



DEPARTMENT NOTICE

24-068

Published: 04/24/24

Expires: 04/24/27

Department General Order 5.25 “Foot Pursuits” Update Packet #106


The purpose of this directive is to announce the implementation of Department General Order 5.25, *Foot Pursuits*, adopted by the Police Commission on March 6, 2024. The Police Commission agreed to a 45-business day implementation period and therefore, members will be held accountable for this policy starting May 8, 2024.

The policy includes, but are not limited to the following:

1. The purpose of this order is to provide officers with guidance regarding when to initiate, continue, or end foot pursuits.
2. Clarifies foot pursuits in regards to apprehension mode versus containment mode.
3. Emphasizes the safety concerns and responsibilities of the initiating pursuit officer.

Members are expected to have a working knowledge of all directives applicable to their respective assignment and comply with their provisions, per DGO 3.01, *Department Written Directives*. Members shall obey all written orders, policies, and procedures of the Department, per DGO 2.01, *General Rules of Conduct*.

Department General Order 5.25 is attached to this Notice and is available to members on the PowerDMS site.


WILLIAM SCOTT
Chief of Police

Per DN 23-152, all sworn & non-sworn Members shall electronically acknowledge this Department document in PowerDMS within (30) thirty calendar days of issuance. Members whose duties are relevant to this document shall be held responsible for compliance. Any questions regarding this policy should be sent to sfpd.writtendirectives@sfgov.org who will provide additional information.

Foot Pursuits

5.25.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to provide officers with guidance regarding when to initiate, continue, or end foot pursuits.

5.25.02 POLICY

It is the policy of this Department that officers may engage persons in a foot pursuit if factors are present that warrant the apprehension of the person attempting to flee. Foot pursuits are one of the most dangerous and unpredictable situations for officers. All foot pursuits are high risk and require good judgment, sound tactics, and heightened safety awareness. The priority for officers engaging in a foot pursuit is safety. This policy does not apply to bicycle pursuits.

5.25.03 DEFINITIONS

Foot Pursuit: An incident where an officer chases, on foot, a person who is evading detention or arrest.

Apprehension Mode: The pursuit of person(s) wherein the intent of the pursuing officer(s) is to detain or take the person(s) into custody.

Containment Mode: The isolation of a person within a confined/controlled area, large or small, with the intent of preventing the person's escape.

5.25.04 PROCEDURES

A. Decision to Pursue

Initiating or continuing a foot pursuit is a decision that an officer must make quickly under unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. An officer may initiate a foot pursuit when they reasonably believe the person has committed an act that would justify a detention, custody, or arrest (See General Order 5.03, *Investigative Detentions*).

Officers initiating a foot pursuit or implementing containment procedures, shall act reasonably and shall continually assess and evaluate whether the need for apprehension justifies the safety risk based upon the evolving circumstances of the pursuit. Officers shall weigh the necessity of immediate apprehension (including, but not limited to, the severity of the crime) against the danger to the pursuing officer(s), the fleeing person and the public.

When deciding to engage, not to engage, or discontinue a foot pursuit, the officer's decision must be evaluated based on the facts and totality of the circumstances known to the officer at the time the decision was made rather than evaluated using the benefit of hindsight.

B. Safety Concerns

The following are examples of officer safety issues that should be considered regarding initiating or continuing a foot pursuit:

1. The potential for violence to the officer(s) or bystanders.
2. The officer is acting alone.
3. The person is known or believed to be armed with a weapon.
4. The officer becomes unsure of the person's location or direction of travel.
5. Radio contact is lost.
6. The officer loses possession of essential equipment.
7. The person enters a building, structure, confined space, or otherwise isolated area.
8. The officer becomes aware of circumstances that increases the risk to officers or the public (i.e., baiting to ambush).
9. An officer pursuing multiple people does not reasonably believe they would be able to control them should a confrontation occur.
10. When two or more officers involved in the pursuit become separated, lose visual contact with one another, or obstacles separate them to the degree they cannot immediately assist each other, officers should consider transitioning to containment mode.
11. The need to secure Department vehicles left unlocked or running.
12. The officer's physical capability to safely control the suspect once apprehended (e.g., fatigue, injury, stature.)

C. Apprehension Mode versus Containment Mode

Depending on the circumstances and the rapidly changing nature of any given foot pursuit, officers must quickly assess and then decide a reasonable course of action. This may include transitioning from apprehension mode to containment mode or vice versa.

For example, when officers lose sight of a person, the danger increases significantly, and the threat of ambush becomes higher. When this occurs, officers should consider transitioning from “pursuit to apprehend” to “pursuit to contain.”

In the transition to containment mode, officers shall do the below tasks when feasible:

- Use protective cover or a position of advantage near where the person was last seen;
- Broadcast the person’s description and last direction of travel (or current location);
- Establish a perimeter;
- Evaluate and request additional resources, if necessary;
- Coordinate securing evidence.

D. Responsibilities of the Officer Initiating the Pursuit

Detaining a person for suspected criminal activity is inherently dangerous for police officers due to the unpredictable response of the person. Before attempting to stop a person, an officer can gain a significant tactical advantage by broadcasting their information to Dispatch *before* the suspect knows of the officer’s intentions. Officer(s) shall coordinate and plan their response, if feasible:

Officers initiating a foot pursuit shall broadcast the following information when feasible:

- Code 33 (Emergency – clear channel);
- Unit identifier;
- Location and direction of travel;
- Reason for the foot pursuit;
- Number and description of suspects; and
- Whether the person is known or believed to be armed.

Early information and communication by officers are essential so that adequate resources can be effectively deployed. Unless relieved by another officer or a supervisor, the initiating officer shall be responsible for requesting resources and coordinating the progress of the pursuit.

Radio transmissions made while running may be difficult to understand and may need to be repeated. Officers unable to promptly and effectively broadcast information should consider transitioning to containment mode. When a foot pursuit terminates, the officer must notify Dispatch with location and status of the pursuit termination (e.g., person in custody or lost sight of the person).

Once containment is achieved and sufficient personnel are on scene, an arrest/react team should be formed to take the suspect into custody. Whenever feasible, the initiating officer should not be involved in the arrest team.

After a prolonged physical encounter, both officers and the detainees may be at risk of medical distress. Officers shall summon medical attention if an officer is injured and/or the subject is injured and/or complains (e.g., including verbal or physical signs) in a way that conveys that the person is having difficulty breathing or may be losing consciousness.

E. Supervisor Responsibility

Recognizing that foot pursuits are dynamic and inherently dangerous, supervisors shall make every effort to monitor, respond to and continually assess the situation.

A supervisor shall respond to a foot pursuit whenever the following occur:

- Injury to an officer, bystander, or suspect;
- Suspect(s) enter a residence, building or structure, defined terrain objective (backyard);
- Any reportable force; or
- When the person is armed with a weapon.

Supervisors shall conduct a debriefing with the involved officer(s), when feasible.

F. Documentation

Officers shall document and articulate in the corresponding incident report their reasons for engaging in a foot pursuit, as well as the outcome of the foot pursuit, and any injuries sustained by officer(s) and suspect(s). If no incident report is required, officers may memorialize their reasons for engaging in the foot pursuit in their body-worn camera or CAD.

References:

DGO 5.03 – Investigative Detentions
POST Learning Domain 21