

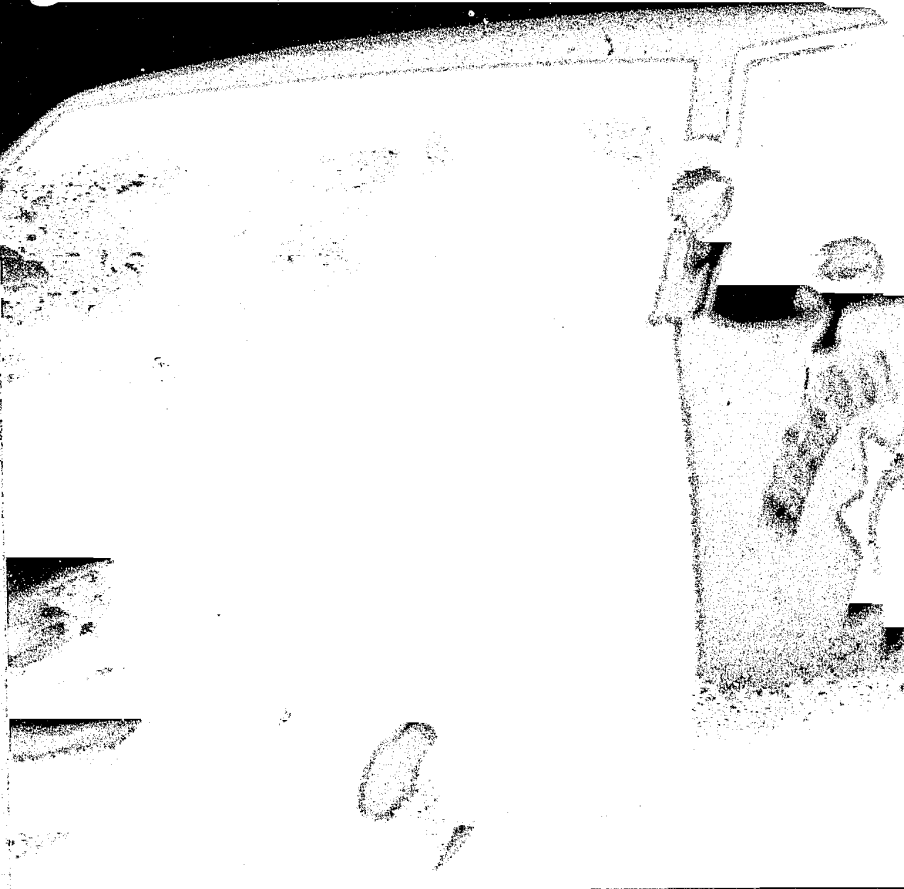
**FBI**

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**Law Enforcement Bulletin**

**DRIVING**

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# Contents

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- 114506 Training { 1 **Inservice Training in Economically Distressed Times**  
By Gerald W. Konkler
- 114507 Operations { 7 **Pursuit Driving**  
By Les Abbott
- 114508 FBI National Academy { 12 **FBI National Academy:  
Attendance Trends From 1976-1987**  
By Audrey B. LaSante and N.J. Scheers
- 114509 Administration { 18 **Police Recruitment Through Strategic Marketing  
Planning**  
By Michael D. Breen
- 21 **Book Review**
- 114510 Legal Digest { 22 **Reasonable Expectation of Privacy Cases  
Revive Traditional Investigative Techniques**  
By Kimberly A. Kingston
- 30 **Wanted by the FBI**

114506-  
114510

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# FBI

## Law Enforcement Bulletin

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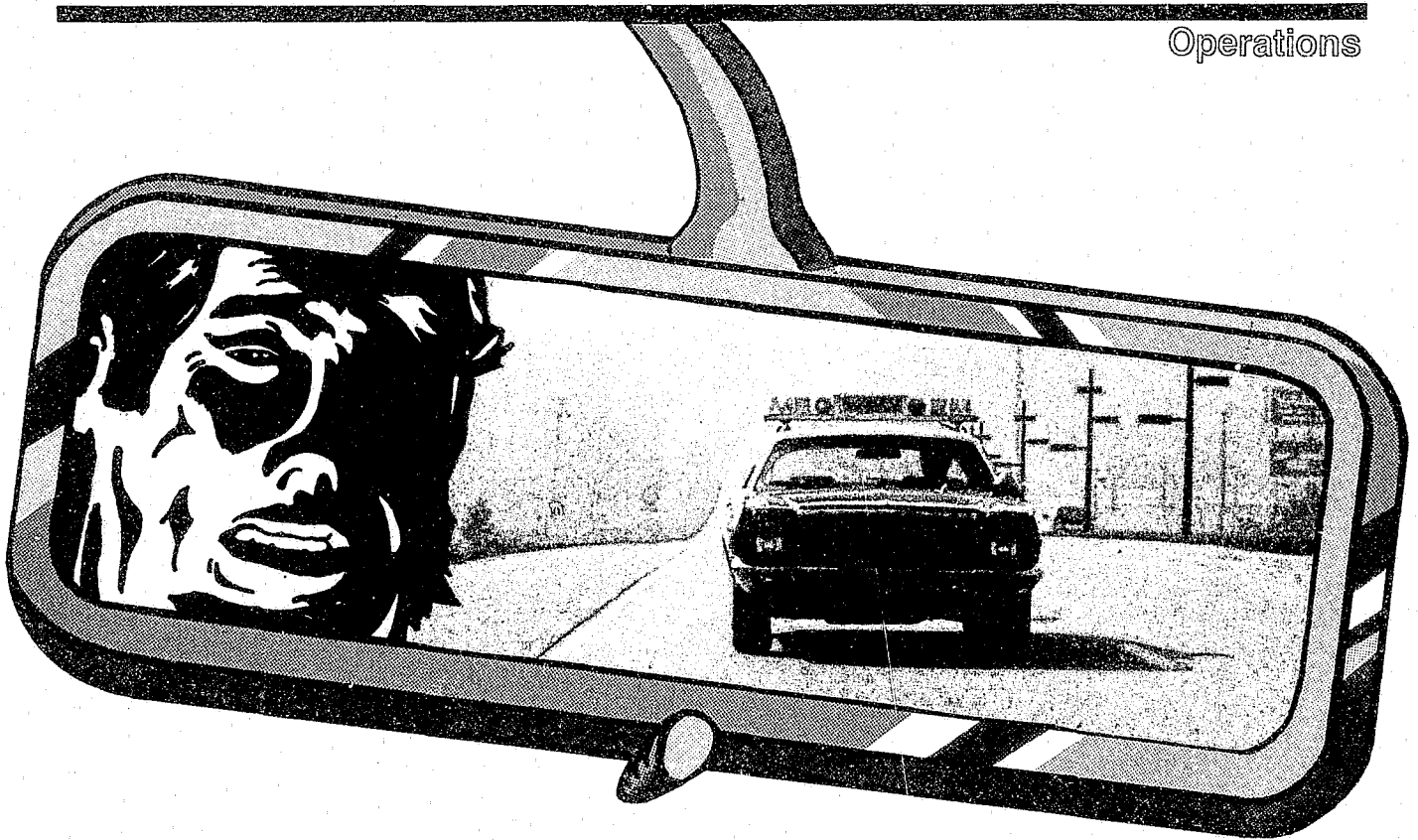
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## Pursuit Driving

***“Conditioning, attitude, and training each play an important role in bringing a pursuit to a conclusion without injury to the officer, the suspect, or the public.”***

By  
SGT. LES ABBOTT

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Each year, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) makes over 4 million vehicle enforcement stops. This figure includes 139,000 arrests for driving while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and over 13,000 arrests for felonies ranging from possession of stolen property to homicide. A significant number of these vehicle stops escalate into a pursuit situation. How an officer responds during a pursuit can mean the difference between life or death.

Vehicle pursuits are one of the many tasks performed by police officers nationwide. Unfortunately, the chase scenes depicted on television and in movie theaters are always exciting, spectacular, and entertaining. Although

actual police pursuits may also be exciting, all too often they end tragically, resulting in property damage, serious injury, or even death.

Why people attempt to evade arrest is a question not easily answered. However, in a pursuit study conducted by the CHP and published in 1983, it was determined that the most common event preceding a pursuit was an officer witnessing a vehicle code violation. To be more specific, of the 683 pursuits studied, 130, or 19 percent of the violators, attempted to flee to avoid being arrested for driving while under the influence. Other common reasons included avoiding a citation, fleeing in a stolen vehicle, and avoiding an arrest



Sergeant Abbott



J. E. Smith  
Police Commissioner

for a penal code violation. Regardless of the reason for fleeing, once a driver commits a vehicle code violation or is involved in some other activity that justifies police intervention, an officer must decide whether to stop the violator. This is the first stage in a pursuit. The second stage is when the violator becomes aware of the officer's intention to pull the car over and he or she decides to evade arrest. The third and final stage is when the officer decides to pursue the violator. How an officer performs at each stage is critical to the success of the pursuit. Conditioning, attitude, and training each play an important role in bringing a pursuit to a conclusion without injury to the officer, the suspect, or the public.

### Policy

Before discussing conditioning, attitude, and training, I would like to stress briefly the importance of a comprehensive written pursuit policy. Such a policy will enhance the officer's ability to make key judgment decisions during a pursuit. For example, an officer must make decisions about the performance capabilities of the vehicle, the type of roadway(s) involved, weather conditions, other traffic, the seriousness of the offense, and the risk involved in initiating or continuing a pursuit. As if this is not enough to consider, the officer must then refocus his or her attention to the termination point of the pursuit and make judgment decisions in taking the violator into custody. Any mistakes during the pursuit or ensuing stop can ultimately result in tragedy. What, then, should a pursuit policy contain?

First and foremost, a pursuit policy should be designed to assist the officer in his/her decisionmaking process, both before and during a pursuit. There are

several areas that should be addressed in a policy statement:

- Safety of the officer and the public,
- Who determines whether to continue or terminate the pursuit,
- The supervisor's role and responsibility,
- Forcible stops (ramming, roadblocks, etc.), and
- The use of firearms.

Once a pursuit policy has been developed and implemented, it should be reinforced through training and supervision. Pursuits should also be analyzed and recorded for data collection and identification of applicable training needs.

### Conditioning

There are three factors to be analyzed after a pursuit: The driver, the vehicle, and the environment or roadway. In pursuit situations resulting in a collision, a deficiency in one or more of these three factors will always be found as the cause. The vehicle and roadway are normally known quantities and are not amenable to change by any immediate human control. The only truly flexible component is the driver. The driver alone can adjust to the vehicle's limitations and allow for the variables encountered on the roadway. The driver is also responsible for the successful integration of the operator-vehicle-roadway relationship and is the person who will suffer most of the consequences of failure. Therefore, in order to have the greatest impact on safety during pursuits, the driver must be conditioned to respond correctly. It is important to remember that proper conditioning is the result of attitude and training.

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## ***“Poor driver attitude contributes to more accidents than does lack of skill.”***

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### **Attitude**

A driver can be taught to develop skills and coordination of mind and body. The eyes see, the brain transmits, and the body reacts; but good judgment comes from experience and a good attitude. Although experience comes with time on the job, proper and acceptable attitudes can be introduced during initial academy courses and reinforced through periodic training. This sets a catalyst for forming good judgment. Let's now examine driver attitude.

Poor driver attitude contributes to more accidents than does lack of skill. Attitude, for our purposes, is defined as the posture of a person showing his or her mental state or mood or a person's manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows his or her disposition. Taken one step further, the characteristics enumerated as being symptoms of poor driver attitude comprise that vague quality we call judgment. Judgment, as it pertains to driving, is the individual's ability to perceive hazards or dangers. The person who perceives and recognizes driving hazards far enough in advance to avoid an accident or loss of control is said to have good judgment.

In pursuit driving, attitude and judgment are inseparable. The following are some examples of poor driving attitude and how they can relate to pursuit driving:

- Overconfidence—People who take too much for granted. They are serenely confident they can control the vehicle under any circumstances. They fail to allow for mistakes or unpredictable actions on the part of other drivers.
- Pride—This characteristic overlaps with confidence. “I've never had an accident.” There are people in cemeteries as a result of their first collision. Or, “I've never lost a pursuit.” Many pursuits are terminated as a result of a police car becoming involved in an accident.
- Experience—These are the officers who have been in police work for several years. There is very little they have not learned (or so they think.) Their time on the job is supposed to divinely see them through. There might not be an officer on the shift who wants to work with them because they are terrible drivers. Yet, their peers are afraid to tell them so, and the supervisor's comments are passed off as being over-critical. It is important to remember that experience develops bad habits as easily as good ones.
- Impatience—This is characterized by taking chances, getting into tight situations, taking shortcuts, and last-minute hard braking.
- Abuses the vehicle—This individual overworks the brakes, downshifts at high speeds, over revs the engine when starting or accelerating, bounces over curbs or railroad crossings without slowing down; then when a breakdown occurs, the officer complains vociferously that the car the department is buying is junk. Enforcement drivers never know when they may need to stretch the patrol car's performance to its maximum limits. Because the car is an essential part of the officer's equipment, abusing it is unforgivable.

There are many more characteristics of poor driver attitude, but those listed above are some to which most enforcement drivers can relate. They are even more easily recognized during pursuit situations when the officer's full attention is devoted to apprehending the suspect. Fortunately, attitudes are not inborn or inherited, rather they are created, then they evolve and become reinforced through repetition.

The very nature of police work frequently subjects an officer to highly stressful situations and may be preceded by a period of relative inactivity. Although not a characteristic of driver attitude, stress can adversely affect the outcome of a pursuit.

While a small amount of stress can cause individuals to operate more efficiently, excess tension, such as that encountered during a pursuit, can hamper the ability to function normally. Stress causes an increase in blood pressure, the injection of adrenalin into the blood stream, and impaired breathing. These physiological changes can so alter the function of the nervous system that an individual may be incapable of intelligent action.

Frequently, a driver questioned after a pursuit accident is unable to recall any of the circumstances immediately preceding the collision. This is an indication the driver has reached his or her “stress threshold.” There are different stress thresholds for each individual, which can be described as the point where physiological reactions so impair the functioning of the senses that the driver becomes unaware of the surroundings.

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***“An effective driver training program must begin with basic skill development and build to the more complex techniques required during pursuit situations.”***

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### **Training**

Police officers working in today's highly mobile society spend the majority of their work shift behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. With liability the way it is today, no longer can an officer be content on just "driving." The multitude of situations and conditions under which an officer operates a vehicle demands a well-trained individual. A driver training program stressing basic concepts is essential in order to meet these demands.

An effective driver training program must begin with basic skill development and build to the more complex techniques required during pursuit situations. There are five phases of training that should be considered essential when developing training for the police officer. In order of complexity, they are vehicle placement, defensive driving, skid control, performance driving, and pursuit/emergency response.

### **Vehicle Placement**

A large percentage of accidents involving law enforcement officers occur while the vehicle is being operated at low speeds, such as in parking lots or while the car is being driven in reverse. Many of these accidents involve fixed or stationary objects. Some consideration as to the basic technique used to steer a vehicle can help minimize the potential of these low speed or vehicle placement accidents.

An awareness of terminology and concepts, such as rear wheel "cheat," front end swing, and braking and how they affect the operation of a vehicle, is extremely important. For example, rear wheel cheat is present anytime a vehicle is turned from a straight path. While driving forward and turning to the left, the rear tires will follow a path to

the left of the path traveled by the front tires. When turning right, the rear tires will track to the right of the front tires. In today's standard-size patrol car, the path of the rear tires may be as much as 36 inches closer to the inside of the curve than the front tires. The severity of the rear wheel cheat is in direct proportion to the degree of turn attempted and the vehicle's wheelbase. Most drivers have observed a long truck or bus swing wide around a corner to avoid jumping the curb, but how many drivers are aware that this same phenomenon affects their own vehicle?

### **Defensive Driving**

This means the continual exercise of good judgment and good driving habits, together with the adoption of an attitude that *you* are the only careful driver and all others are reckless and cannot be depended upon to drive properly and safely. A good defensive driver will always be alert to an unexpected action on the part of another motorist and will be prepared to take preventive action.

### **Skid Control**

The goal of this phase of training is to control a skid should the operating parameters of the vehicle be exceeded. In order to teach the driver to control a skid, it is necessary to place the driver in a potential loss of control situation. Emphasis should be placed upon anticipation and recognition of a potential loss of control.

### **Performance Driving Techniques**

A good definition of performance driving might be a driver's ability to use fully the performance potential of the vehicle. Limited skill is needed to floor the throttle and drive in a straight line. A discussion of performance driving

techniques is a discussion of proper cornering techniques. The two basic considerations when cornering a vehicle are entry speed and roadway position, with speed being the most critical factor.

A turn should always be entered at a speed that is less than maximum. For most drivers, this is a difficult point to learn. The fact that a driver manages to keep the car on the pavement through a turn does not mean the speed was less than maximum. Less than maximum means the driver can position the vehicle wherever desired on the roadway while negotiating the curve. At maximum speed, the vehicle will understeer and push wide as it goes through the turn. A driver will be unable to choose a route to use the full pavement surface effectively. Proper position will be impossible to attain at maximum speed, except for the most proficient and experienced driver; furthermore, it definitely is not the quickest or safest way through a turn.

### **Code 3 (Emergency Lights and Siren) Driving Techniques**

Code 3 driving frequently demands split-second timing and instant reactions. Moves must be planned ahead so valuable moments won't be wasted in panic and indecision. Code 3 and pursuit runs are situations where the enforcement officer can apply the techniques of performance driving. Make time where it can be made safely. For example, on long, open straightways and clear, unobstructed intersections, use the performance potential of the vehicle. When confronted with hazardous areas or traffic congestion, slow down and even *stop if in doubt* as to what other drivers may do.

How fast should a car be driven on

a code 3 run? This will depend on a lot of variables and will ultimately be the decision of the individual officer. The best answer to this question is: You can't help anyone if you don't get there! Remember: The red light and siren only request the right-of-way. They don't grant it. When traveling code 3, keep in mind that the high-pitched sound of a siren is very directional. It travels in a straight line and will bounce off solid objects, such as a car trunk.

Finally, remember that it is easy to become personally caught up in the

heat of the chase when the adrenalin starts flowing. Catching the violator becomes a matter of pride. An officer's vision tunnels in on the violator to the exclusion of existing hazards. It takes a great deal of maturity to discontinue a pursuit when the hazards posed to innocent bystanders can't be justified. An officer should not be reprimanded for terminating a pursuit; however, disciplinary action is justifiable for officers exercising poor judgment in *continuing* a pursuit. Granted, when the violator runs, there is reasonable cause to

sue, as it might be a stolen car or a fleeing felon. However, it frequently turns out to be only a frightened juvenile without a driver's license. The final question must be asked. Are the risks to the public and the officer associated with a pursuit worth the possible consequences? That question is one each officer must answer before initiating a pursuit or deciding if a pursuit should be terminated. These are critical decisions, because ultimately, the officer will be held accountable for the outcome.

FBI

## Slap-Fire Shotgun

This "slap-fire" shotgun was constructed by a local teenager, reported the Brunswick, OH, Police Department.

The weapon is constructed of two steel tubes of different diameters, allowing one tube to fit inside the other. The receiver is 10 inches long, while the thinner tube, the barrel, is 14½ inches long. Each tube is equipped with a hand-hold consisting of a metal rod welded at a 90-degree angle to the tube. The rear of the receiver tube has a welded cap. A small screw welded to the base of the cap acts as a firing pin.

The weapon fires a 12-gauge shotgun shell, held in place by the rim of the shell. The barrel tube is inserted into the receiver and forced back, bringing the firing pin into contact with the shell's primer. Only moderate force is required to fire the weapon, which is accurate up to 15 feet.

