



TOPEKA POLICE DEPARTMENT

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM



To: Chief of Police

From: Major Scott Gilchrist #237

Subject: 2017 Pursuit Board Findings

Date: 04/02/18

The Topeka Police Department was involved in 37 vehicle pursuits in 2017. By comparison, the department had 80 pursuits in 2015 and 22 pursuits in 2016. Of those pursuits: 13 were marked apprehended, 5 eluded on foot, 11 eluded in a vehicle. ***The significant drop in vehicle pursuits is attributed to the governing policy change that took effect on February 5th, 2016. That policy limited vehicle pursuit's circumstances significantly by mandating that they only be initiated when the immediate danger to the officer and the public created by the pursuit is less than the immediate or potential danger to the public should the suspect remain at large. The decision to pursue must rely on the totality of the circumstances known at the time the officer decides to pursue the fleeing vehicle.***

The policy evolution provided guidance that specifically prohibited vehicle pursuits unless the officer has a reasonable belief that the subject to be pursued (1) has committed a felony; where the need to capture the suspect outweighs the danger to the public or (2) has created an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to another person or a substantial threat to the safety of another person.

In 2017, officers terminated pursuits 9 times and supervisors terminated 7 times. Combined these actions accounted for 43% of the agency pursuits being terminated. The dramatic decrease in total vehicle pursuits & self-terminations further supports

that our officers and supervisors have adapted to the policy change and continually demonstrate real world compliance with same.

In 2017, officers deployed stop sticks 7 times and of those 3 struck and 4 did not strike the suspect vehicle.

Major Scott Gilchrist
Chair-Accident/Pursuit Board

Amanda Huguenin
Office Assistant/Board Administrator

In 2017, none of our officers were involved in any injury accidents as a result of a pursuit. Officers were involved in 3 minor motor vehicle accidents.

Suspects were involved in 6 motor vehicle accidents from pursuits: 4 minor accidents and 2 accidents where the suspect's vehicle became disabled.

In 2017 the total duration of all pursuits was 2hr 15min, with an average of 3 to 5 minutes per each pursuit. Duration of vehicle pursuit for 2016 was not entered into the pursuit database so there is no data comparison to make in that area. In 2017 the total distance of all pursuits was 121 miles, with an average of 4 miles per each pursuit. Distance data for 2016 was not entered into the pursuit database in 2016 so there is no data comparison to make in that area.

Pursuit Review Process

The process of supervisor review followed by command staff and pursuit review board has remained the same. A pursuit report is completed by all officers involved, followed by a supervisory report. The pursuit review travels through the chain of command until it ends up with the Deputy Chief. The pursuit review board then meets once a month to review all of the pursuits which included reviewing the video of each pursuit. The board's findings are shared with the Bureau Commanders each quarter. This review process has worked well and will continue as we move forward.

Driver Training

The department did have department wide driving training in 2017 involving low speed operation and parking. The department's recruit officers did receive classroom instruction and driving instruction in their respective academies in 2017. Classroom instruction included the dynamics of the vehicle, state statutes regarding pursuits, department pursuit policy and pursuit tactics. Among the actual driving practical's, recruits had to pass evasive maneuvers, emergency braking and actual pursuit driving during our pursuit perception course. Remedial training to existing officers was provided as needed.

A review of pursuits in 2017 did not reveal any common or pervasive driving issues that required department wide training. The majority of issues involved conforming to policy and each was addressed by the officer's supervisor