

**TOPEKA POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**  
**6.40 FOOT PURSUITS**

<b>SUBJECT: Foot Pursuits</b>		
<b>6.40</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> 11-01-2018	<i>William Cochran</i> William Cochran, Chief of Police
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**6.40.1 PURPOSE**

To provide tactical guidance and rules for the pursuit of non-compliant individuals.

**6.40.2 POLICY**

Foot pursuits inherently place the pursuing officer at a high risk of injury. Separation from the police vehicle and the communication challenges are to be considered before a foot pursuit is initiated. The changing nature of a foot pursuit requires the pursuing officers and controlling supervisor engage in continuous risk assessment. Officers shall consider factors such as unfamiliarity with the area, physical fatigue, and severity of the offense when determining whether to engage or continue in a foot pursuit. Officers may need to consider alternative response choices such as disengagement, area containment, surveillance, waiting out a subject, summoning reinforcements, or calling in specialized units.

**6.40.3 PROCEDURE**

A. Prevention

Tactical and coordinated approaches reduce the opportunity for individuals to flee. Officers should consider the location of the approach and the availability of supporting officers prior to contact.

1. Situational awareness and assessment reduce the opportunity and effectiveness of flight. To create a tactical advantage officer(s) should consider the following:
  - a. Secure the police vehicle when feasible;
  - b. When feasible, delay approach and coordinate additional resources;
  - c. Choose a contact area and/or direction of approach that limit escape routes, or directs the suspect to a supporting officer(s); and
  - d. Be mindful of preflight indicators by suspects contacted such as:
    - 1) Changing direction or splitting up and going separate ways upon officer observation;

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- 2) Glancing at escape routes, rotating one or both legs away from the officer(s);
- 3) Shifting weight on to one foot and leaning over (starting blocks); and
- 4) Initiating a diversion to move out of the officers' initial reach.

**B. Deciding Whether to Pursue**

Although it is an officer's decision to initiate a stop, it is the suspect or violator who decides to precipitate a foot pursuit by fleeing. An officer's decision to pursue on foot shall be made with an awareness of and appreciation for the risk to which the officer and others will be exposed. No officer or supervisor shall be criticized or disciplined for a decision not to engage in a foot pursuit if, in the officer's assessment, the risk exceeds the need for apprehension.

1. Where necessary, an officer may pursue persons who he or she reasonably believes have committed an act that would warrant a stop, investigative detention, or arrest.
2. In deciding whether or not to initiate a pursuit, an officer shall consider the following alternatives to foot pursuit;
  - a. Is containment of the area immediately possible;
  - b. Canine search possibility;
  - c. Saturation of the area with patrol personnel;
  - d. Aerial support available;
  - e. Apprehension at another time and place when the officer knows the identity of the subject or has information that would likely allow for later apprehension.

**C. Prior to engaging in a foot pursuit, officers should consider a number of factors in deciding if a foot pursuit should be initiated or continued safely. These factors may include:**

1. The seriousness and/or dangerousness of the crime or matter warranting police involvement;
2. Suspect reasonably believed to be armed;
3. Identity of suspect is known;
4. Available support units, aviation, canine;
5. Multiple suspects or potential intervention by others;
6. Communication and the ability to coordinate and direct;
7. Area type, e.g. commercial, multi-family housing, residential, agricultural, wooded;
8. Lighting, weather, visibility;
9. Pursuing officer is unsure of his or her present location;
10. Suspect's current location unknown; and/or
11. Officer preparedness level and access to defensive weapons and equipment.

**D. Pursuing Officer Responsibility**

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When possible, officers anticipating the likelihood of flight shall provide SCECC with the following information prior to making a contact with the suspect and as necessary during the pursuit:

1. Officer unit number;
2. Location;
3. Direction of travel;
4. Number and description of suspects;
5. Suspected possession of weapons;
6. Reason for pursuit; and
7. Coordination of supporting officers with SCECC.

**E. Pursuit Tactics**

Officers shall consider the following:

1. Waiting for back-up to enter a building or structure;
2. Seek to keep the fleeing suspect in sight and await support prior to making contact.

**F. Guidelines and Restrictions**

1. The pursuing officer shall terminate a pursuit if so instructed by a supervisor.
2. Unless there are exigent circumstances such as an immediate threat to the safety of other officers or civilians, officers shall not engage in or continue a foot pursuit under the following conditions:
  - a. If the officer believes the danger to pursuing officers or the public outweighs the necessity for immediate apprehension.
  - b. If the officer loses possession of his or her firearm;
  - c. If the suspect's location is no longer known;
  - d. If primary officers lose communications with SCECC or communication with backup officers is interrupted;
  - e. If an officer or third party is injured during the pursuit who requires immediate assistance and there are no other police or medical personnel able to render assistance; or
  - f. If the officer is unsure of his or her own location or direction of travel.
3. When the pursuing officer terminates the pursuit he or she shall notify SCECC with his or her location and request any assistance deemed necessary.

**G. Controlling Supervisor Responsibility**

A supervisor shall acknowledge the pursuit is being monitored as soon as possible and:

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1. The supervisor shall terminate a foot pursuit at any time he or she determines that the danger to the pursuing officers or the public outweighs the necessity for immediate apprehension of the suspect.
2. Upon completion of the pursuit the supervisor should review the pursuit and enforce policy as needed.

#### **H. Effective Communications and Coordination**

Foot pursuits create a communication and coordination challenge. Location description and direction of travel information necessary to assist officers in pursuit are often inaudible, ambiguous, or misleading. Officers, controlling supervisor and SCECC shall avoid unnecessary radio traffic and shall closely monitor the radio to reduce retransmission of information. The controlling supervisor shall enforce communications discipline. The following procedures shall also be followed:

1. The initiating officer, if able, should coordinate with SCECC so responding officers can establish a perimeter in the area to contain the suspect(s).
2. Assisting officers shall immediately attempt to contain the pursued suspect while at least one officer goes directly to the aid of the pursuing officer.
3. If feasible, the first officer arriving at the initiating officer's unsecured car should quickly secure it.