



Helen Police Department

Standard Operating Policies and Procedures

Chapter P020 Pursuit	Effective Date:	August 1, 2022	# of Pages:	14
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	Special Instructions:			

I. PURPOSE

- A. To establish the City of Helen policy in the operation of police vehicles in routine response to calls, pursuits, and emergency response to calls.
- B. The emergency operation of police vehicles is one of the most dangerous tasks police officers are asked to perform. Death or permanent injury to police officers and/or citizens can result. Lawsuits against police officers involved in pursuit and emergency response to calls are second only to use of deadly force.
- C. Officers will, at all times, consider the external factors which may have a bearing on the emergency operation of the police vehicle, including the time of day, road and traffic conditions, weather, speeds involved, nature of the incident and their personal ability to control the vehicle.

II. POLICY

- A. The Helen Police Department recognizes that police pursuits are inherently dangerous and pose a risk to the safety of citizens as well as members of the department. The safety of officers and citizens is the paramount concern in a pursuit. Therefore, pursuits are prohibited unless there is probable cause to believe that the person(s) to be pursued is committing or has committed:
 - 1. Murder
 - 2. Voluntary Manslaughter

3. Involuntary / Manslaughter
4. Aggravated Assault
5. Aggravated Battery
6. Kidnapping
7. Rape
8. Armed Robbery
9. Arson First Degree
10. Any action that creates an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to another person or a substantial threat to the safety of another person or when an officer has articulable reasonable suspicion or probable cause that an extraordinary danger exists that warrants immediate action and necessitates a vehicle pursuit.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Routine Response Driving

Driving a police vehicle while engaged in normal patrol operations or responding to routine incidents such as calls for service or delayed reports of property crimes with no offender present. Officers will utilize the normal traffic flow, obeying all traffic patterns, signs and signals.

B. Emergency Driving

An emergency response, using blue lights and siren, will be allowed only in response to a call of an immediate or potential life-threatening nature or a forcible felony which is in progress or has just occurred, or where failure to respond immediately would aid the perpetrator in making good an escape.

C. Pursuit Driving

An active attempt by a law enforcement officer operating a motor vehicle and utilizing simultaneously all emergency equipment to apprehend one or more occupants of another moving vehicle when the driver of the

fleeing vehicle is aware of that attempt and is resisting apprehension by maintaining or increasing his speed, ignoring the officer, or attempting to elude the officer while driving at speeds in excess of a legal speed limit.

D. Emergency Equipment

Authorized emergency equipment require an audible signal and use of a flashing or revolving blue light visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of 500 feet to the front of such vehicle.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. The primary concern of personnel assigned to urgent or emergency calls is to respond in the most expeditious manner without endangering the safety of themselves or other persons. An assigned officer is of no assistance to anyone if he/she does not arrive at the scene of an emergency.

B. A. Routine Response (Code 1)

1. While on patrol or conducting routine operations, the posted speed limit will be observed and all traffic control signs and / or signals will be observed and obeyed.
2. Defensive driving and courtesy toward other drivers and pedestrians will be practiced at all times.

C. B. Emergency Response (Code 3)

1. Officers employing emergency response will utilize emergency equipment and may do the following with due regard:
 - a. Park or stand irrespective of the provisions of the Georgia statute.
 - b. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down or stopping as may be required and necessary for safe operation.
 - c. Exceed the posted speed limit, but only to the degree that is reasonable.

d. Disregard regulations governing the direction of movement or turning of traffic in a specified direction. Officers responding will consider the following factors.

1. Nature of the emergency.
2. Time of day.
3. Volume of vehicle and/or pedestrian traffic.
4. Location and geographical area.
5. Weather conditions.
6. Road conditions.
7. Vehicle condition.

D. The following are classified as emergency calls and are examples of authorized emergency response, but is not intended to be all inclusive.

1. Bomb Threat
2. Explosives Located
3. Homicide
4. Fight in Progress
5. Assault in Progress
6. Accident with Injuries
7. Armed Robbery
8. Person Hit by Automobile
9. Drowning in Progress
10. Rape in Progress
11. Person Shot

12. Person Stabbed

13. Abduction in Progress

14. OFFICER NEEDS HELP

15. Chase in Progress

16. Aggravated Domestic

E. Officers shall not use the spotlight as a means of clearing oncoming traffic. The spotlight shall at no time be directed at windshields of oncoming vehicles.

F. Officers shall utilize "wig wag" alternating lights intermittently as a means of warning traffic ahead of the police vehicle. "Wig wag" lights shall be extinguished after stopping the police vehicle or when such lights are not required to warn vehicles ahead of the police vehicle so as to avoid blinding motorists in oncoming traffic lanes.

G. Officers responding to calls requiring an emergency response will relay to the dispatcher the response level that they will be responding. When the officer is dispatched to an emergency call the radio traffic will be as follows.

1. Radio : "Radio to 701"
2. Officer: " 701"
3. Radio : " Auto Accident with Injuries at Main Street and Munich St"
4. Officer : "701 Clear, Responding Code Three"

5. Shift supervisors may assign a specific response if the need arises. This response may be a higher or lower level of response than the officer indicated in his radio traffic.

H. Pursuit Initiation - Officer Responsibilities

The responsibility for the decision to pursue and the methods to be employed during pursuit rests initially with the individual officer. When making this determination the officer shall evaluate the circumstances and consider the following factors:

1. Nature of the crime.

2. Time of day.

3. Volume of vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic.
4. Location and geographical area that the pursuit will occur in or extend into.
5. Weather conditions.
6. Road conditions.
7. Speeds involved.
8. Vehicle condition.
9. Whether there is a real or apparent emergency.

Once a pursuit is initiated, the officer shall immediately notify the Communications Center. Officer will relay information such as the identity of the pursuing unit, location, direction of travel, exact reason for pursuit, description of the fleeing vehicle and other relevant information about the vehicle or occupant(s) to coordinate efforts with other jurisdictions.

I. Pursuit Continuation - Officer Responsibilities

1. Officers involved in a pursuit will use all emergency equipment and must proceed with due regard and in accordance with OCGA 40-6-6.
2. During a pursuit, the officer will continually evaluate the internal and external factors involving the pursuit. The officer will weigh these factors and determine whether to continue or terminate the pursuit.
3. A safe distance shall be maintained between both vehicles, enabling the pursuing officer to duplicate any sudden turns, stops, or maneuvers by the fleeing vehicle to lessen the possibility of a collision.
4. Pursuing officers shall not pull alongside of or in front of a fleeing motorists in an attempt to force the subject into a ditch, curb, parked vehicle, or any other obstacle, nor shall any attempt be made to ram the pursued vehicle unless absolutely necessary for the preservation of life.
5. The use of a rolling roadblock or a blocking or boxing maneuver is expressly prohibited unless the violation for which the pursuit is initiated

involves a violent felony justifying the use of deadly force as defined by SOP P-030 or the roadblock would be necessary for the preservation of human life and is authorized by a shift supervisor.

6. Police units that have prisoners, witnesses, suspects, complainants or citizens aboard shall not become engaged in pursuit situations.
7. Unmarked police units shall not engage in a pursuit unless the fleeing vehicle represents an immediate and direct threat to life. Whenever a marked unit becomes available to take over the pursuit, the unmarked unit will withdraw immediately from the pursuit.
8. No pursuing unit will continue pursuit if it becomes involved in a collision unless the collision is with the vehicle being pursued and no other police units are available to continue the pursuit.

J. Pursuit Termination

1. The pursuing officer shall terminate the pursuit if any of the following events or conditions occur:
 - a. Any of the emergency equipment on the police unit ceases to function.
 - b. It becomes evident that the risk to life and property begins to outweigh the benefit derived from the immediate apprehension or continued pursuit of the offender.
 - c. The suspect's identity has been established to the point that later apprehension can be accomplished and there is no longer any need for immediate apprehension.
 - d. The environmental conditions indicate the futility of continued pursuit.
 - e. Upon the order of a supervisory or command officer.
 - f. At any point when the officer or supervisor believes the risk associated with continuing the pursuit is greater than the risk associated with terminating the pursuit.
 - g. The distance from the pursued vehicle is too great to justify continuing the pursuit.

- h. The pursuing officer is not familiar with the territory.
 - i. The pursuing officer knows, or is reasonably certain, that the fleeing vehicle is being operated by a juvenile and the offense constitutes a misdemeanor or a felony that does not jeopardize the safety of the public.
2. No officer will be disciplined for discontinuing a pursuit. For the purposes of this standard operating procedure, the reasonable pursuit of vehicles will be determined on the basis of the following factors:
- a. Time of day.
 - b. Weather and road conditions.
 - c. Volume of traffic on roadway.
 - d. Speed of pursued vehicle.
 - e. Availability of assistance from other police units.
 - f. Distance between the police vehicle and the pursued vehicle.
 - g. Danger of injury to the officer, offender or other citizens.
 - h. Distance traveled in pursuit.
 - i. Any other factor which affects the general safety of the pursuit.

Note: Any ranking officer may at any time order the pursuing officer to discontinue pursuit of a violator based on the factors listed above.

K. Secondary/Assisting Unit's Responsibility

1. Once the pursuit is engaged, assisting officer(s) shall, while enroute:
- a. Use the radio (transmit) only out of absolute necessity. Assisting officers and units shall identify themselves and give the Communications Center a conservative estimate of time of arrival at the scene and provide a status report as soon as possible. Officers will take into consideration distance to travel, traffic, and weather conditions.

- b. Move into tactically advantageous positions to assist with the stop of the felon.
- c. Do not caravan the pursuit; no more than one (1) assisting police unit may actively pursue with the exception of approval by specific order from the shift supervisor. A second vehicle may follow the pursuit to act as back-up for the pursuing officer. However, safe operation is mandatory. The second vehicle may not assume primary pursuit position unless the primary pursuit vehicle becomes disabled or relinquishes control. The second vehicle will communicate with dispatch, advising locations, and directions allowing the primary pursuit vehicle to concentrate on the operation of his vehicle.
- d. The second car shall be spaced appropriately and driven so as to allow for ample reaction time and distance in order to reduce the possibility of officer-involved accidents.

L. Supervisor Responsibilities

- 1. It shall be the responsibility of the shift supervisor to review the facts given by the pursuing officer and to make an independent judgment if the pursuit should be continued.
- 2. Based on all information available, the shift supervisor will order termination of the pursuit if, in his opinion, the dangers created by the pursuit outweigh the need for an immediate apprehension of the offender or the supervisor believes the risk associated with continuing the pursuit is greater than the risk associated with terminating the pursuit.
- 3. Continuous monitoring of the pursuit's progress by the shift supervisor will be made until the pursuit ends or the pursuit is terminated either by the officer or shift supervisor.
 - a. The shift supervisor will make a determination as to the number of police units that will be assigned to the pursuit.
 - b. Unless otherwise directed by the shift supervisor no more than two (2) police vehicles will become actively involved in the pursuit. (Other officers should be alert to the pursuit progress and location.)

- c. If the pursuit exits the city limits, the shift supervisor will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no more than two (2) units continue the pursuit. (Unless the shift supervisor feels that more units are needed to ensure apprehension of the fleeing vehicle and/or occupants.)
- d. The shift supervisor will generally remain within the city limits of Helen to ensure proper direction to patrol units not involved in the pursuit, unless the shift supervisor is the primary pursuing unit or deems it necessary to leave the municipality or there are additional supervisors working who can direct units not involved in the pursuit.
- e. If an officer is involved in a serious situation (i.e., accident, shooting, etc.) which requires the shift supervisor being present, the shift supervisor will ensure adequate manpower is left within the municipality.
- f. Shift supervisor(s) will notify the Deputy Chief, at the earliest possible time, if an officer is involved in an accident, injured, or deadly force is used.
- g. The shift supervisor will prepare a post-pursuit report after having reviewed the circumstances with the involved officer(s). This report shall be submitted prior to the end of the tour of duty in which the pursuit occurred.

M. Communications Center

- 1. The Communications center shall notify the on-duty supervisor of the pursuit.
- 2. The dispatcher shall serve as the controller for all messages relevant to the pursuit, monitor other agency bands closely and shall immediately broadcast all available information relating to the pursuit on all local channels.
- 3. When a pursuit has ended, the dispatcher shall broadcast the termination of the pursuit on all local channels.

N. Use of Firearms During Pursuits

- 1. Officers shall not discharge a firearm at or from a moving vehicle except as the ultimate measure of self defense or the defense of another when

the offender is employing deadly force. Departmental standard operating procedure regarding deadly force shall be strictly followed.

2. Firing strictly to disable a vehicle is prohibited.
3. In every incident the officer shall take into account the location of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and the potential hazard to innocent persons.

V. ROADBLOCKS

A. Use of Roadblocks in Pursuits

1. The use of a roadblock, fixed or moving, must be authorized by the shift supervisor.
2. Roadblocks will be used ONLY as a last resort and ONLY when all other attempts to terminate the pursuit have failed and the need to terminate the pursuit is imperative.

B. Roadblocks for the purpose of apprehending wanted suspects or felons shall not be employed when it is apparent that innocent persons will be endangered.

C. Officers of the Helen Police Department will receive annual training in the use of roadblocks, vehicle pursuits and vehicle immobilization tactics prior to their use in the field.

D. Fixed Roadblock

1. Roadblocks are expressly prohibited unless the violation for which the pursuit is initiated involves a violent felony, justifying the use of deadly force, or the roadblock would be necessary for the preservation of human life. A fixed roadblock may be utilized upon the direction of the shift supervisor only as a last resort in felony cases. Roadblocks of this type must offer an alternative path of travel around the blockade. No roadblock will be erected unless road and weather conditions allow visibility in both directions for a minimum of 500 feet. This type of roadblock will not be employed when it is apparent that innocent people will be endangered. A fixed roadblock will not be completely blocked unless the use of deadly force would be authorized.

2. Once a roadblock is established, the Communications dispatcher shall notify on all frequencies the location of the roadblock to the pursuing police vehicles and shall ensure acknowledgement.
3. Officers will not remain in any police vehicle that is used to block off the roadway.

E. Moving Roadblocks

1. Moving roadblocks are expressly prohibited unless the violation for which the pursuit is initiated involves a violent felony, justifying the use of deadly force, or the roadblock would be necessary for the preservation of human life. Under certain circumstances the use of rolling roadblocks is effective and the chance of injury and vehicle damage is greatly reduced. A moving roadblock should be considered before resorting to a stationary roadblock.
2. Methods of employment
 - a. Creating slow moving traffic -- reducing the movement of the wanted vehicle may be accomplished by slowing the normal flow of traffic. Patrol units not involved in the pursuit entering the roadway sufficiently ahead of the violator accomplish this. By slowing the flow of normal traffic, the violator and the pursuit vehicle are forced to reduce their speed.
 - b. Blocking -- in pursuit at moderate speeds, blocking may be accomplished by positioning a patrol vehicle in front of the violator and another patrol vehicle beside the violator. Speed should be reduced gradually until the violator is stopped. Every effort should be made to maximize officer safety and avoid actual contact with the violator's vehicle.

F. Inter- and Intra-jurisdictional Pursuits

1. Pursuits initiated by an outside agency traveling through the City of Helen will be the responsibility of the initiating agency.
 - a. Officers will not become involved in pursuits initiated by other agencies except to:
 - b. Block intersections along the pursuit route.

- c. Attempt to regulate traffic to minimize danger of injury to pursuing officers, other motorists or pedestrians, and occupants of pursued vehicles.
- d. Provide geographical information.
- e. To provide assistance once the violator is stopped.
- f. To provide assistance with pursuit upon specific request.

G. Prohibited Practices

1. Officers will not pursue violators the wrong way on a freeway.
2. Officers will not discharge their weapons at a moving vehicle unless an occupant of the vehicle is using deadly force.
3. Units will, at all costs, avoid intersecting the path of an oncoming high-speed vehicle.
4. Officers will not attempt to force the vehicle from the roadway by driving alongside or in front of the fleeing vehicle.
5. Officers will not bump or ram a fleeing vehicle.
6. Except for the primary and secondary unit directly involved in the immediate pursuit, there shall be no caravanning by other units.
7. There will be no attempt to pass the primary pursuit unit unless the passing officer receives specific permission from the primary pursuing officer or a supervisor.

H. Reporting of Pursuits/Roadblocks

1. Officers involved in pursuits or a roadblock shall submit a written report by use of the department's incident report form. Reports shall be completed and turned in prior to the end of their tour of duty.
2. When an officer is involved in a pursuit or a roadblock, the officer shall be debriefed by the shift supervisor, or other immediate supervisor, who shall complete a Helen post pursuit report prior to the end of his/her tour of duty or workday.

3. When a supervisor is the pursuit officer, the supervisor shall be debriefed by the next ranking supervisor. When a lieutenant or captain is the pursuit officer, the lieutenant or captain shall be debriefed by his/her immediate supervisor or designee. A post pursuit report shall be completed by the immediate supervisor prior to the end of their tour of duty or workday.
4. The post pursuit report and copies of all other reports shall be forwarded through the chain of command to the Chief's Office. The Shift Supervisor and the Patrol Commander shall review all reports to determine if those individuals involved in the pursuit violated department policy. Findings shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police.
5. In conjunction with submitting a Post Pursuit report, a taped copy of the radio communications will be forwarded to the Chief of Police for review. The Chief of Police shall maintain copies of all Pursuit reports. An annual written review and analysis of vehicle pursuit reports will also be completed.

I. Familiarity with State Statute

1. All officers will be familiar with and adhere to the following sections of the Georgia Vehicle Code:
 - a. Section 40-8-91: Marking and Equipment of Law Enforcement Vehicles.
 - b. Section 40-8-92: Designation of Emergency Vehicles: Flashing or Revolving Lights.
 - c. Section 40-8-94: Sirens, Whistles, or Bells.
 - d. Section 40-6-395: Fleeing or Attempting to Elude Police Officer.
 - e. Section 40-6-6: Authorized Emergency Vehicle.
 - f. Section 40-6-74: Operation of Vehicles on Approach of Authorized Emergency Vehicles.
 - g. Section 40-6-99: Pedestrians to Yield to Authorized Emergency Vehicles.