

Memorandum

TO: ALL DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL **FROM:** Paul Joseph
Acting Chief of Police

SUBJECT: DUTY MANUAL REVISION – **DATE:** May 24, 2024
ROLE OF THE AIR SUPPORT UNIT
IN VEHICLE PURSUITS

APPROVED

Memo# 2024-015

BACKGROUND

A review of Department policy pertaining to vehicle pursuits revealed the need to clarify and more closely define the role of the Department's Air Support Unit when a suspect attempts to evade ground officers in a motor vehicle. The resulting Duty Manual changes accomplish the following:

1. Establish as policy the procedure of "tracking," in which the Department's helicopter continues to follow the suspect vehicle and ground units reduce to Normal Response [REDACTED]
2. Specify that a police helicopter is not an emergency vehicle, according to state guidelines and statutes.

ANALYSIS

The Duty Manual should be revised to reflect the changes described below. Additions are shown in *italics and underlined*. Deletions are shown in ~~strike through~~ form.

L 2109 HELICOPTER ASSISTANCE:
Revised 05-24-24

Helicopter assistance can provide valuable information to ground units concerning traffic congestion, hazards or other factors which might endanger the safety of the officer or public. This information, together with the helicopter crew's ability to provide constant visual surveillance, can assist in the safe and successful apprehension of pursuit suspects.

A police helicopter is not an emergency vehicle. The POST California Vehicle Pursuit Guidelines states, "an aircraft is not defined as an authorized emergency vehicle in the California Vehicle Code and should not be described as a pursuit vehicle."

When a pursuit is initiated, as per Duty Manual section L 2101 - VEHICLE PURSUITS, the pursuing officer should determine the status of the Department helicopter and, if available, request its immediate response via Communications.

Dispatchers handling a pursuit ~~or receiving a helicopter pursuit request~~ will determine the helicopter's location and advise the operators of the pursuit location.

Department helicopter operators should respond immediately to the pursuit scene. Once the helicopter has arrived on the scene and the ~~observer~~ Tactical Flight Officer has established visual contact with the pursued vehicle, the helicopter crew should advise the pursuing units via Communications that they will ~~observe and report~~ track the vehicle. If the pursuit is outside of the Department's pursuit policy, ~~the pursuing units should then terminate the pursuit and allow the helicopter crew to observe the actions of the vehicle and suspect(s) in question. Ground units will~~

~~reducing~~ reduce their response to Normal Response
Ground units will continue to follow the helicopter crew's directions
. The event will remain on the originating district channel for the entirety
. The initial field supervisor will maintain supervision of the event.

~~The Department helicopter pilots~~ Tactical Flight Officers may use the helicopter's spotlight to maintain observation of the fleeing vehicle and gain suspect description(s) and other important information, unless it appears that its use results in continued unsafe driving by the suspect driver and the circumstances warrant termination of the pursuit by the helicopter. The helicopter's spotlight may also be used to alert other motorists to the fleeing suspect's position in an attempt to increase the safety of uninvolved motorists and pedestrians.

If, in the judgment of the ground field supervisor, the gravity of the offense, extenuating circumstances or the surrounding terrain dictates that the primary and/or other units remain in close proximity, the primary unit and/or other units may continue the pursuit. If the ground field supervisor elects to maintain the pursuit, Communications is advised, and the helicopter should continue as an observation unit. The notified ground field supervisor will have final authority to modify or terminate a pursuit at any time.

If the helicopter locates a suspect vehicle, either through observation or with assistance of ALPR, ground units will respond and attempt to make an enforcement stop on the suspect vehicle. If the vehicle flees the enforcement stop and the want for the vehicle is not within the Department's pursuit policy,

with the assistance of the helicopter.
The event will remain on the primary radio channel where the vehicle was initially located and the ground supervisor responsible for the initiating units will maintain supervision of the event.

approved to do so by a supervisor. If allied agencies are requested to assist in the apprehension of the vehicle by the ground supervisor, the initiating unit will respond to the termination point at the conclusion of

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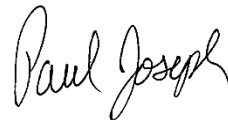
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the event to take custody of the suspect(s) and/or evidence and complete the investigation.

ORDER

Effective immediately, all Department personnel shall adhere to the above Duty Manual sections.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Joseph
Acting Chief of Police

PJ:PH:NB:KK