

Foot Pursuits

425.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines to assist deputies in making the decision to initiate or continue the pursuit of suspects on foot.

425.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this agency that deputies, when deciding to initiate or continue a foot pursuit, continuously balance the objective of apprehending the suspect with the risk and potential for injury to agency members, the public or the suspect.

Deputies are expected to act reasonably, based on the totality of the circumstances.

425.3 DECISION TO PURSUE

The safety of agency members and the public should be the primary consideration when determining whether a foot pursuit should be initiated or continued. Deputies must be mindful that immediate apprehension of a suspect is rarely more important than the safety of the public and agency members.

Deputies may be justified in initiating a foot pursuit of any individual that the deputy reasonably believes is about to engage in, is engaging in or has engaged in criminal activity. The decision to initiate or continue such a foot pursuit, however, must be continuously re-evaluated in light of the circumstances presented at the time.

Mere flight by a person who is not suspected of criminal activity alone shall not serve as justification for engaging in an extended foot pursuit without the development of reasonable suspicion regarding the individual's involvement in criminal activity or being wanted by law enforcement.

Deciding to initiate or continue a foot pursuit is a decision that a deputy must make quickly and under unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. It is recognized that foot pursuits may place agency members and the public at significant risk. Therefore, no deputy or supervisor shall be criticized or disciplined for deciding not to engage in a foot pursuit because of the reasonable perception of risk involved.

If circumstances permit, surveillance and containment are generally the safest tactics for apprehending fleeing persons. In deciding whether to initiate or continue a foot pursuit, a deputy should continuously consider reasonable alternatives to a foot pursuit based upon the circumstances and resources available, such as:

- (a) Containment of the area.
- (b) Saturation of the area with law enforcement personnel, including assistance from other agencies.
- (c) A canine search.
- (d) Thermal imaging or other sensing technology.

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- (e) Unmanned aerial vehicle or air support.
- (f) Apprehension at another time when the identity of the suspect is known.

425.4 GENERAL GUIDELINES

When reasonably practicable, deputies should consider alternatives to engaging in or continuing a foot pursuit when:

- (a) Directed by a supervisor to terminate the foot pursuit; such an order shall be considered mandatory.
- (b) The deputy is acting alone.
- (c) Two or more deputies become separated, lose visual contact with one another or obstacles separate them to the degree that they cannot immediately assist each other should a confrontation take place. In such circumstances, it is generally recommended that a single deputy keep the suspect in sight from a safe distance and coordinate the containment effort.
- (d) The deputy is unsure of his/her location and direction of travel.
- (e) The deputy is pursuing multiple suspects and it is not reasonable to believe that the deputy would be able to control the suspect should a confrontation occur.
- (f) The physical exhaustion of the deputy renders him/her incapable of controlling the suspect if apprehended.
- (g) The deputy loses radio contact with Milwaukee County 911 Communications Division or with assisting or backup deputies.
- (h) The suspect enters a building, structure, confined space, isolated area or dense or difficult terrain, and there are insufficient deputies to provide backup and containment. The primary deputy should consider discontinuing the foot pursuit and coordinating containment pending the arrival of sufficient resources.
- (i) The deputy becomes aware of unanticipated or unforeseen circumstances that unreasonably increase the risk to deputies or the public.
- (j) The deputy reasonably believes that the danger to the pursuing deputies or public outweighs the objective of immediate apprehension.
- (k) The deputy loses possession of his/her firearm or other essential equipment.
- (l) The deputy or a third party is injured during the foot pursuit, requiring immediate assistance, and there are no other emergency personnel available to render assistance.
- (m) The suspect's location is no longer known.
- (n) The identity of the suspect is established or other information exists that will allow for the suspect's apprehension at a later time, and it reasonably appears that there is no immediate threat to agency members or the public if the suspect is not immediately apprehended.

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- (o) The deputy's ability to safely continue the foot pursuit is impaired by inclement weather, darkness or other environmental conditions.

425.5 RESPONSIBILITIES IN FOOT PURSUITS

425.5.1 INITIATING DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Unless relieved by another deputy or a supervisor, the initiating deputy shall be responsible for coordinating the progress of the pursuit and containment. When acting alone and when practicable, the initiating deputy should not attempt to overtake and confront the suspect but should attempt to keep the suspect in sight until sufficient deputies are present to safely apprehend the suspect.

Early communication of available information from the involved deputies is essential so that adequate resources can be coordinated and deployed to bring a foot pursuit to a safe conclusion. Deputies initiating a foot pursuit should, at a minimum, broadcast the following information as soon as it becomes practicable and available:

- (a) Location and direction of travel
- (b) Call sign identifier
- (c) Number of suspects and description, to include name if known
- (d) Whether the suspect is known or believed to be armed with a dangerous weapon

Deputies should be mindful that radio transmissions made while running may be difficult to understand and may need to be repeated.

If the foot pursuit is discontinued for any reason, immediate efforts for containment should be established and alternatives considered based upon the circumstances and available resources.

When a foot pursuit terminates, the deputy will notify Milwaukee County 911 Communications Division of his/her location and the status of the foot pursuit termination (e.g., suspect in custody, lost sight of suspect), and will direct further actions as reasonably appear necessary, to include requesting medical aid as needed for deputies, suspects or members of the public.

425.5.2 ASSISTING DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Whenever any deputy announces that he/she is engaged in a foot pursuit, all other deputies should minimize non-essential radio traffic to permit the involved deputies maximum access to the radio frequency.

425.5.3 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon becoming aware of a foot pursuit, the supervisor shall make every reasonable effort to ascertain sufficient information to direct responding resources and to take command, control and coordination of the incident. The supervisor should respond to the area whenever possible; the supervisor does not, however, need not be physically present to exercise control over the incident. The supervisor shall continuously assess the situation in order to ensure the foot pursuit is conducted within established agency guidelines.

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The supervisor shall terminate the foot pursuit when the danger to pursuing deputies or the public appears to unreasonably outweigh the objective of immediate apprehension of the suspect.

If possible, upon apprehension of the suspect, the supervisor should promptly proceed to the termination point to direct the post-foot pursuit activity.