

# **EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS**

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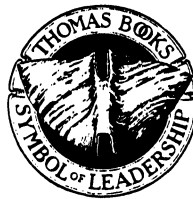
# EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS

## *Emergency Calls and Pursuit Driving*

*By*

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## PREFACE

Few law enforcement tasks involve more danger—to officers and third parties—and the likelihood of civil liability than the emergency vehicle operations. Answering emergency calls and engaging in pursuit requires that the officer be adequately trained, properly supervised and directed (and restricted) by policies, procedures and rules. The days of unrestricted emergency vehicle operations, especially high-speed pursuits, by law enforcement officers are over. The public, especially those sitting on juries, and professional law enforcement officers, agencies and organizations will no longer tolerate “macho police cowboys” behind the wheel of a police vehicle.

This book defines law enforcement emergency vehicle operations and examines the liability concerns and provides guidelines for the development of policies, procedures and rules. Pursuit, the most dangerous emergency vehicle operation, is analyzed from the viewpoint that only well-regulated pursuits should be allowed when the danger to the public of the violator remaining at large outweighs the danger to the public created by the pursuit.

The cost benefit analysis for every pursuit is reached by answering three questions that guide every pursuit: when to pursue, what to do during a pursuit, and when to abandon a pursuit. Ultimately, the need for a pursuit and the continuation of a pursuit once it has begun rests with the **Termination Equation**—Justification for the pursuit balanced against the need for immediate apprehension and the risks involved.



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# **EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS**



# **Chapter 1**

## **INTRODUCTION- RODNEY ROOKIE'S FIRST PURSUIT**

Officer Ted Brown was instructing his new charge, another spit and polish rookie fresh out of the academy. A usual day of rolling and patrolling. Then it happened. On their way to answer a domestic disturbance call, a 1994 blue T-Bird busted the light in front of Car 35.

"Damn, if I was going five miles faster that jerk would've T-boned us!" Brown said turning in behind the T-Bird.

"We're gonna put that guy in jail," Brown added.

Six-year veteran Brown turned the blue light on, hit the siren, and off he drove. The light blue T-Bird roared into afterburner as the light bar lit up.

"Damn, he's not gonna stop! Oh, no a chase!" Rodney yelled as he nervously tightened his seat belt.

Avenue I was busy. Cars darted across the busy avenue going from one shopping mall to another. The T-Bird wove in and out of the six o'clock traffic heading north on Avenue I at sixty miles per hour. The police vehicle approached seventy in the twenty-five-mile zone as it threaded its way through the heavy traffic in an attempt to catch-up. Rodney had his left hand wrapped in a death lock on the black shotgun barrel that sat in the secure rack between him and Ted Brown. His right hand dug into the seat as they bounced along. Rodney felt he had to relieve himself, but he didn't think Ted would stop so he could go to the bathroom. Someone screamed at Rodney. Who could it be?, Rodney thought. It was Ted.

"Get on the damn radio and tell them we're 10-100," Ted screamed at Rodney.

10-100 meant pursuit. You're supposed to notify dispatch as soon as you go 10-100, Rodney said to himself as he remembered the

academy lecture on emergency vehicle operations.

Telephone poles, department stores, fast-food restaurants, service stations, pulled-over cars, cars stopped in the middle of the road, frightened pedestrians holding packages and small children, and water hydrants whizzed by on the right as Rodney tried to remember his lecture on pursuit driving. Oh, Jesus! He's gonna hit somebody. We're gonna hit somebody, Rodney thought as the T-Bird quickly approached Avenue I and 13<sup>th</sup> street. The blue flash in front of them ran the red light at Avenue I and 13<sup>th</sup> street as it turned east. Oh, My God! The light is still red and Brown isn't slowing down, Rodney thought. He started screaming, "Change light, change," as they approached. Cars slammed on their brakes as they saw the police car approach. The light changed. "We're invincible," Rodney screamed as his heart pumped wildly.

Sliding out of their high-speed turn, Ted slapped the mike against Rodney's left arm and shouted. "You work the mike. I told them we're 10-100."

Rodney didn't want to, but he released his grip on the shotgun barrel to pick up the mike wildly bouncing on the seat between them. Rodney held the mike in his left hand, squeezed the seat with his right hand and prayed that he wouldn't wet his pants. The radio kept screaming the same thing, "Car 35, where are you now?" Rodney kept telling them, but they wouldn't stop asking.

The blue flash two car lengths in front of the wide-open police vehicle ran the two way stop sign at Avenue J and 13<sup>th</sup> street and turned back north on Avenue J. The T-Bird passed two slow-moving vehicles on the two-lane residential road. Car 35 passed the same two vehicles as an oncoming pick-up truck ran up on the sidewalk to avoid the speeding police vehicle. Both cars ran the stop signs at 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> street.s Residents gathered up playing children. One elderly man shot the police vehicle a middle finger salute. The T-Bird, with the police vehicle now a half a car length behind it turned left at Avenue J and 16<sup>th</sup> street. "Another red light," screamed Rodney. The fickle "goddess of pursuit" was with them as they ran the light and turned north on the four-lane Avenue I.

Finally, it was over. The T-Bird pulled to the curb four blocks and three stop signs after the turn on Avenue I and 16<sup>th</sup> street. Ted Brown was out of the police car in a flash. Brown yanked the teenage driver out of the car by the hair and hit him squarely in the nose. Blood

spurted from the screaming and crying teenager's face as a horrified Rodney looked on. Within seconds the area filled with officers and police cars. Ted Brown quickly grabbed Rodney by the arm and led him to the back of the police car before the other officers reached them.

"Rodney, that kid hit his nose on the steering wheel when he hit the curb, didn't he?"

"I guess he did if that is what you say, Ted."

A stern-looking Ted Brown shot back, "No, that's what you're gonna say, isn't it?"

"Yeah, that's what happened," a perplexed Rodney replied.

The funny looks the other cops gave Rodney made him nervous. Rodney tried to figure out why everyone was looking at him. They were laughing at him, when Sergeant Edwards from roll call approached.

"Rodney go back to Car 12 and have a seat," he said with a sardonic smile.

Sergeant Edwards talked to Ted Brown for 15 minutes as Rodney sat in the car. Every few seconds cops came by pointed at him and laughed. Rodney couldn't figure out what was wrong. Finally, the sergeant got in the car and turned toward the Interstate.

"Rodney, we're going to Central Headquarters. I want you to hear something."

During the eight-mile drive, the two were silent. Arriving at Central Headquarters, Rodney followed the sergeant down several corridors until they came to a door marked Communications. A balding lieutenant let them in. When they were in the room, a smiling lady sitting behind a console spoke.

"Sergeant Edwards, is that the rookie who was operating the radio?"

"Yep, that's him," was the reply.

Sergeant Edwards, the lieutenant and Rodney moved over to what looked like a giant reel to reel stereo player. The lieutenant took one of the tapes off, moved to another tape player and started rewinding it. Now and then, he hit the play button. Radio transmissions and responses were heard.

"This is Car 35. We're 10-100 North on Avenue I," an excited voice erupted from the tape.

Rodney recognized the voice. It was Ted Brown. A female voice asked.

“Car 35 what’s your location now?”

Rodney recognized the next voice even though it was loud and more of a scream than a response.

“We’re right behind them.”

The room erupted into laughter at the next exchange.

“Car 35, where exactly are you?”

“We’re right behind them. We’re right behind them. Real close behind them,” the excited voice kept repeating.

Could this or has this happened in your police department? Could you, or have you reacted like Rodney during a chase? Have you met Ted Brown or Rodney? If the scenario described above happened in your department would it violate written policies and procedures? Does your department have written policies and procedures covering police pursuits? What, if anything, did Officer Ted Brown do wrong during the pursuit? If there had been an accident with injuries or deaths could Officer Brown convince a jury that his actions were reasonable and prudent under the circumstances? Should the officers have initiated the pursuit? What should they have done differently, if anything, during the pursuit? Should the pursuit have been abandoned? When? What would you do differently or the same as Officer Brown did? Answer these questions now and see if your answers change after reading this book.