

Police Department
City of Keene, New Hampshire

Date: January 19, 2022

To: Steven Russo – Police Chief *SR-140*

Through: Steven Stewart – Police Captain *SMS #106*
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Subject: Annual Vehicle Operation Report, CY-2021

SECTION I - PURSUITS:

This section contains data compiled from Pursuit Reports (KPD Form 41-2) covering the period as noted above, completed in accordance with Department Pursuit Policy 4104E, Section IX, Post Pursuit Actions.

Number of Pursuits:

Between the period of January 2021 through December 2021, Keene Police Officers were involved in eight pursuits. This is two less pursuits than were reported in CY 2020. Of the eight pursuits this year all but two of them were initiated in the City.

Suspect vehicles of CY 2021 consisted of; 1 work/panel van, 2 pickup trucks, 3 passenger vehicles, 1 motorcycle and 1 U-haul type moving van.

Initial Contact/Terminated:

The reason/circumstances and how each pursuit was terminated vary; therefore they will be broken down individually for better clarity.

January 14th – A van was reported stolen from Tire Warehouse in the town of Chesterfield. Members of New Hampshire State Police were able to attempt to stop the vehicle as it entered the city. The van failed to stop for NHSP and they were able to successfully deploy spike strips on the vehicle. The van still failed to stop and continued into the city on Route 9.

Keene Officers set up at two locations on Route 9 and were able to deploy spike strips again, deflating the remaining tires on the van. The van continued through the Base Hill Rd rotary and ultimately came to a stop on Route 9 between Ashbrook Road and the T-intersection. The driver was taken into custody without incident by Keene PD and NHSP. NHSP took custody of the driver and handled the arrest.

February 4th – Keene Police Officers were investigating a Criminal Threatening complaint at Applebee's restaurant. As they were responding, the officers were given a description of the suspect and advised that he was in a vehicle. Upon arrival, an officer observed the vehicle leaving the parking

lot and attempted to stop it. The vehicle drove without its headlights on and refused to stop for the officer. The officer pursued the vehicle onto Ivy Drive, into an apartment complex. The officer was able to conduct a felony stop and take the driver into custody without incident. The driver was charged with Disobeying an Officer, Aggravated DWI and Criminal Threatening (felony).

June 20th – An officer attempted to stop a vehicle for a red light violation when it fled from him. After traveling approximately 1.3 miles, the officer lost sight of the vehicle and terminated the pursuit. The officer was later able to identify a suspect. He was ultimately arrested and charged with Reckless Operation, Disobeying an Officer and Conduct after an Accident.

June 20th – An officer attempted to stop a pick-up truck on Main Street for several traffic violations. When the officer tried stop the vehicle it fled from him at a high rate of speed. The officer pursued the vehicle into the Town of Swanzey onto Kempton Road. The officer terminated the pursuit when the vehicle's speed made the road conditions hazardous (dusty, poor visibility).

The suspect vehicle was later found deep in the woods by NH Fish and Game officers. At this time the driver of this vehicle has not been identified.

August 5th – We received a report for a BOLO that Hillsborough Police had a vehicle flee from them on a motor vehicle stop. It was reported that the vehicle was traveling toward Keene and the driver currently had a suspended driver's license. As patrol units were responding to the area, we were further advised that Stoddard Police and Cheshire County Sheriff had made contact with the vehicle and that they were currently pursuing it toward Keene. Keene Officers set up in two different areas on Route 9 and deployed spike mats in an attempt to stop the vehicle. The driver of the vehicle was able to evade the first set of spikes that were deployed and continued traveling. Upon reaching the secondary spike area at Route 9 and Route 10 north, the deployment of the spike mat was successful. The vehicle only traveled for a couple hundred yards before coming to a stop. Once stopped, the driver of the vehicle was taken into custody without incident. She was charged with Disobeying an Officer and Driving after License Suspension.

August 24th – An officer observed a motorcycle on Marlboro Street that was excessively revving its engine and committing a misuse of power violation. The officer pulled behind the motorcycle and before he was able to activate his emergency lighting, the motorcycle accelerated to a high rate of speed and fled from the officer. The officer pursued the motorcycle until he lost sight of it on Meadow Road. At this time the officer decided to terminate any attempts to pursue the motorcycle further and began checking the area for it.

After a short time, the officer located the motorcycle and driver in a nearby apartment complex. The driver was attempting to conceal the motorcycle inside the building. The officer was able to take the driver into custody without incident. The driver was charged with; Reckless Conduct, Falsifying Physical Evidence, Disobeying an Officer and Habitual Offender of MV Laws.

August 24th – Keene Police Patrol units were advised by the Chesterfield Police that they had observed a vehicle on Route 9 at a high rate of speed but had lost the vehicle before attempting to stop it. A short time later an officer attempted to stop the vehicle for speeding. Upon doing so the vehicle fled from the Officer. The officer continued to pursue the vehicle until he lost sight of it near Route 9 and Washington Street. A short time later, a second perimeter officer advised that he was now attempting to stop the vehicle on Washington Street (this officer also observed speeding violations). This officer pursued the vehicle through the downtown area until losing sight of it in the area of Route

101. The originating pursuing officer had taken a new perimeter position once the second officer began pursuing and ultimately located the vehicle traveling north on Route 12 (still observing a speeding violation). The officer pursued the vehicle north on Route 12 until he lost sight of it in the area of Maple Ave. At this time the pursuit was terminated.

Through investigation, the driver was ultimately identified and charged with Reckless Driving, Negligent Driving and Disobeying an Officer.

October 10th – Keene Police received a report of a theft of a television from Walmart. It was reported that a witness was following the suspects, who were traveling in a U-haul truck, on Route 9. One officer went to Walmart and took the report while the second officer looked for the suspect vehicle. The second officer located the U-haul at the top of Chesterfield Hill and stopped it. Initially the U-haul stopped for the officer and the driver exited the vehicle. Then, the driver re-entered the vehicle and began to flee from the officer. The officer pursued the U-haul into the town of Chesterfield. Chesterfield was notified and advised that they would try to deploy spike strips. This was ultimately unsuccessful. While pursuing the U-haul, it began traveling on the shoulder, coming in contact with a guardrail and another vehicle. Due to this operation, traffic volume and severity of the original crime, the officer terminated the pursuit and had the dispatcher notify Brattleboro Police.

Ultimately, the vehicle was not located by Brattleboro and the suspect remains unidentified.

Apprehension:

The driver was arrested in six of the eight reported pursuits.

Number of Officers:

When we look at this piece of data, we are actually looking at two different items; number of officers actively involved in pursuing the offender, and the number of officers who assume tactical roles; such as the deployment of deflation devices. Our policy allows for two marked police units to be actively involved in the pursuit itself, but it allows any number of officers to assume peripheral roles in an attempt to help resolve it.

This year I found that in five of the reported pursuits, additional officers were able to respond and attempt to take a position to deploy tire deflation devices or assist in the flow of traffic. In two others, the vehicles left town prior to additional units having time to deploy. In the last one, the pursuit with the motorcycle, the officer lost visual fairly quickly but remained in the area checking several places for the motorcycle/suspect. This action ultimately resulted in the officer locating the suspect and taking him into custody

Annual review of our driving and pursuit policies remains effective in this area and officers are reacting and attempting to respond accordingly and effectively.

Distance:

The distances traveled during the eight pursuits are approximate figures, and noted in miles as follows:

- 1.5 miles
- 0.3 miles
- 1.3 miles
- 8.0 miles

2.0 miles
1.0 mile
10.0 miles
6.0 miles

The average distance traveled was 3.76 miles. This is a decrease from CY 2020 pursuits, which was 7.21 miles.

Speed:

Speeds traveled during a pursuit are critical to their management and potential outcome.

In regards to safety and a deciding factor to terminate (or not), it would appear that speed was a factor in the outcome in four of the pursuits this year in which the Keene officer determined to terminate the pursuit due to the speed traveled by the suspect vehicle.

Weather/Pavement/Traffic:

In reviewing each incident reported in CY2021, it would appear that weather/pavement/traffic was a factor in two of this year's pursuits. One being the pickup truck that traveled into Swanzey, due to the speed and dusty conditions, the officer decided to terminate the pursuit. Also in the pursuit with the U-haul, due to the traffic conditions, coupled with the suspects operation and severity of the initiating reason, the officer terminated the pursuit.

Other Data:

There remains no pattern as to where and when pursuits occur within our City; CY 2021 saw eight incidents occur. Based on the low frequency of the pursuits and the varying times, and the unknown actions of individuals, it is not possible to predict or prevent a pursuit from occurring. Further, in reviewing the officer's reports and actions when deciding to stop the suspected vehicles, it appears that they were using the appropriate techniques and decision making skills when deciding to initiate a stop or waiting for backup.

Policy Compliance:

All reported incidents in 2021 were within compliance of our General Order (GO 4104) Pursuits. Our policy remains effective in the safe conclusion of pursuit related incidents.

Decision Making:

The data shows that officers are making good decisions relative to pursuits. Taking into consideration the environmental and traffic conditions, officers are continually evaluating the nature of the pursuits and making reasonable decisions concerning termination or continuation.

Pursuit Reporting:

It is currently the policy of the Keene Police Department that all pursuits shall be reported in an Offense or Arrest report and that no matter the length of the pursuit or was or how it was terminated, that a Pursuit Report (KPD form 41-2) be completed prior to the end of the officer's shift. These two methods have proven to be very effective in the collection of data and timeliness of the reporting.

Conclusions:

Officers are responding appropriately when faced with pursuit situations and are taking appropriate action as the circumstances may dictate. It can be reasonably concluded, that the established annual review of our pursuit policy is a reason why. The fact that the pursuit policy itself is drafted to a standard of reasonableness also plays a role.

In reviewing this year's reports and previous year's reports, it shows that officers are making sound decisions in regards to pursuits. It further shows that backup officers are deploying appropriately to assist in ensuring a successful resolution to a pursuit. We also saw that supervisors continue to pay attention during incidents as these and are making appropriate decisions in regards to turning pursuits over to other agencies and cancelling multiple units.

SECTION II – CRUISER ACCIDENTS:

This section contains data compiled from Keene Police Department collision reports (KPD Safety Report, commonly referred to G1's) involving police cruisers and unmarked police vehicles, covering the period January 2021 through December 2021.

Number of Cruiser Involved Collisions:

Keene Police cruisers were involved in five collisions during CY 2021. This number is the same as CY2020. Furthermore all of the collisions were minor in nature and did not require the city owned vehicle to be taken out of service until repairs could be scheduled.

This year is the third year in a row that no unmarked or administrative vehicles were involved in motor vehicle collisions. This year, one collision occurred when an officer was attempting to make a motor vehicle stop but there were no collisions that occurred during emergency, pursuit or stressful driving situations.

Actions Being Performed By Officers at Time of Collision:

2/4/21 – A cruiser was parked legally on Court Street when it was struck by a vehicle. The vehicle continued without stopping and was later located. The driver of the vehicle was arrested by NHSP for DWI and Conduct after an Accident. The parked cruiser sustained a broken mirror.

2/12/21 – An officer was on patrol and driving through a snow covered parking lot that had not been plowed. During this time he struck some curbing in the parking lot and damaged the driver side front tire.

3/4/21 – An officer was attempting to catch up to a vehicle he intended on stopping when he went to the left of a stopped vehicle. As the officer did this, the vehicle began to negotiate a left hand turn and turned into the side of the cruiser. The officer had his emergency lights on but no siren. The cruiser sustained door and fender damage but was drivable and remained in service until repairs were completed. There were no injuries to the officer or the other driver as a result of this accident.

4/3/2021 – An officer was in the area of the Wright Estates on Court Street when they negotiated a U-turn to conduct a motor vehicle stop. As they made the U-turn, the passenger side tire left the paved portion of the roadway causing tire damage and a flat tire.

8/24/21 – An officer was checking an area for a motorcycle that had fled from him when he observed it cross a footbridge. The officer began backing up to turn around when he struck the cement footing for a light post causing damage to the rear bumper and fender of the cruiser. The cruiser remained in service until repairs were completed.

Weather:

Weather played a factor in one of this year's accident in which the amount of snow in the parking lot covered the granite curbing.

Policy Compliance

This year there were no violations of the General Order governing Operation of Police Vehicles (GO4103G).

It is the policy of this Department to counsel or issue Letters of Guidance to Officers/Employees when they become involved in a preventable motor vehicle accident. This practice serves to reinforce accountability. By the same token, one must take a step back and balance the fact that Officers routinely spend a much greater amount of time on the road and thus the odds of becoming involved in a collision, however minor in nature, increase greatly. To bring this more into perspective, I offer the following CY 2021 mileage figures for the Department's fleet, as provided by the City's fleet services division:

Total miles driven by all police department vehicles – 272,774 miles
Total miles driven by marked police cruisers only – 219,658 miles

SECTION III – CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

This section contains data compiled from citizen complaints pertaining to police vehicle operation, as articulated to the Department by telephone, correspondence, or third party.

Number and Nature of Complaints:

No complaints of driving or cruiser operation were made against the Keene Police Department for CY2021. This is the fourth year in a row that we received no complaints for driving.

Methods of Reporting:

N/A

Location/Date/Time of Complaints:

N/A

Complaint Disposition:

N/A

Recommendations:

- Continue to post this annual document to the Department's global information-sharing files for all officers to review and to the Department's web page for viewing by all citizens.
- Periodic reminders, via roll call sessions, about the importance of driving safely and avoiding distractions. These reminders should include the importance of non-stress driving as well as emergency driving.
- In-house driving training utilizing our department's driving instructors. We continue to have department wide driver training annually for all sworn members of the department. We continue to evaluate each accident and adjust the lesson plan of this annual training to adjust to the needs or issues seen during the previous years, as well as adjustments to state and national trends regarding operation of police vehicles. As shown, this strategy appears to be working. When we analyze the accidents they typically are very minor and most times do not require repair.