

Lewisville Police Department



Annual Vehicle Pursuit Report 2023

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Executive Summary

The Lewisville Police Department takes its obligation seriously to provide the most effective and efficient police service while ensuring employee and community safety. Law enforcement is a particularly dangerous occupation and while many of our activities are fraught with risks, employees must take all safety measures to drive with due regard for public safety; especially while operating a vehicle in an emergency, or when pursuing a suspect's vehicle.

The Department's Annual Vehicle Pursuit report was created to evaluate all vehicle pursuit data reported during the calendar year. It provides an analysis of the reasons for the pursuits, the employees involved, and the result of the pursuits. This report is completed annually, in compliance with Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices 7.14 – Pursuit Documentation, as part of the Recognition Program.

This report covered three major areas: an analysis of all vehicle pursuits reported in 2023, the frequency of vehicle pursuits per employee, and highlights of the results from these pursuits (including injuries, damages, or other significant event). This annual analysis is not intended to determine if an employee acted inappropriately, but instead to identify department-wide trends that may suggest changes in policy, training, equipment, or manner of supervision.

Overall, there were 54 events that resulted in vehicle pursuits in 2023. These events involved 157 officer engagements, with 26 of them resulting in one or more policy violations. The total number of policy violations was identified at 30. The most frequent reason for a vehicle pursuit was due to a Flock identification for a stolen vehicle or a sighting and identification of a stolen vehicle by the officer. Vehicle pursuits for suspicions of DWI were the third most common in 2023.

The most common violation was excessive speed in residential areas, followed closely by intersection violations. It is recommended officers receive to review vehicle pursuit policies at least monthly and follow up with updates or changes made by Command Staff throughout the year. It is also recommended to implement a mandatory remediation class for those that incur vehicle pursuit violations, in addition to the discipline they may receive.

Definitions

Vehicle Pursuit: A vehicle pursuit is an active attempt by a law enforcement officer to apprehend one or more occupants of a moving vehicle; providing the driver of such vehicle is aware of the attempt and is resisting apprehension by maintaining or increasing his speed, by ignoring the officer's attempt to stop them, or by taking evasive action.

Code 1: It is normal driving on standard patrol and while responding to non-emergency calls for service. Officers are to obey all traffic laws and drive courteously. The use of emergency lights and sirens is not authorized.

Code 3: It is the use of emergency lights and sirens to respond to emergencies as safely and as quickly as possible. Emergency lights must be operated continuously. Sirens may be deactivated if there are no hazards present or when it is necessary to travel silently in order not to alert a suspect or endanger lives. Code 3 is not authorized without appropriate emergency equipment.

Controlling Supervisor: In most cases, the controlling supervisor will be the pursuing officer's supervisor or Watch Commander. This supervisor has the responsibility of monitoring vehicle pursuits and ensuring that all inter-departmental pursuit policy agreements are followed. This agreement for North Texas Law Enforcement agencies limits the number of vehicles involved in a pursuit to three.

Support Unit Operator: This unit has back-up responsibilities to the primary unit. It will stay at a safe distance from the primary unit to lessen the chance of collision and allow the primary unit room to maneuver. It will assume radio transmission responsibility when actively involved in the pursuit, and assist the primary unit as needed when the pursuit ends.

Safety Review Committee (SRC): Also known as ***Safety Review Board (SRB)***, this committee is composed of members from the Lewisville Police Department and City stakeholders. They are responsible for reviewing all vehicle pursuits initiated by an employee. This is to ensure the employees' actions were appropriate and within policy guidelines.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting Vehicle Pursuits

Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices 7.14 and Lewisville Police Department General Orders 4.8.II.E.5 require a written report to be completed anytime and officer pursues a vehicle. Per Lewisville PD policy, when a pursuit is concluded, a Vehicular Pursuit Report will be completed by every officer involved and the reports will be forwarded, through the chain of command, to the Chief. The report will be reviewed by Command Staff and used by the Safety Review Committee (SRC) to assess training needs and policy revision. If a policy violation is noted, Command staff will determine the appropriate discipline for the employee or refer the matter to a Discipline Board. Employees may receive additional training, or in some cases, discipline all the way up to employment termination.

Data Collection

All data and metrics were collected from vehicle pursuits documented in Axon Standards for events that took place in 2023. There were multiple officer engagements associated with most events. The data analysis focused on five major components: an analysis of vehicle pursuit data, individual officer analysis, reasons for the pursuit, pursuit termination, and policy violations.

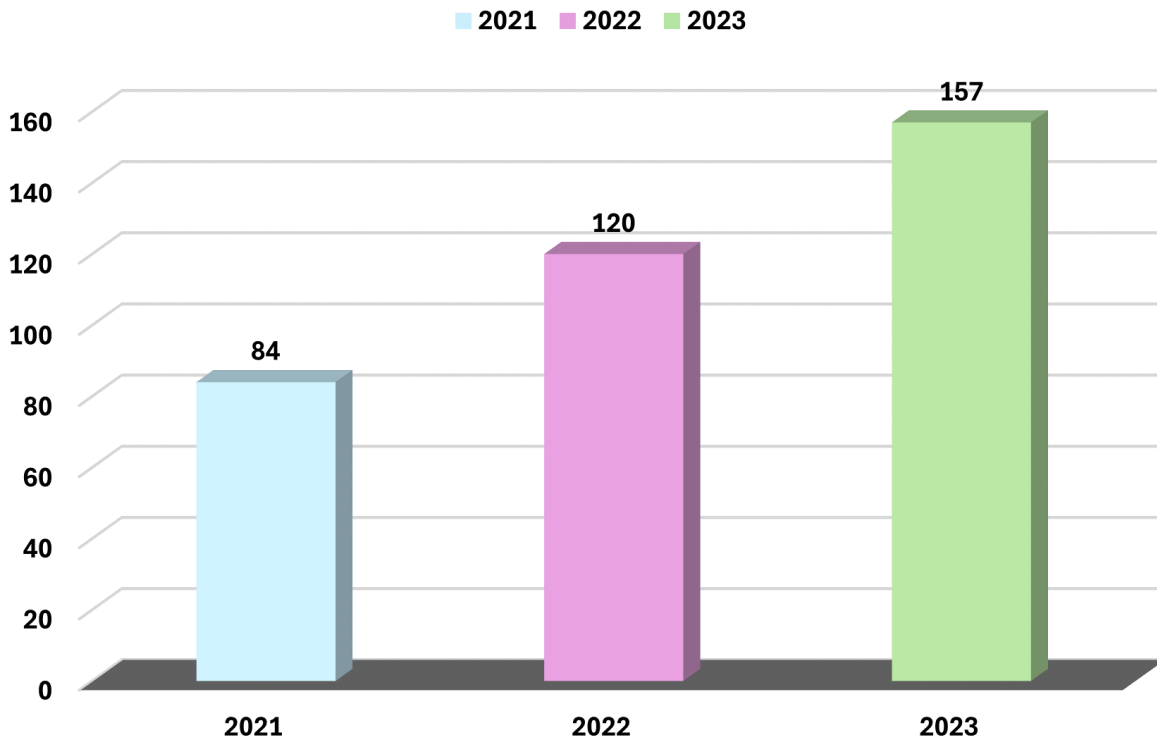
Findings

Vehicle Pursuit Data

The Lewisville Police Department reported 54 events related to vehicle pursuits in 2023. These events involved 157 officer engagements, including those made by supervisors. This represented a 31% increase in officer involvement, when compared to 2022 (120). The frequency of policy violations, per event, decreased from 42% in 2022 to 26% in 2023 (14 of 54). All vehicle pursuit reports were reviewed by the Safety Review Committee (SRC) and Command Staff to determine if the actions of each officer were in alignment with policy, training, best practices, industry standards, and relevant law. The SRC found no policy violations in 131 reports for vehicle pursuits but found some policy violations in the remaining 26. The rate of policy violations per officer involvement decreased from 23% in 2022 to 17% in 2023.

The Flock Safety ALPR camera system continues to successfully assist Lewisville PD officers in locating stolen vehicles, and as such, it may have contributed to an increase of vehicle pursuits in the last two years. The following bar graph (Figure 1) shows a year-by-year comparison of officers involved in a vehicle pursuit in the last three years.

Figure 1. Vehicle Pursuits per Year



Individual Officer Analysis

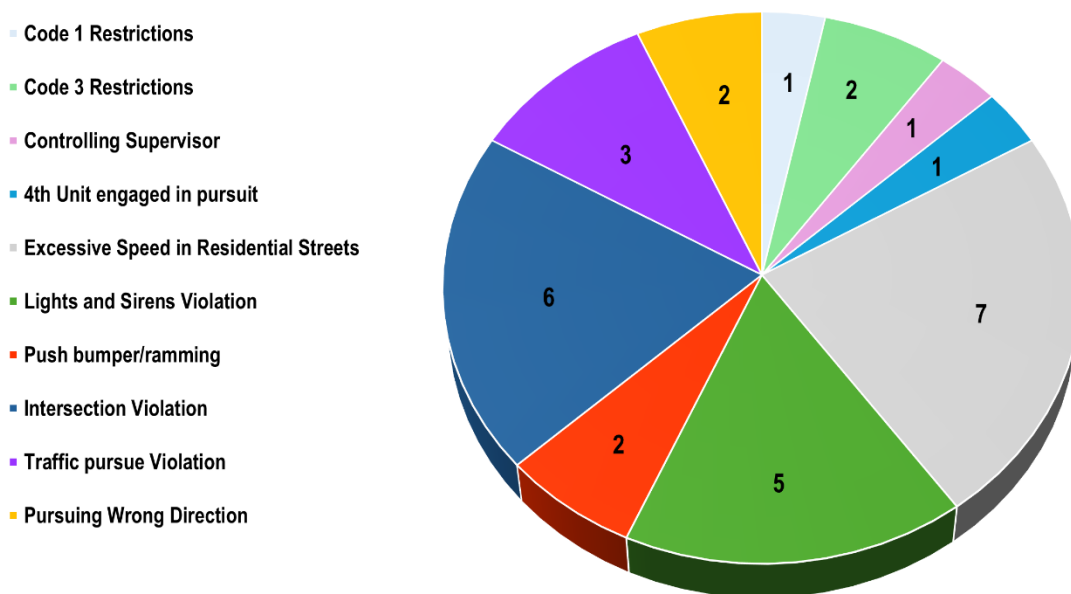
In 2023, the SRC and Command Staff identified 26 vehicle pursuit reports with policy violations. Of those, 4 had at least two violations each, and 9 resulted in no disciplinary action, due to the totality of the circumstances associated with the vehicle pursuit. Of the 30 policy violations reviewed by SRC and Command Staff, the most frequent was exceeding speed in residential areas (23%), followed by intersection violations with 6 (20%), and light and sirens violations with 5 (17%).

A total of 21 officer were involved in a vehicle pursuit in 2023. Of those one officer had three violations, two for running code 3 without care and one for lights and sirens violation. Another 5

officers had two policy violations each. Most of them involved lights and sirens and intersection violations. The pie chart below (Figure 2) shows a breakdown of all policy violations that were identified in 2023 during vehicle pursuits.

Some other policy violations involved code 1 restrictions violations, 4th unit engaged in a pursuit, controlling supervisor violation, push bumper/ramming violation, pursuing for traffic violation, and pursuing a vehicle going the wrong direction.

Figure 2. Policy Violations by Type

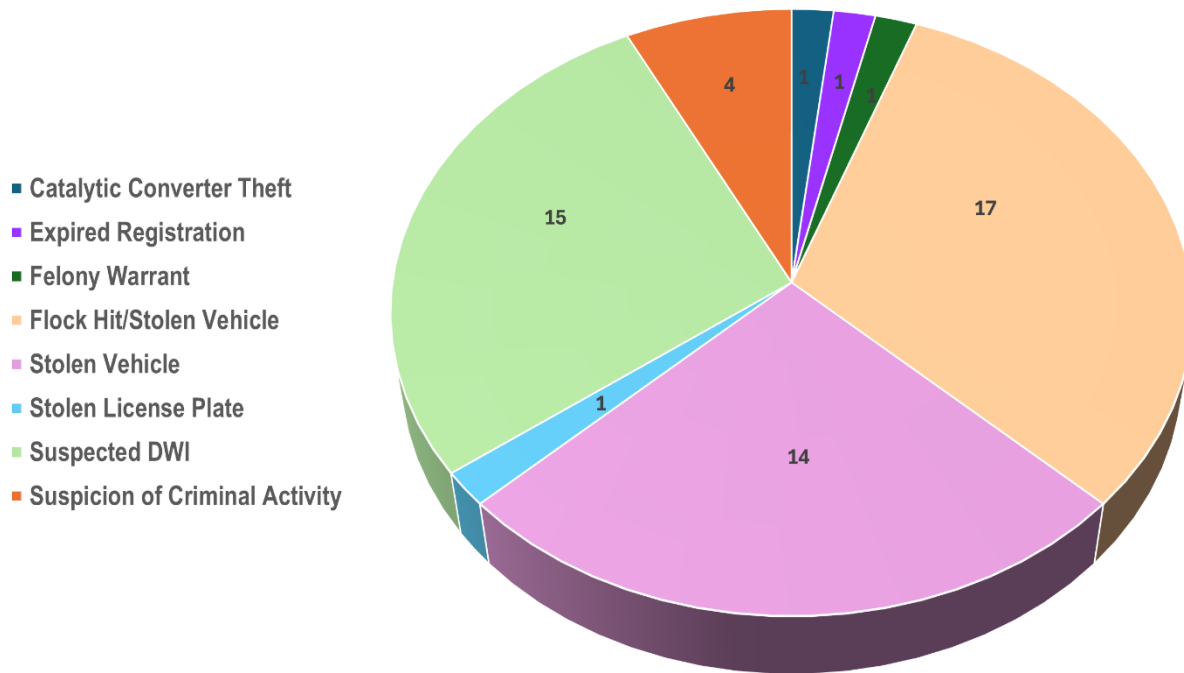


Reasons for Vehicle Pursuits

The Lewisville Police Department General Orders state that officers may only pursue vehicles for felony offenses or suspicion of intoxicated drivers. Of the 54 events related to vehicle pursuits, the most frequent reason was for a Flock hit on stolen vehicle (31%) followed closely by suspicion of an intoxicated driver (28%) and sightings/identification of a stolen vehicle (26%) while on patrol.

Some other reasons for a vehicle pursuit involved suspicion of felonious criminal activity, felony warrants, and catalytic converter theft. The pie chart below (Figure 3) shows a breakdown of all reasons for vehicle pursuits reported in 2023.

Figure 3. Reasons for Vehicle Pursuits



Pursuit Highlights

Axon Standards Report EVT-00000645 refers to a report involving four officers. One of the officers spotted a vehicle making a U-turn in an unsafe manner and almost causing an accident. The officer believed the driver could be intoxicated and initiated a traffic stop. The driver did not stop and sped up, running red lights, and heading to the highway (I35E north bound). The officer initiated a vehicle pursuit at that point. The driver kept switching from the highway to Frontage Rd. and then turned the opposite direction on I35E north bound Frontage Rd. and started to drive south on the NB lanes. The officer stopped the pursuit at that time. The suspect's vehicle was later pinned by other two units, and the suspect was placed in custody. During the same incident, a second officer responded code 3 to help the primary unit, who advised a vehicle was not stopping for him. The primary unit advised the officer was in pursuit. The second officer exceeded code 3

regulations at that time. Once on the service road, the second officer tried to block the suspect from driving the wrong way, but the suspect went around him. A sergeant and third officer were able to get the vehicle to stop. A third officer, along with a sergeant used a stopping mechanism (by using the push bumper of her vehicle and get the suspect's vehicle) to stop the suspect from continuing to drive in the wrong direction.

- The SRC determined that all officers were justified in the pursuit of the DWI suspect. The only policy violation was the one from the third officer and the sergeant, but their actions were justified by stopping a wrong way driver on the interstate highway.
- Command Staff agreed this was just a technical policy violation, and recommended no action be taken, due to the risk to the public and the intentional act to save lives.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Compared to 2022, there was a slight decrease in policy violations in 2023 (from 28 to 26). The most common being excessive speed in residential areas and intersection violations. These violations were all related to the officer's speed and control of the vehicle when engaging in a vehicle pursuit. All sworn personnel at the Lewisville Police Department are now required to review General Orders 4.08 Emergency Operations multiple times throughout the year. Additionally, watch commanders are continuing to conduct briefing training on this General Order, to mitigate future violations.

- It is recommended officers receive to review vehicle pursuit policies at least monthly and follow up with updates or changes made by Command Staff throughout the year.
- It is also recommended to implement a mandatory remediation class for those that incur vehicle pursuit violations, in addition to the discipline type they may receive.
- Increment briefings from watch commanders on vehicle pursuit policies and provide examples of prior violations to explain how updated policies may impact the way General Orders 4.08 is implemented from that point.