

# HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT

## POLICY LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS

May 29, 2026

Policy Number 4.01

### VEHICLE PURSUITS

#### POLICY

This policy regulates the manner in which vehicle pursuits are initiated and conducted. The guidelines established in the policy assist officers in performing their duties safely and to protect the public.

#### PROCEDURE

##### I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Vehicle pursuit: An effort by an officer operating or directing the operation of a vehicle to stop or follow another vehicle when an occupant of that vehicle is a suspected violator of the law and after the driver of that vehicle appears to be resisting the order to stop or fleeing from the police.
- B. Authorized emergency vehicle: A vehicle that is authorized for police service and equipped with an operable department-authorized blue light and siren. Authorized emergency vehicles include police helicopters.
- C. Primary unit: The police vehicle that initiates or continues as the lead vehicle in a pursuit.
- D. Secondary unit: Any police vehicle that becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit.
- E. Patch/patching: Connecting the audio of multiple radio frequency channels or talk groups by the Communications Division. Patching allows officers of different districts/elements to communicate with one another without having to switch the channels on their radios.

- F. Pursuit supervisor: The sector sergeant assigned to the area where the pursuit is initiated. In the sector sergeant's absence, the field supervisor who is notified by the Communications Division shall be designated as the pursuit supervisor.
- G. Body-worn camera (BWC): A department-issued, compact video/audio-recording device used by an officer for the purpose of recording interactions with the public.
- H. Superior officer: An officer above the rank of sergeant.
- I. Vehicle: A vehicle as defined in Section 291C-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Vehicle pursuits may be hazardous because of the speeds and intricate maneuvers involved.  
  
Therefore, in each decision to engage in a vehicle pursuit, the need to apprehend the suspect must be weighed against the assessable risk of harm to persons and property.
- B. As each pursuit is unique, officers/supervisors shall apply policies, their training and experience, and reasonableness to the known circumstances when deciding to initiate or continue a pursuit.
- C. Pursuits shall be carried out in accordance with the HRS, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021, and directives of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD).
- D. Officers should not engage in pursuits conducted by non-HPD agencies or jurisdictions without authorization from their respective field supervisors.
- E. Vehicles not equipped with department-authorized blue lights and sirens shall not engage in vehicle pursuits.

- F. When an authorized emergency vehicle follows a vehicle without activated blue lights or siren and the subject vehicle then attempts to flee, the officer shall either:
  - 1. Activate the vehicle's blue lights and siren as a command to stop the vehicle; or
  - 2. Stop following the vehicle.

III. PURSUIT PROCEDURES

The blue light and siren shall be used to command a vehicle to stop in accordance with Policy 4.62, TRAFFIC STOPS, and Policy 4.13, POLICE VEHICLES.

- A. An officer shall assess the risk of initiating a pursuit based on considerations listed in section II above. A pursuit may be initiated with an authorized emergency vehicle if the officer determines that a pursuit is warranted.
- B. When an officer initiates a vehicle pursuit, the officer shall continuously use the flashing blue lights and siren and shall:
  - 1. Immediately notify a Police Communications Officer (PCO) by explicitly announcing that he or she is initiating a pursuit;
  - 2. Provide the reason for the pursuit;
  - 3. Provide the location and direction of the pursuit;
  - 4. Provide the speeds involved;
  - 5. Provide the weather conditions;
  - 6. Provide a general description of the pedestrian and vehicular traffic;
  - 7. Provide the description and license plate number of the pursuit vehicle; and
  - 8. Provide a description of the pursued vehicle's occupants.

The officer shall provide frequent updates of items 3 to 6 above, particularly when the situation changes (e.g., speed increases or change in location or direction) or the pursuit is prolonged.

Secondary units have a shared responsibility to ensure frequent updates of items 3 to 6 above are provided.

- C. Upon gathering adequate information, the PCO shall promptly notify the appropriate field supervisors (field sergeants and/or lieutenants) and the on-duty lieutenant (or designee in the lieutenant's absence) of the Communications Division who shall monitor the pursuit closely.
- D. A multicast broadcast shall be made to notify all available units of the pursuit. The PCO shall transmit all available information about the pursuit.
- E. All personnel involved in the pursuit shall use the district patrol radio channel for the area where the pursuit began and, as much as practicable, use their call sign when communicating pursuit-related information.
- F. The PCO shall contact the Helicopter Section and direct it to assist if available and deemed appropriate.
- G. The primary frequency PCO and officers in the field shall monitor the pursuit on their radios.
- H. Radio communications unrelated to a pursuit should be minimized to allow for the transmission of updates by pursuing officers and supervisors.
- I. If a pursuit crosses districts, the Communications Division watch lieutenant shall assess the situation. The lieutenant shall then coordinate the patching of the radio channels to ensure that personnel in the district where the pursuit began and those in the current district of the pursuit can communicate.

IV. SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. When a pursuit is initiated, the responsibility for supervising the pursuit shall be assumed by the pursuit supervisor or, in that officer's absence, by the ranking supervisor available at the time (a field sergeant or lieutenant). The pursuit supervisor shall establish the supervisory role over the radio and determine which units are to participate while directing the pursuit.
- B. Pursuit supervisor responsibilities shall not be assumed by a supervisor who is engaged in a pursuit unless no other field supervisor is available for these responsibilities.
- C. The pursuit supervisor is responsible for gathering the necessary information from the pursuing officer(s) over the police radio and directing the pursuit throughout its duration.
- D. When a superior officer begins to instruct or direct officers involved in the pursuit, the pursuit supervisor's responsibilities are transferred to that superior officer.
- E. When continuing the pursuit becomes dangerous, it shall be the responsibility of any field supervisor to terminate it.
- F. The initial patrol district watch commander shall ensure that a To/From report to the district commander is submitted in accordance with section VIII A below.

V. PURSUIT TACTICS

A. Number of Police Vehicles

As a general rule, no more than two police vehicles shall pursue another vehicle at any time. However, the pursuit supervisor may authorize more vehicles to participate in the pursuit if deemed necessary for the safety of the officers involved (e.g., multiple suspects, armed suspects, or serious crime).

1. Primary Unit

Guidelines for the primary unit's involvement in a pursuit are outlined in section III above.

2. Secondary Unit

The operator of a secondary unit that becomes involved as a backup to the primary unit shall:

- a. Keep the emergency lights and siren activated at all times during the pursuit;
- b. Inform a PCO that he or she is engaging in the pursuit; and
- c. Inform a PCO when he or she takes over the pursuit.

B. Officers Not Participating in the Pursuit

Officers not directed by the pursuit supervisor to participate shall not join in the pursuit. They should monitor the progress of the pursuit on their radios and position themselves to assist if directed.

C. Overtaking the Pursued Vehicle

An officer should not attempt to pull alongside or pass a pursued vehicle; it would place the officer in a vulnerable position. Rather, the pursuing officer should remain a safe distance behind the pursued vehicle and keep it in sight until the driver stops voluntarily. Moreover, the pursuing police vehicles should remain a safe distance from each other.

D. Firearms

If a firearm is used, it shall be in strict compliance with applicable laws and directives covering the use of firearms.

E. BWC

Any officer with a BWC who becomes involved in a pursuit shall activate and use the camera in strict compliance with applicable laws and directives. Refer to Policy 2.57, BODY-WORN CAMERAS.

F. Ramming/Blocking/Containing

Vehicles used for law enforcement purposes, regardless of registered ownership, shall not be used to block, contain, or ram a subject's vehicle.

G. Traffic Regulations

Officers shall abide by Policy 4.13, POLICE VEHICLES, and utilize their emergency lights and sirens when violating traffic laws.

Officers not directed to participate in a pursuit shall not violate traffic regulations in order to position themselves near the pursuit.

H. Helicopter

When appropriate and a unit is available, a helicopter shall assist in a pursuit by providing location and description information via the designated district patrol radio channel. If the helicopter is able to track the pursued vehicle, this fact and other relevant information shall be relayed to the pursuit supervisor. Based on the information provided, the pursuit supervisor may consider directing all ground units to terminate their pursuit and have these units respond to the location of the pursued vehicle in a nonemergency status.

VI. TERMINATION OF PURSUIT

A. A pursuit shall be terminated under any one of the following conditions:

1. When the risk created by the pursuit is unreasonable given the nature of the offense for which the suspect is being pursued and the conditions under which the pursuit must be conducted;

a. An assessment of the risks created by the pursuit should include:

- (1) Speeds involved;
- (2) The volume of traffic on the road;
- (3) Pedestrian traffic;
- (4) Weather and roadway conditions;
- (5) Actions of the pursued vehicle;
- (6) Actions of the pursuing officer(s);  
and

- (7) Additional factors such as actions at intersections (e.g., running a red light or stop sign), school zones, time of day, and anything else that may affect visibility and maneuverability.
- b. The primary responsibility for a decision to terminate a pursuit rests with the pursuit supervisor. The primary unit is responsible for the decision when no supervisor is available;
- 2. When the suspect has been identified with sufficient certainty that apprehension can be effected later; and
- 3. When the whereabouts of the pursued vehicle are no longer certain.
- B. While supervisors are charged with the responsibility of terminating a pursuit, this does not preclude any other officer, including the primary unit, from terminating the pursuit based on his or her knowledge of conditions that are relevant to the pursuit.
- C. The helicopter pilot will have the final discretion to terminate their participation in a pursuit if the pilot or observer feels the risk to continue the pursuit from the air outweighs the need to continue the pursuit.
- D. When an order to terminate a pursuit is given, the PCO shall repeat the termination command.
- E. When a pursuit is terminated, the pursuing officer(s) shall turn off the vehicle's siren and blue lights, resume adhering to traffic laws, and attempt to maneuver his or her vehicle out of view of the pursued driver.
- F. When the pursuit is terminated, the helicopter shall climb to the normal cruising altitude and out of view of the pursued vehicle unless directed by the pursuit supervisor to continue monitoring the vehicle.

VII. PURSUIT DECLARATION/DETERMINATION

At times, it may be unclear between an officer and a PCO whether a pursuit is occurring as defined by this policy. If a pursuit is not clearly declared over the radio:

- A. The PCO or patrol supervisor shall confirm with the primary officer over the radio if a pursuit is occurring or had occurred;
- B. If there is still a disagreement after the response, the Communications Division watch lieutenant shall confer with the patrol watch lieutenant or pursuit supervisor to make a determination as soon as practicable; and
- C. If a decision is not reached after the conferral, pursuit reports shall be generated by all persons involved in accordance with section VIII below.

VIII. VEHICLE PURSUIT REPORTS

- A. A To/From report on each vehicle pursuit shall be prepared by all participating personnel and elements involved in the pursuit (e.g., pursuit supervisor(s), primary and secondary units, PCO(s), arresting officer(s), and officers of the Helicopter Section) and reviewed by the respective element commanders. The reports shall include:
  - 1. The reason for the pursuit;
  - 2. The date, start time, and end time of the pursuit;
  - 3. Parties involved;
  - 4. Synopsis of the circumstances; and
  - 5. If a BWC was present and whether or not it was activated.

The on-duty lieutenant or designee of the Communications Division shall submit a To/From report documenting the involvement of the division's personnel in the pursuit incident.

- B. Each report shall be forwarded by the next day after the incident to the commander (or designee) of the element where the pursuit began. This commander is responsible for collecting all of the reports and submitting them to the Professional Standards Office (PSO) within five days of the pursuit. The commander should use a To/From template, which outlines relevant information regarding vehicle pursuits, as a transmittal for all of the reports. Copies of this template can be obtained from the PSO.
- C. The major of the PSO shall forward a set of the reports and transmittal to the Pursuit Review Board (PRB) and commander of the element where the pursuit began.

IX. PURSUIT REVIEW BOARD

Except for vehicle pursuits that will be reviewed by the Administrative Review Board (ARB) due to the circumstances of the incident (e.g., critical incidents), the PRB shall review all other vehicle pursuits and recommend a course of action to the Chief of Police.

- A. The board shall consist of a major or designee from each bureau (total of six). The Traffic Division major shall be the chair for the PRB. The other five members shall be selected by the ARB. A majority of the board members constitutes a quorum.
- B. Each member shall serve at least 12 months and two members shall be replaced by the ARB each year.
- C. A vice-chair shall be elected by the PRB members and shall serve a minimum of 12 months.
- D. Each completed investigation report shall be circulated by the PRB chair to all board members for their review. The chair shall also ensure that the report is circulated to all commanders of employees who are being charged.
- E. The captain(s) of the element(s) involved in the pursuit shall appear before the board at the request of the chair and provide a synopsis of the pursuit and make recommendations concerning whether the pursuit was conducted within acceptable parameters or if additional investigation is required.

- F. After considering all pertinent information, the PRB shall take one of the following actions:
1. Determine the pursuit was conducted within acceptable parameters and submit the conclusion in writing to the Chief of Police;
  2. Determine the pursuit was not conducted within acceptable parameters and recommend that additional investigation is required to the Chief of Police.
    - a. The Chief of Police will forward the case via the appropriate deputy chief to the PSO for investigation. Additional investigative work (if needed) will be completed by the PSO and/or the division-level command to which the officer(s) is assigned.
    - b. The review and disposition of misconduct investigations shall be in accordance with section V of Policy 5.01, COMPLAINTS AND INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS.

X. ANNUAL REPORT


Every January, the PRB shall complete a report to be submitted to the Chief of Police that includes:

- A. An analysis of all pursuit reports to determine possible patterns and trends;
- B. A review of pursuit policies and reporting procedures; and

May 29, 2026

Policy Number 4.01  
Page 12

C. Any recommendations for training and/or policy changes.

  
WADE K. VANIC  
Interim Chief of Police

Post on bulletin  
board for one week

Policy first issued  
February 20, 1998