhancing Safety on the COPS Training Portal located at: <https://learn.copstrainingportal.org/> Signup and login may be acquired at the same address.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **GENERAL TERMS:**

**Pursuit:** An active attempt by a peace officer in an authorized marked emergency vehicle when emergency lights and siren are activated in-order to apprehend an actual or suspected law violator, is attempting to avoid apprehension through evasive maneuvers and tactics beyond a reasonable point at which a person should know they are being directed to stop.

**Peace Officer:** Any sworn peace officer as defined by Illinois Statute currently employed by a public safety agency.

---

<sup>1</sup> These guidelines are designed to inform the decisions of law enforcement agencies in the formulation of policies governing pursuits. They are not intended to create legal obligations or to be utilized by individual officers in performance of their duties.

- Supervisor/Officer in Charge:** A peace officer who, by virtue of rank or assignment, is responsible for the direction or supervision of the activities of other peace officers.
- Suspect:** Any person who a peace officer reasonably believes has committed an offense or poses an immediate threat to the safety of the public and/or other peace officers.
- ISPERN:** Illinois State Police Emergency Radio Network.
- Street Paralleling:** Driving a police vehicle on a street parallel to a street on which a pursuit is occurring. Paralleling involves monitoring radio traffic and geographical positioning but not pursuit.
- Trail or Trailing:** The unauthorized following of a pursuit at any distance, to include paralleling, intercepting, or tracking.
- Caravanning:** The practice of more than two cars pursuing a vehicle.
- Divided Highway:** A road which includes a physical barrier between traffic traveling in opposite directions.
- Terminate:** To abandon or abort the pursuit.
- Termination Point:** The location where the pursuit comes to a conclusion.

**AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE:**

**Marked Police Vehicle:** Any police vehicle that is identifiable by color scheme, red and/or blue lights permanently mounted on or within the vehicle, equipped with a siren, and has a department seal and/or police or sheriff lettering which a reasonable person knows to be a marked police vehicle.

**Semi-Marked Police Vehicle:** A vehicle that is not identifiably marked by a distinctive color scheme; red and/or blue lights may be mounted within the vehicle, equipped with siren, and could have partial police marking which a reasonable person would know is a police vehicle.

**Unmarked Police Vehicle:** A vehicle that has no distinctive identifiable marking but may have portable emergency warning lights.

## **VEHICLES ENGAGED IN PURSUIT:**

**Primary Unit:** The police vehicle that initiates a pursuit or any unit that assumes control of the pursuit as the lead vehicle (the first police vehicle immediately behind the fleeing suspect).

**Secondary Unit:** Any police vehicle which becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit and follows the primary unit at a safe distance.

## **STATIONARY STOP TECHNIQUES:**

**Roadblock:** A restriction or obstruction used or intended for the purpose of preventing free passage of motor vehicles on a roadway in order to affect the apprehension of a suspect. This includes placement of vehicles as well as use of devices to disable a vehicle.

## **MOBILE STOP TECHNIQUES:**

**Boxing In/Rolling Roadblock:** The surrounding of a suspect's moving vehicle with moving pursuit vehicles which are then slowed to a stop along with the suspect's vehicle.

## **FORCIBLE STOP TECHNIQUES:**

**Vehicle Contact Action (Ramming, Police Immobilization Technique):** Any action undertaken by the pursuing officer intended to result in contact between the moving police vehicle and the pursued vehicle.

**Heading Off:** An attempt to terminate a pursuit by pulling ahead of, behind or toward a suspect's moving vehicle to force it to the side of the road or to otherwise come to a stop.

## **PHASE ONE: INITIATION OF PURSUIT**

Any peace officer in an authorized vehicle may initiate a pursuit when ALL of the following criteria are met:

1. The suspect is attempting to evade apprehension.
2. The suspect, if allowed to escape, may present a danger to human life or cause serious injury. 2

---

2 In implementing these guidelines, a jurisdiction needs to provide officers with guidance as to what type of conduct constitutes sufficient "danger to human life" to warrant pursuit. This guidance can be provided through specific written guidance and/or training.

## **PHASE TWO: FIELD OPERATIONS AND PURSUIT TACTICS**

### **A. ENGAGEMENT:**

1. No pursuits will be conducted with a police vehicle while providing transportation for any persons other than sworn law enforcement officers.
2. To reduce the likelihood of a pursuit occurring, a peace officer intending to stop a vehicle for any violation of the law, except a traffic law, shall, whenever possible and without creating a threat to public safety or peace officers, close the distance between the two vehicles prior to activating emergency lights, an audible device, or otherwise signaling the suspect to stop.
3. No more than two police vehicles (a Primary Unit and a Secondary Unit) shall become actively involved in a pursuit unless otherwise specifically directed by a supervisor.
4. Peace officers involved in a pursuit shall not proceed in a direction opposite to the flow of traffic on a divided highway without the specific authorization of a supervisor, if feasible.
5. Police units that are on a street parallel to a pursuit may not join or interfere with a pursuit unless specifically directed by a supervisor.
6. All units in a pursuit, whether the Primary or Secondary Unit, should be spaced sufficiently to successfully execute basic maneuvers.
7. Upon approaching an intersection controlled by traffic signals or signs, or any other location at which there is an increased likelihood of a collision, the driver of any pursuit vehicle shall, prior to entering the intersection, or upon the approach to any other such location where there is an increased likelihood of a collision, reduce the vehicle's speed so as to avoid a collision with another vehicle or pedestrian. Peace officers shall ensure that the way is clear before proceeding through an intersection or otherwise increasing speed. Pursuing peace officers are expected to maintain complete control of their vehicles at all times.
8. A motorcycle officer may initiate a pursuit, providing that the proper justification exists, but will relinquish Primary Unit status immediately upon the participation of a marked police vehicle. Upon relinquishing Primary Unit status, motorcycles shall terminate active involvement in a pursuit unless there are extremely exigent circumstances or are otherwise directed by a supervisor.
9. Semi-marked units may initiate a pursuit providing that the proper justification exists, but will relinquish Primary Unit status immediately

upon the participation of a marked police car. Upon relinquishing primary status, semi-marked units shall terminate active involvement in a pursuit unless they are needed to fulfill Secondary Unit responsibilities or are otherwise directed by a supervisor.

10. Unmarked or other departmental vehicles, except for marked, semi-marked and motorcycle units, may not initiate a pursuit without the authorization of a supervisor unless there is an imminent threat to life or great bodily harm represented by the continued freedom of the suspect.
11. Throughout the course of a pursuit, pursuing peace officers shall not attempt to overtake, pull alongside, or pass the suspect's moving vehicle without the specific authorization of a supervisor, if feasible. Peace officers shall not pass other units involved in a pursuit unless the passing peace officer receives specific permission from the Primary Unit.
12. Peace officers may use stationary stop techniques to terminate any pursuit so long as the technique is employed in a fashion that is not calculated to cause death or great bodily harm to persons in the pursued vehicle or others in the vicinity (i.e. the pursued vehicle has sufficient time and distance to stop before reaching the roadblock or the technology employed is designed to disable the vehicle without the loss of control). Where feasible, a peace officer should obtain authorization from a supervisor before implementing stationary stop techniques. Absent exigent circumstances, such techniques should not be employed by peace officers that have not been trained in application of the selected technique.
13. Peace officers may use mobile stop techniques to terminate any pursuit so long as the technique is employed in a fashion that is not calculated to cause death or great bodily harm to persons in the pursued vehicle or others in the vicinity. Where feasible, a peace officer should obtain authorization from a supervisor before implementing mobile stop techniques. Absent exigent circumstances, such techniques should not be employed by peace officers that have not been trained in application of the selected technique.
14. At low speeds [20 MPH or below], the use of forcible stop techniques is permitted when there is legal justification for the use of force. Where feasible, a peace officer should obtain authorization from a supervisor before implementing forcible stop techniques. Absent exigent circumstances, such techniques should not be employed by peace officers that have not been trained in application of the selected technique.
15. At high speeds [in excess of 20 MPH], the use of forcible stop techniques is permitted ONLY when there is legal justification for the use of deadly force. Where feasible a peace officer implementing forcible stop techniques. Absent exigent circumstances, such techniques should not be

employed by peace officers that have not been trained in application of the selected technique.

16. Peace officers involved in a pursuit shall not discharge any firearm from or at a moving vehicle, nor engage in any vehicle contact action except as a last resort to prevent imminent death or serious bodily injury to an officer or another person where deadly force would otherwise be legally justified. Where feasible, a peace officer should obtain authorization from a supervisor before discharging a weapon from or at a moving vehicle.

**B. PRIMARY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. The decision to initiate and/or continue a pursuit **REQUIRES** weighing the public safety need to immediately apprehend the suspect against the degree of risk to which peace officers and others are exposed as the result of a pursuit. Peace officers are reminded that they are under no legal obligation to initiate a pursuit, and that in many circumstances the safety of the public will dictate that no pursuit be initiated, and/or it be discontinued. Consideration should be given to the reason for pursuit of the fleeing vehicle, speed of the pursuit, the area of the pursuit, weather and road conditions, lighting and visibility, the presence of pedestrians and other traffic, the presence of passengers in the police or suspect vehicle, the presence or absence of audible or visible warnings, the relative performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle and vehicle being pursued, known information on the suspect, available equipment, and officer training and experience.
2. Upon the initiation of a pursuit, the pursuing peace officer shall immediately activate the vehicle's emergency warning lights, audible device, and headlights if not already activated.

**C. SECONDARY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. A Secondary Unit shall notify the telecommunicator and supervisor, if feasible, that they have joined the pursuit. Until such time that a supervisor assumes responsibility, only one Secondary Unit shall become involved in an ongoing pursuit.
2. Upon being assigned Secondary Unit responsibilities, the vehicle's emergency warning lights, audible device, and headlights shall be activated.
3. Whenever practicable, the Secondary Unit shall assume the responsibility for ongoing pursuit telecommunications from the Primary Unit.
4. If so requested by the Primary Unit or if directed by a Supervisor to do so, the Secondary Unit may assume Primary Unit responsibilities. Otherwise,

the Secondary Unit may not attempt to overtake or pull alongside the Primary Unit.

5. Secondary Unit personnel are responsible for serving as a backup to the Primary Unit. As such, they will respond to directions from the Primary Unit personnel unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.

**D. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Upon notification that a pursuit is in progress, the supervisor shall assume responsibility for the monitoring and control of the pursuit as it progresses.
2. The supervisor shall immediately determine whether the pursuit was initiated in accordance with the provisions of this guideline and shall permit the pursuit to be continued only if said guideline has been fully complied with to the best of the supervisor's knowledge.
3. Upon being notified of a pursuit, the supervisor shall verify the following:
  - a. That no more than the required or necessary number of units are involved in the pursuit;
  - b. That the proper radio frequency is being used;
  - c. That other agencies are notified as necessary and appropriate.
4. The supervisor shall continuously review the incoming information to determine whether the pursuit should be continued or terminated.
5. The supervisor shall order a pursuit terminated after concluding danger to the pursuing peace officers or the public outweighs the need for the immediate apprehension of the suspect.
6. The supervisor may order a pursuit terminated if the suspect's identity is established to the point where later apprehension is likely and there is no immediate threat to public safety.
7. The supervisor should order a pursuit terminated whenever the weather, road or traffic conditions substantially increase the danger to the public posed by the pursuit beyond the need for immediate apprehension.
8. The supervisor shall order a pursuit terminated whenever the distance between the pursuing and fleeing vehicles is so great that further pursuit is futile.

9. In controlling the pursuit, the supervisor shall be responsible for the coordination of the pursuit as follows:
  - a. Directing pursuit or support units into or out of the pursuit;
  - b. The assignment of a Secondary Unit to the pursuit;
  - c. The redesignation of Primary, Secondary, or other support units as necessary;
  - d. The approval, disapproval, and coordination of pursuit tactics;
  - e. The approval or disapproval to cross jurisdictional boundaries in the continuation of the pursuit;
  - f. Ensure compliance with interjurisdictional pursuit agreements.
10. The supervisor may approve and assign additional backup or support units to assist the Primary and Secondary Units based upon their analysis of:
  - a. The nature of the offense for which the pursuit was initiated;
  - b. The number of suspects and any known propensity for violence;
  - c. The number of peace officers in the pursuit vehicles;
  - d. Any damage or injuries to the assigned Primary or Secondary Units or peace officers;
  - e. The number of peace officers necessary to safely make an arrest at the conclusion of the pursuit;
  - f. Any other clear and articulable facts that would justify the increased hazards caused by adding more than the Primary and Secondary Units to a pursuit.
11. When the pursuit is terminated, the supervisor shall require that all participating agencies are notified, and identify an on scene supervisor or designee to monitor the arrest and transportation procedures.
12. The supervisor shall require throughout the duration of the pursuit that this guideline is followed by all peace officers.

**E. OTHER UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Unless otherwise directed, police units other than the Primary Unit and the first Secondary Unit shall not become involved in an ongoing pursuit.

2. Unless otherwise directed, police units other than the Primary Unit and the first Secondary unit shall not caravan and/or trail. Non-engaged police units are expected to monitor radio transmissions and to position themselves to be of possible assistance.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

### **A. ENGAGED VEHICLE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Upon the initiation of a pursuit, the pursuing peace officer shall immediately or as soon as is reasonably practicable, notify telecommunications of the following information if available:
  - a. Notify the telecommunicator of pursuit in progress;
  - b. Advise location and direction of travel;
  - c. Give description of vehicle;
  - d. Give reason for pursuit;
  - e. Give estimated speed of fleeing vehicle;
  - f. Give number of occupants;
  - g. Give weather, road, and traffic conditions;
  - h. Identify other agencies involved in pursuit;
  - i. Advise when leaving jurisdiction.
2. The Primary Unit will provide telecommunications with frequent updates as to the location, direction of travel, and other pertinent information unless or until the Secondary Unit assumes responsibility for the telecommunication.
3. The Primary Unit is responsible for the conduct of the pursuit and in determining whether to continue or discontinue the pursuit unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.
4. The pursuing peace officer should keep windows rolled up and operate siren manually when possible, so that the telecommunicator can hear transmissions clearly.

**B. TELECOMMUNICATOR:**

1. Gives priority to Primary Unit;
2. Notifies other units of pursuit, including location, direction of travel, and vehicle description; also keeps a clear channel;
3. Notifies patrol supervisor if feasible;
4. Receives and records all incoming information on pursuit;
5. Keeps supervisor apprised of progress of pursuit,
6. Requests status when pursuing peace officer fails to make frequent contact;
7. Notifies neighboring jurisdictions of pursuit approaching their boundaries;
8. Performs relevant records and motor vehicle checks;
9. Coordinates and dispatches backup assistance and air support units under the direction of the supervisor.

**C. RADIO FREQUENCY:**

1. Pursuit communication will be handled on pursuing agencies' designated frequency, unless one or more of the following conditions exist; in that event, pursuit telecommunications should be handled on ISPERN:
  - a. Pursuit has or may extend into other jurisdictions.
  - b. The supervisor directs a switch to ISPERN.
2. Upon using the ISPERN frequency, the Primary Unit shall conform to ISPERN guidelines.

## **PHASE THREE: TERMINATION OF PURSUIT**

### **A. PURSUING PEACE OFFICER(S) SHOULD TERMINATE PURSUITS WHEN:**

1. The danger to the public or the pursuing peace officer outweighs the necessity for immediate apprehension of the suspect. Consideration should be given to the following conditions: speed of the pursuit, area of the pursuit, weather and road conditions, the presence of pedestrians and other traffic, the presence or absence of audible or visible warnings, and the reason for the pursuit of the fleeing vehicle, or;
2. The distance between the pursuing peace officer and the suspect is so great that further pursuit is futile, or;
3. The peace officer loses visual contact with the suspect for an extended period of time, or;
4. The suspect is identified and the failure to apprehend poses no immediate threat of death or serious injury to another person, or;
5. There are malfunctions with police equipment or the police vehicle (e.g., emergency lighting, siren) which make continued operation of the vehicle in a pursuit hazardous, or;
6. When ordered to do so by a supervisor.

### **B. INTERJURISDICTIONAL PURSUITS:**

1. Pursuits entering another department's jurisdiction:
  - a. Primary Unit will advise a supervisor and telecommunications that the pursuit is leaving the original jurisdiction.
  - b. Supervisor will decide to continue or terminate pursuit based upon the existing circumstances.
  - c. Telecommunicator will notify the involved jurisdiction.
  - d. Peace officers will refrain from entering pursuits unless assistance from the pursuing agency is requested and such assistance is approved by a supervisor.
  - e. If two units from the other agency are actively involved in the pursuit, peace officers will not engage in the pursuit unless directed to do so by a supervisor.

2. Peace officers involved in interjurisdictional pursuits are required to comply with their department's guidelines and interjurisdictional agreements. Only pursuit tactics which are permitted by their own guidelines may be utilized, irrespective of what is requested by the other agency.

### **AGENCY REPORTING AND REVIEW PROCESS**

- A. All agencies engaging in a pursuit will complete an appropriate report of the pursuit incident and assign a case reporting number to each pursuit incident. Agencies involved in interjurisdictional pursuits will obtain an ISPERN number in addition to their own case reporting number.
- B. All agencies should investigate pursuit incidents thoroughly. The acquisition of statements, photographs, drawings, preliminary medical reports and any other evidentiary items that are or could be relevant to the conduct of the pursuit incident should be completed.
- C. All agencies are requested to complete the "Pursuit Driving Report" (Appendix 1). The "Pursuit Driving Report" should be submitted through the agencies chain of command for internal evaluation and review to determine:
  1. Guideline compliance
  2. Operational needs
  3. Future training needs

### **REPORTING TO EXTERNAL AGENCY**

- A. A "Pursuit Driving Report" will be submitted to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, 4500 South Sixth Street, Room 173, Springfield, Illinois 62703, by each agency involved in a pursuit.
- B. The Training and Standards Board will continue to compile, analyze, publish, and distribute to law enforcement, all data received from the reports.