



## News and Information Release

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**Contact:**

King County Courthouse  
Room W-116  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

Phone: (206) 263-2560

Email:

KCSOMRO@kingcounty.gov

 @kingcosoPIO

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[Website](#)

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**Date: July 31, 2024**

### **NEW PURSUIT POLICY TO GO INTO EFFECT AUGUST 1**

The King County Sheriff's Office has updated its Pursuit of Motor Vehicles policy. The Washington Legislature's revision of law enforcement vehicle pursuit laws earlier this year prompted this change.

In June of 2024, Initiative 2113 lifted certain restrictions on vehicle pursuits, restoring the authority to pursue a fleeing suspect when there is reasonable suspicion the suspect has violated the law, but retaining many of the risk reduction requirements found in the previous legislation. This impelled the Sheriff's Office to evaluate modifications to its policy.

Effective August 1, the revised policy continues to restrict vehicle pursuits to dangerous felonies and DUI, while modifying the definition of dangerous felony to include burglary. The policy also allows pursuits for felony crimes, and non-felony crimes against a person, under extraordinary circumstances where there is an imminent and ongoing threat to persons or the community at large.

The most important factor when deciding whether to engage in a pursuit remains the risk to the community. Deputies are required to continually weigh the danger of failing to apprehend a suspect against the danger to the community created by the pursuit.

"I have confidence in the good judgement of our deputies when weighing the dangers of a chase against the potential threat to the people of King County," said Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall. "We have given these adjustments careful consideration. We understand the vital importance of striking a balance between holding people accountable for their actions and the well-being of the community."

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The more restrictive law, passed in 2021, only allowed law enforcement to chase suspects involved in a narrowly defined set of serious, violent crimes and required probable cause (a higher legal standard than reasonable suspicion) to chase.

Between 2018-2021, the King County Sheriff's Office averaged just over 15 pursuits per quarter, compared to 14 per quarter from 2021-2023, after the more restrictive legislation went into effect.

In contrast, prior to the 2021 legislation, 41 suspects refused to stop for deputies every quarter, while 138 refused to stop after the 2021 pursuit legislation.

Additionally, the number of pursuits that resulted in injuries stayed static and vehicles damaged went down only slightly from almost 4 a year to 3 respectively.

The new policy lays out what factors deputies should consider when initiating a vehicle chase including communication protocol, supervisor responsibilities, when to terminate a chase, and training.

"KCSO's vehicular pursuit policy has historically been more restrictive than the state law and that's worked well for us," said Undersheriff Jesse Anderson. "It was important for us to listen to community members asking us to go after dangerous criminals putting people at risk. That really helped drive our decision."

The new policy covers all unincorporated King County, as well as the 12 cities that contract with the Sheriff's Office.

The updated King County Sheriff's Office Pursuit of Motor Vehicles Policy will be available in the public General Orders Manual [here](#) on August 1.

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