

Police Department
City of Keene, New Hampshire

Date: January 26, 2023

To: Steven Stewart – Police Chief SMS #156

From: Mike Kopcha – Police Captain 

Subject: Annual Vehicle Operation Report, CY-2022

SECTION 1 - 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 4104F, Section IX, Post-Pursuit Actions.

Number of Pursuits:

During the period of January 2022 through the end of December 2022, Keene Police Officers were involved in ten pursuits. This is two more pursuits than that which was reported in CY 2021. Of the ten pursuits this year all but one of them were initiated in the City.

Suspect vehicles of CY 2022 consisted of: 3 motorcycles; 4 sedans; and 3 SUVs.

Initial Contact/Terminated:

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

January 1st — A Keene Officer heard very loud revving at approximately 0100 hours coming from the area of Gates St. and Adams St. The officer noted a motorcycle approaching him at a high rate of speed and producing a great amount of unnecessary noise coming from the exhaust and revving engine. The officer got behind the motorcycle on Adams St. and observed it cross Baker St. and drive onto the sidewalk. The motorcycle then turned around to face the officer in his fully marked cruiser. At this point, the officer noted that the motorcycle did not have a license plate.

The officer turned on his emergency lights and the motorcycle sped past him, again pulling onto the sidewalk on Adams St. before speeding off.

Without losing sight of the fleeing motorcycle, the officer watched as the vehicle pulled into a driveway on Adams St. The operator was taken into custody as he tried to park the motorcycle in the garage.

The operator was arrested and charged with DUI, Aggravated; Operating After Certified as a Habitual Offender; Unregistered Vehicle; Common Law Criminal Contempt; Unnecessary Noise From a Motor Vehicle; Speeding; Driving on Sidewalk; and Disobeying an Officer.

February 4th — A Keene Police officer was patrolling Main St. and noted a sedan traveling southbound at a high rate of speed. The officer got behind the vehicle and was traveling 40 mph while the sedan was pulling away from him. The officer turned on his emergency lights and the vehicle continued southbound on Main St., making an abrupt turn onto Baker St.

The vehicle made another abrupt turn into a residence on Baker St. and the officer pulled in behind the vehicle. The operator exited the vehicle quickly and began walking away from it while ignoring the officer's commands for him to get back inside his vehicle.

The suspect would not follow commands to remain at the rear of the suspect vehicle and continued to try and walk away. The officer attempted to detain the male suspect and the suspect resisted. In the course of the altercation, the suspect was sprayed with pepper spray and ran off from the officer. The suspect was ultimately taken into custody after a short foot chase. He was arrested and charged with Disobeying an Officer x2; Operating Without a Valid License; and Resisting Arrest.

April 2nd — An Officer was patrolling Winchester St. and noted a motorcycle pass him eastbound while traveling at a high rate of speed (48 mph in a 30 mph zone). The officer turned around on the motorcycle and illuminated his emergency lights, however the motorcycle continued to travel eastbound on Winchester St.

The officer turned on his siren and watched as the motorcycle turned left onto Ralston St. and then turned right onto Davis St, revving the engine and accelerating. The officer could hear the motorcycle's engine rev again and he observed the motorcycle turn onto Blake St. Due to the high amount of foot traffic in the densely populated area, the officer turned off his siren and terminated the pursuit. The motorcycle was not located and the operator was never identified.

April 9th — An officer was patrolling in the area of Davis St. at around 2330 hours and noted a dual-sport motorcycle with an extinguished tail light. The officer proceeded to follow the motorcycle and watched as it rolled through a stop sign. At this point, the officer turned on his lights and called the stop in to Dispatch. However, the operator showed no intention of stopping and began to accelerate down Winchester St.

The officer turned on his siren and began to pursue the motorcycle. The motorcycle took evasive actions, to include cutting through Keene State College on Appian Way (no motor vehicles permitted), driving around a Campus Safety vehicle, driving around a stopped Keene Police Cruiser, riding on the bike path, and riding off road in an effort to escape pursuing Keene Police cruisers. When the motorcycle continued down the bike path near Route 12, the on duty supervisor terminated the pursuit.

The initiating officer continued to investigate, and was able to identify the operator as a Keene resident. A warrant was drafted and the operator was arrested and charged with Disobeying an Officer.

May 29th — An officer noted a subject that he believed to be a person for whom there was an active warrant. At that time, the subject was hanging around a particular Honda Civic outside of a local

establishment. Later that same evening, that same officer noted the Honda Civic leave the area and he began to follow the vehicle down Dunbar St. The officer noted that the vehicle had an obstructed rear license plate (a tinted license plate cover). The officer illuminated his emergency lights, but the vehicle failed to stop.

The officer pursued the vehicle through the Monadnock Coop parking lot and onto Community Way. The officer watched as the vehicle continued to flee, running several stop signs while traveling back to Main St. where it accelerated and headed southbound.

The vehicle continued to flee southbound, reaching speeds estimated to be in excess of 85mph. The vehicle continued into Swanzey, and failed to negotiate a rotary. When the vehicle left the roadway at Route 12 and Swanzey Factory Rd., it was disabled.

The front passenger (the male the officer initially noted that had an active arrest warrant) fled on foot away from the vehicle; he was taken into custody after a foot chase by a second Keene Police officer. The female operator was taken into custody by the pursuing officer. She was arrested and charged with a number of offenses, to include Disobeying an Officer; Conduct After an Accident; Reckless Operation; License Req'd; Op w/o Valid License; Speeding 26+ mph over limit of 55 or less; and Failure to Display Plates.

June 12th — At 2100 roll call, it was relayed that earlier in the day officers had been trying to locate a reportedly suicidal female that was armed with a handgun in her vehicle. Keene Police officers were currently assisting New Hampshire State Police (NHSP), who were observing that female sitting in her vehicle on Branch Rd. in Roxbury, NH.

At the request of NHSP Troopers, Keene Police officers set up spike mats on Branch Rd., as the female was not cooperating with NHSP, and would not exit her vehicle. Ultimately, the female attempted to flee from the NHSP units, and ran over the Keene Police spike mats, deflating all 4 of the vehicle's tires.

The vehicle promptly stopped, and the female was detained by NHSP.

October 12th — At 0215 hours, an officer noted a vehicle at Central Square with a headlight out. The officer illuminated their emergency lights and attempted to stop the vehicle in Central Square; the vehicle did not stop, and continued northbound on Court St. The officer followed, turning on their siren. The vehicle turned down some side streets where the officer used the PA to order the operator to stop, however these orders were ignored and the vehicle continued north on Court St.

The vehicle turned onto Maple Ave. and continued south on Route 12. The vehicle exited onto West St. and continued onto Park Ave, where it pulled into a residential driveway. The female operator was arrested and charged with DUI-Aggravated; Op After Revocation/Suspension – DUI; and Disobeying an Officer among other offenses.

November 25th — At 0106 hours, an officer was monitoring traffic on Winchester St. when he noted a vehicle traveling westbound at 50mph. The officer pulled behind the vehicle and turned on the cruiser's emergency lights. The vehicle extinguished its headlights and accelerated towards the Winchester/Island St./ Pearl St. intersection. The officer now turned on his siren and notified Dispatch of the pursuit.

The vehicle continued at a high rate of speed onto Pearl St. and crashed into a rock and a tree in a residential yard when it failed to negotiate a sharp curve.

The male operator and female passenger were unhurt. The operator was arrested and charged with Aggravated DUI; DUI Subsequent; Disobeying an Officer; and Operating After Revocation/Suspension.

December 19th - At around 0223 hours an officer was patrolling Main St. by Wyman Way. The officer noted a vehicle traveling north on Main St. at 37 mph in a 25 mph zone. The officer turned around on the vehicle and switched on the emergency lights in an attempt to stop the vehicle for speed. The vehicle increased its speed and drove around another vehicle in the Main St./Marlboro St. rotary, headed east on Marlboro St.

The officer initiated the siren and called in to Dispatch that the vehicle was not stopping.

The vehicle continued to flee eastbound on Marlboro St. at speeds approaching 90 mph. The vehicle attempted to turn right onto Optical Ave. and lost control. The vehicle crossed into the oncoming lane, left the roadway, and struck a tree.

The driver was taken into custody and identified. The driver sustained injuries in the crash, and was taken to the hospital and later flown to Lebanon.

After being released from the hospital, a warrant was drafted and the driver was ultimately arrested and charged with Disobeying an Officer; Driving after Revocation/Suspension; Negligent Driving; and Driving After Revocation/Suspension from a DUI.

December 20th – At around 2300 hours on 12/19/22, an officer received a phone call relaying a possible sighting of a stolen car out of Brattleboro, VT; it was reported that the vehicle was in the McDonald's parking lot in Keene.

Shortly thereafter, another officer located the vehicle on Island St. The officer attempted to stop the vehicle and it began to flee.

Officers pursued the vehicle south on Winchester St. towards the Rte. 101 rotary. The vehicle continued southbound on Rte. 10, at speeds over 100 mph. The pursuing officer was made aware that there were no other county police units in the area at that time, and he continued the pursuit through Swanzey and into Winchester. The vehicle continued to flee at a high rate of speed and passing other motorists in "no passing" zones.

The vehicle headed east at Rte. 119, where the pursuing officer switched his radio over to Cheshire County frequency, as he had lost radio contact with Keene Dispatch.

An assisting county police unit was able to set up spike strips in the area of the Rte. 119 and Rte. 12 intersection; the suspect vehicle hit the spike strips.

The lead pursuing officer was unable to avoid the spike strips and the front right tire was deflated on his cruiser.

The pursuit was taken-over by multiple county police units, as well as 2 other Keene Police units. The suspect vehicle was immobilized as a result of the spike strips, and the driver was taken into custody and charged with Disobeying an Officer; Driving After Suspension/Revocation; Reckless Operation; and Receiving Stolen Property.

Apprehension:

The driver was arrested in nine of the ten reported pursuits.

Number of Officers:

When we look at this piece of data, we are actually looking at two different items: the 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 one of the reported pursuits, additional KPD officers were able to respond and attempt to take a position to deploy tire deflation devices. In another incident, tire deflation devices were successfully deployed by an assisting agency to end the pursuit. In these cases and most all the other pursuits, the assisting officers were able to immediately help in the physical arrest of the suspect at the conclusion of the pursuit. In one pursuit, the short duration of the pursuit contributed to the fact that the vehicles were stopped and the suspect arrested before additional units had time to deploy or assist.

In the one pursuit that was terminated, the suspect was never located nor identified; the other pursuit where the vehicle (motorcycle) traveled in an area where a cruiser was not able to follow, the suspect was later identified and arrested through further investigation after the fact.

Two of the pursuits involved officers staging and partially blocking the roadway, while leaving a safe lane of passage for the fleeing vehicle. In one of these instances, this tactic helped to safely end the pursuit.

This annual review of our driving and pursuit policies shows that officers are effective in this area and are reacting and attempting to respond accordingly and effectively.

Distance:

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

0.1 miles

0.2 miles

0.5 miles

1.2 miles

2.5 miles

0.03 miles

5.9 miles

0.49 miles

1.8 miles

28.3 miles

The average distance traveled was 4.1 miles. This is an increase from CY 2021 pursuits, where the average distance traveled was 3.67 miles.

Speed/Unwarranted Risk to Public Safety:

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

In regards to safety and the deciding factors to terminate (or not), it would appear that speed was a factor in the outcome of one of the pursuits this year, in which the Keene officer determined to terminate the pursuit due to the speed traveled by the suspect in a densely populated area with heavy pedestrian traffic.

Weather/Pavement/Traffic:

In reviewing each incident reported in CY2022, it would appear that weather/pavement/traffic was not a factor except for one of the pursuits. In the same pursuit noted above, the officer was pursuing a motorcycle through a densely populated area with heavy foot traffic. Due to the risk to pedestrians that officer decided to terminate the pursuit.

Other Data:

There remains no pattern as to where and when pursuits occur within our City; CY 2022 saw ten incidents occur. Based on the low frequency of the pursuits and the varying times in which they occur, and the unknown actions of individuals, it is not possible to predict or prevent a pursuit from occurring. Further, in reviewing the officers' reports and actions when deciding to stop the suspected vehicles, it appears that they are using the appropriate techniques and decision making skills when deciding to initiate a stop or waiting for backup.

Policy Compliance:

All reported incidents in 2022 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 nor 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 for this. The fact that the pursuit policy itself is drafted to a standard of reasonableness also plays a role.

In reviewing this and previous years' 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 closely monitor incidents such as these, and are making appropriate decisions with regard to turning pursuits over to other agencies, cancelling multiple units, or terminating the pursuit, for example.

SECTION 11 - CRUISER ACCIDENTS/DAMAGE:

This section contains data compiled from Keene Police Department collision/damage reports (KPD Safety Report, commonly referred to G-I's) involving police cruisers and unmarked police vehicles, covering the period January 2022 through December 2022.

Number of Cruiser Involved Collisions/Damage to Cruisers:

Keene Police vehicles were involved in seven incidents during CY 2022. This number is two more than reported in CY2021. All of the collisions/damage 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 two unmarked or administrative vehicles were involved in minor motor vehicle collisions.

This year, one cruiser was damaged when an officer was involved in a motor vehicle pursuit (tire deflation); this was the only collision/damage that occurred during emergency, pursuit, or stressful driving situations.

Actions Being Performed By Officers at Time of Collision:

April 5th – An officer was backing into a parking space and struck a guardrail while attending training at the police academy. No injuries. The vehicle was driven from the scene.

April 14th – An officer was taking a left hand turn and struck a street sign in the median. No injuries. The vehicle was driven from the scene.

June 27th – An officer was parked close to a curb, and due to inattention drove over this curb when leaving the parking spot. No injuries, the vehicle was driven from the scene.

September 23rd – An officer drove through wet paint that had been poured in the middle of the roadway. No injuries. The vehicle was driven from the scene.

November 9th – While on patrol, an officer noted that the tire pressure light was illuminated and the tire pressure had dropped down to 2psi. Upon inspection, a small piece of metal was located that had penetrated the rear passenger tire. No injuries. The vehicle was driven from the scene.

December 18th – An officer noted that a section of the front air dam was loose and became disconnected from the underside of the front grill. No injuries. The vehicle was driven from the scene.

December 19th – An officer was involved in a pursuit of a fleeing stolen vehicle. An officer from another agency had deployed a spike mat and the officer was unable to avoid striking the spike mat. The damaged tire was replaced with the spare. No injuries. The vehicle was driven from the scene.

Weather:

Weather did not play a factor in any of the reported collisions/damage for this calendar year.

Policy Compliance

This year there were no violations of the General Order governing Operation of Police Vehicles (G04103G).

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 2022 mileage figures for the Department's fleet, as provided by the City's fleet services division:

Total miles driven by all police department vehicles — 275,857 miles

Total miles driven by marked police cruisers only — 229,825 miles

SECTION 111 - 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 CY2022. This is the fifth 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.