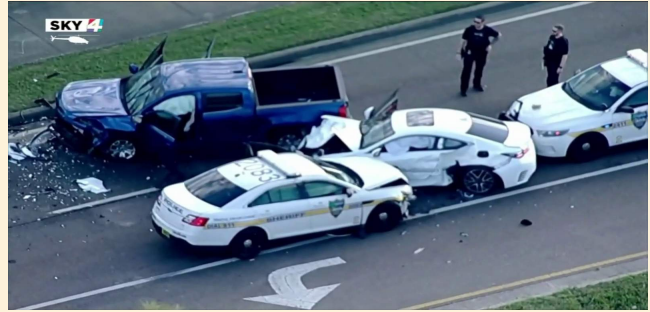


# The High Cost of Vehicle Pursuits

For decades one of the most difficult decisions a law enforcement officer will make - to pursue or not pursue a criminal or offender - has been debated. In addition to the initial reason for the pursuit, the standard typically centers around whether the need to apprehend the offender is greater than the risk to the public if the pursuit continues.



In Florida, many law enforcement agencies have adopted the Forcible Felony language in FS 776.08, as criteria to engage and continue a pursuit. Fleeing and Eluding or Aggravated Fleeing and Eluding a LEO are not identified as forcible felonies. Although some would argue that when someone steals a car, they have committed a burglary, grand theft of a vehicle is not articulated in the above statute as a forcible felony either. The decision to pursue a stolen vehicle, when no other offenses are involved other than traffic, should be carefully weighed.

While it is true that dangerous felons steal cars, many times they are stolen by teenagers. The conclusion of a vehicle pursuit can involve more than bent metal. Serious bodily injury/death to the suspects, the innocent public and deputies, as well as significant property damage may result.

Deputies need be extremely clear on what their agency's policy is on vehicle pursuits prior to initiating one. Most allow for a pursuit when exigent or extenuating circumstances of an immediate threat to the personal safety of another exist. A deputy who chooses to engage in a pursuit for the aforementioned reasons, must be able to articulate the circumstances.

**Supervisors must:**

- 1. Supervise and carefully monitor active pursuits**
- 2. Ensure agency policies and Florida Statutes are being adhered to**
- 3. Limit the number of vehicles involved**
- 4. Cancel the pursuit if it is outside the parameters of policy or statute or when the risks to the public outweigh the need to apprehend the offender**

Number of deaths related to vehicle pursuits by law enforcement agencies in the United States between 1996 and 2015, by state (Top 5)

