



Pursuit Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

A vehicle pursuit occurs whenever an officer disengages from routine patrol driving with the intention to pursue and stop a violator of the law. This definition covers two types of pursuits:

- A. Normal Pursuit - Pursuit of a violator after a violation has been observed; the operator is signaled to stop and complies.
- B. Extended/High-Speed Pursuit - The violator attempts to avoid arrest by fleeing in his/her vehicle, or ignores or fails to comply with the officer's signals to stop.

II. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Ridgely Police Department to permit officers to engage in vehicle pursuit when it is necessary to apprehend a violator of the laws of this state. Extended/high-speed pursuit is a sanctioned enforcement technique. It should be used with discretion and after conscious deliberation and not be the product of one's emotions. It is better to disengage from a pursuit than become involved in unreasonable risk taking.
- B. The potential for personal injury and damage to personal property must be weighed against the urgency of the pursuit and the tactics employed by the pursuing officer.
- C. Vehicular pursuits will only be permitted in cases where it is necessary to take into immediate custody violators of (non-traffic) misdemeanor and felony crimes as well as violators of *serious* motor-vehicle offenses. This removes from officer discretion minor traffic infractions and most payable citations.
- D. Officers will not be permitted to continue a pursuit outside of Caroline County, unless the violator is suspected of committing a felony, and only then until such time that sufficient units from other agencies have joined in the pursuit.
- E. Officers will not be permitted to continue a pursuit into another state without the expressed verbal permission of the Chief of Police or his designee.
- F. Officers will not be permitted to join in a pursuit initiated by another agency unless specifically requested to do so by the pursuing agency.

III. GENERAL

A. Department policy permits officers wide latitude in deciding to pursue and after pursuit has begun, in choosing the manner and methods of conducting the pursuit. The Chief or his designee will be made aware of the pursuit, and has the authority to direct its course, or to cancel it. The primary consideration of the Chief or his designee shall be the safety of the public and the officer.

B. Consistent with Section 21-106 of the Transportation Article, an officer who is engaged in vehicle pursuit may disregard traffic laws, but is responsible to drive with due regard for the safety of others, and is not protected from the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others.

C. An officer should always ask themselves two questions to determine whether to pursue when a violator has failed to stop:

1. Are there safe alternative ways of apprehending the suspect? If yes, do NOT pursue. If no, answer question 2.
2. Is the pursuit permitted by departmental policy? If no, do NOT pursue. If yes, pursue and notify a supervisor immediately.

D. While engaged in a pursuit, officers will continuously evaluate the risk factors (road condition, traffic, pedestrians, weather, etc.). If the risk of injury to the public exceeds the benefit of the apprehension, the pursuit will be discontinued.

IV. PURSUIT PROCEDURE

A. Attempt to apprehend the violator as soon as possible to minimize the hazard of his/ her violation. The sooner the violator is apprehended, the less an opportunity exists for a collision.

B. Emergency lights, vehicle high-beam headlights, and siren will be used during pursuit situations.

C. A supervisor, when possible, will monitor the pursuit and assign additional cars when necessary. To that end, Officers initiating a pursuit will immediately request that the 911 dispatcher contact the Chief of Police (or his designee) to advise them of the incident.

D. Consistent with the safe operation of the police vehicle, the pursuing officer shall maintain radio contact with Communications and provide them with necessary information which will assist in apprehending the violator. Communications will be continually advised of location, direction of travel, speeds, road/traffic conditions, and any other pertinent information regarding the pursuit.

E. The goal of the pursuing officer is to stop the offender as safely and as expeditiously as possible. In doing this, an officer may appropriately duplicate some of the actions of the violator. There are, however, more maneuvers which are intrinsically reckless and dangerous, and shall not be attempted by the officer (going the wrong way on a dual lane highway, not slowing for an intersection, etc.)

F. Officers of the Ridgely Police Department are forbidden from ramming, striking, bumping, or otherwise making deliberate contact with a fleeing vehicle during a pursuit. Vehicles belonging to the Ridgely Police Department will not be used in any type of fixed, or stationary, roadblock during a pursuit.

V. ABANDONING PURSUIT

A. The decision to abandon a pursuit will remain, in most instances, with the pursuing officer.

B. The supervisor will monitor the course of the pursuit and have the prerogative to terminate the pursuit based on input from the pursuing officer and the supervisor's personal knowledge of the area, road, and traffic conditions.

C. Generally, pursuits shall be discontinued when:

1. The officer is told to end the pursuit by higher authority.
2. The risk of the officer and the public are unnecessarily high.
3. The risk is inconsistent with the severity of the violation.
4. The roadway and environmental conditions are not conducive to continue safe pursuit.
5. The violator's identity can be, or has been, established by other means and they can be taken into custody at a later time.