



University of Pennsylvania Police Department 4040 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa 19104		 
Directive: 95	Subject: Foot Pursuits	Effective Date: 12/23/2011
Order of: Gary Williams, Chief of Police		Amended Date: 08/01/2023

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines and procedures for police pursuits on foot while protecting the safety of the public and police officers while taking into consideration law enforcement's duty to enforce the law and apprehend suspects.

II. Policy

It shall be the policy of the University of Pennsylvania Police Department (UPPD) that officer and public safety shall be the overriding consideration in determining whether a foot pursuit will be initiated or continued. Foot pursuits are inherently dangerous police actions. Officers must evaluate the risk involved to themselves, other officers, the suspect and the community versus what would be gained from pursuing the suspect.

A foot pursuit shall constitute a priority assignment and police supervisors are responsible for reviewing the tactical soundness of foot pursuits and decide if such pursuits are warranted and how they should be conducted.

III. Scope

This directive shall affect all sworn police officers.

IV. Definitions

- A. **Foot Pursuit:** An incident where an officer, on foot, chases a person who is evading detention or arrest. The officer must have reasonable suspicion that an individual is about to commit, is in the process of committing, or has committed a crime.
- B. **Suspect:** Includes any individual who a police officer reasonably believes is about to commit, is in the process of committing, or has committed, a crime or poses an immediate threat to the safety of the public, other officers or themselves.
- C. **Contact/Cover:** Describes the practice of having two or more officers working together during a foot pursuit. The officers work in unison via direct or indirect communication to coordinate

their efforts, remain aware of the locations of other officers and suspects, and keep informed of the status of the pursuit.

V. Procedures

A. Factors to Consider When Initiating a Foot Pursuit

1. The nature of the offense committed by the suspect
2. Whether or not the suspect is armed
3. Location:
 - a. Nature of the area: residential, commercial, school zone, expressway, etc.
 - b. Conditions of the structures: abandoned or condemned
 - c. Environmental factors: weather or darkness
 - d. Containment considerations
4. Ability to apprehend the suspect at a later date
5. Communications
 - a. Familiarity with the area, ability to transmit location of fleeing suspect
 - b. Radio frequency and coverage (dead spots)
6. Availability of backup units to assist

B. Pursuing Officer(s) Responsibility

1. The decision to initiate or continue a foot pursuit requires weighing the need to apprehend the suspect against the degree of risk to which the officer and others are exposed as a result of the pursuit.
2. Once a foot pursuit has been initiated, the officer shall, as soon as practical, notify PennComm of the following information:
 - a. Call sign or badge number
 - b. Location
 - c. Direction
 - d. Description of the suspect(s)

- e. If armed with a weapon
 - f. Reason for foot pursuit
3. PennComm will notify a supervisor of the pursuit circumstance and any other relevant information.
 4. The pursuing officer will coordinate with other officers to establish a perimeter in the area to contain the suspect. Assisting officers shall attempt to contain the pursued suspect.
 - a. In the event that a suspect is confined in an area, consideration should be given to the use of specialized units such as ERT, Philadelphia Police Department SWAT or Canine Units.

C. Termination of a Foot Pursuit

1. Officer(s) shall terminate a foot pursuit under the following circumstances:
 - a. When ordered by a supervisor.
 - b. When the officer believes that the danger to the pursuing officer or public outweighs the necessity for the immediate apprehension of the suspect.
 - c. If the suspect's identity is established or other information exists that allows for the suspect's probable apprehension at a later time; and there is no immediate threat to the public or police officers.
 - d. If the officer loses possession of his/her firearm.
 - e. If the officer loses communication with PennComm or back-up officers.
 - f. If the officer is unsure of his/her own location or direction of travel.
 - g. If an officer or third party injured during the pursuit requires immediate assistance; and there are no other police or medical personnel able to render assistance.
 - h. If the officer becomes aware of any unanticipated circumstances that substantially increases the risk to public safety, inherent in the pursuit.

D. Supervisor Responsibilities

1. The supervisor shall take command, control, and coordinate the foot pursuit as soon as possible and shall decide whether the pursuit should continue. As in any tactical incident, the supervisor does not have to be physically present to assert control over the situation.
2. The supervisor should allow the foot pursuit to continue if:

- a. There are available back-up units to assist; or
 - b. There is reasonable belief that a suspect has committed an act that would permit the officer to detain the suspect; or
 - c. There is a reasonable belief that the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the public or other police officers; or
 - d. The pursuit does not violate provisions of this or related department policy, procedures, or training.
3. The supervisor shall terminate the foot pursuit if at any time it is determined that the danger to the pursuing officer(s) or the public outweighs the necessity for the immediate apprehension of the suspect.
 4. Once the foot pursuit has concluded, the supervisor shall proceed to the terminus of the pursuit to assert post-pursuit control as needed.

E. PennComm Responsibilities

1. Once a foot pursuit has been initiated, dispatch personnel shall immediately notify the field supervisor and the operations room supervisor (ORS) and provide all available information.
2. PennComm personnel shall carry out the following responsibilities during a foot pursuit:
 - a. Receive, record and immediately report incoming information on the pursuit, the officer(s) involved and the suspect.
 - b. Control all radio communications and clear the radio channels of all nonemergency traffic.
 - c. Coordinate and dispatch backup assistance under the direction of the field supervisor.
 - d. Attempt to monitor the pursuit via CCTV cameras.

F. Compliance

Violations of this directive, or portions thereof, may result in disciplinary action.

G. Officers Assigned to Other Agencies

Officers of this department assigned to or assisting other law enforcement agencies will be guided by this directive.

H. Application

This directive constitutes department policy, and is not intended to enlarge the employer's or employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It shall not be construed as the creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims insofar as the employer's or employee's legal duty as imposed by law. Violations of policy will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.