

## 6.9: Current Issues - Use of Force and Vehicle Pursuits

Police officers have the power to use force if deemed necessary. If an officer uses more force than required for the situation, this brings up many red flags. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 authorized the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to initiate civil actions against policing agencies if the use of force utilized is excessive or constitutes a pattern of depriving individuals of their rights. <sup>[1]</sup>

One additional issue in police use of force situations is that it is difficult to measure. There are many types of force police can use. The force utilized varies from going hands-on to pepper spray, taser, ASP baton, control holds or takedowns, to deadly force. Every situation is different because it involves human beings and can be interpreted differently from those involved to those standing on the side-lines.

### Vehicle Pursuits

Vehicle pursuits have dramatically changed over the last decade. It used to be commonplace for officers to engage in several vehicle pursuits during one-shift. Officers would get in a vehicle pursuit for many reasons, stemming from locating a rolling stolen vehicle to a driver failing to stop after running a stop sign. Vehicle pursuits have at a minimum, two, four-to-five thousand-pound deadly weapons (a.k.a.= the vehicles) that are driven recklessly (most times), chasing one another. The morgue has seen large numbers of fatalities due to vehicle pursuits. Victims range from an innocent person in a crosswalk at the wrong time when the vehicle police pursued, hit the victim, or the innocent person driving across an intersection with a green traffic light struck while the pursuing vehicle runs a red traffic light. There are too many sad stories of the innocent victim killed because the police decided to pursue a vehicle with lights and siren and the pursuing vehicle refused to pull over.

Because of the many senseless fatalities, many police departments have updated their vehicle pursuit policies and procedures. Although the policies of each department do differ in minor areas, most departments have chosen to only approve a vehicle pursuit in dire situations. Such a situation fitting that description would be if the driver of the fleeing vehicle were actively engaging in behavior that was placing other citizens in immediately dire harm.

1. DOJ. (March 2, 1998). Justice Department Consent Decree Pushes Police to Overhaul Operations, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, C-1. ↩

This page titled [6.9: Current Issues - Use of Force and Vehicle Pursuits](#) is shared under a [CC BY-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Alison S. Burke, David Carter, Brian Fedorek, Tiffany Morey, Lore Rutz-Burri, & Shanell Sanchez \(OpenOregon\)](#) .

- [6.9: Current Issues - Use of Force and Vehicle Pursuits](#) by Alison S. Burke, David Carter, Brian Fedorek, Tiffany Morey, Lore Rutz-Burri, & Shanell Sanchez is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).