

# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE**



**ANNUAL PURSUIT REPORT  
2015**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Vehicular pursuits can be one of the most dangerous activities in law enforcement, not only for the officers and suspects, but also for bystanders. Unlike the media-generated perspective of pursuits that saturate the evening news, the reality is that the pursuits involving the Montgomery County Police Department are in fact controlled, contained, and closely monitored. The number of MCPD-initiated pursuits remains low compared to the number of traffic stops our officers conducted on an annual basis in 2015: 130,342 traffic stops and 39 vehicular pursuits. Over 50% of these pursuits were authorized to apprehend a felony suspect. These pursuits ended with apprehension of the suspects in 29 incidents.



One of the biggest dangers in pursuits is the risk of a collision in which the officer, suspects, or bystanders could be injured. This year, 14 pursuits involved a collision—and of those, three suspects and one civilian sustained non-life-threatening injuries. Officers and supervisors must balance the safety risks with the urgency to apprehend the driver. Our Departmental directives dictate when an officer can initiate a pursuit and the directives also govern when a pursuit should be terminated. Some factors that officers must consider prior to the initiation of a pursuit include:

- Reason for pursuing a vehicle (*suspected offense*)
- Suspicion that the driver may be impaired
- Time of day
- Type of location (*crowded street with pedestrians vs. limited-access highway*)
- Road and weather conditions

In reviewing this report, I am confident that my officers are adhering to Department policy and making decisions that not only apprehend dangerous individuals but also maintain the safety of the public. MCPD will continue to review each pursuit, determine the strength and weaknesses of policies, and continue to provide education to our officers, and the public.

J. Thomas Manger  
Chief of Police

## OVERVIEW

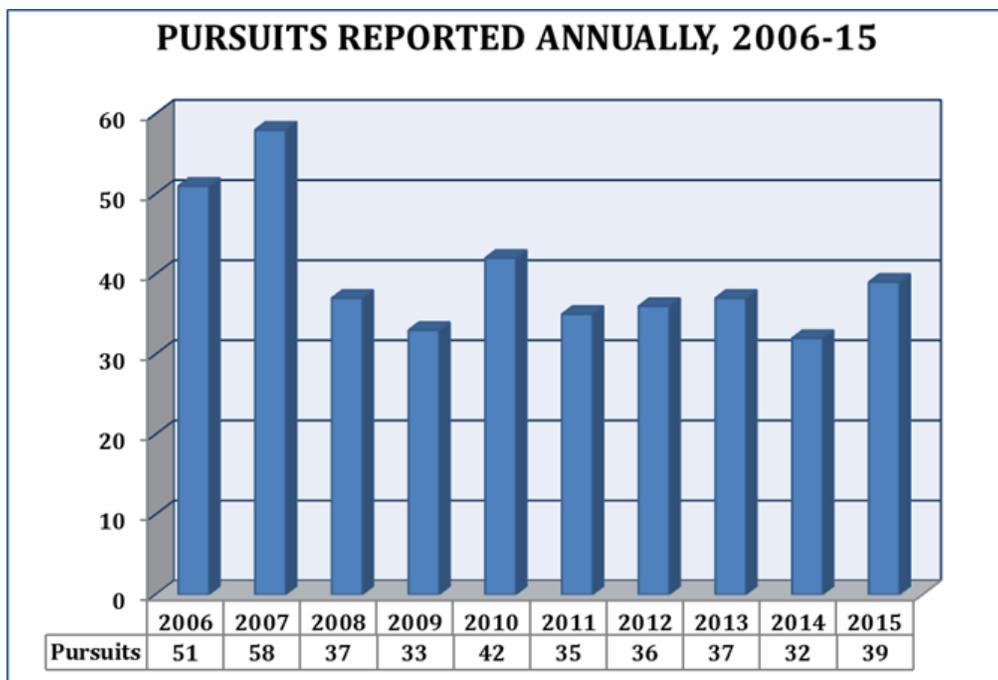
The information contained in this report is obtained from the MCP 610, *Motor Vehicle Pursuit Report*, the form completed by a supervisor from the district where a police pursuit originated. A vehicular pursuit is defined by policy as ***an active attempt by an officer in a vehicle to apprehend an occupant of a moving motor vehicle who exhibits a clear intention to avoid apprehension by maintaining elevated speed, increasing speed, and/or using evasive tactics.***

On an annual basis, the Montgomery County Department of Police reviews and analyzes the data collected from the MCP 610 forms obtained in that calendar year and the pursuit policy (Function Code 135).

Per Function Code 135, *Vehicle Pursuits*, pursuit of a vehicle is authorized only when the offense for which the suspect is being pursued is one of the following:

1. **Criminal:** Felony or the officer has reason to believe a felony has occurred or is occurring. Note: In order for 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Assault on a Police Officer to be a felony, physical injury means “any impairment of physical condition, excluding minor injuries”, and “a person may not intentionally cause physical injury to another if the person knows or has reason to know that the other is a law enforcement officer engaged in the performance of the officer’s official duties.”
2. **Traffic:**
  - a. Driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics (misdemeanor).
  - b. Hit-and-run, personal injury collision when the officer has reasonable cause to believe serious physical injury has occurred (felony).

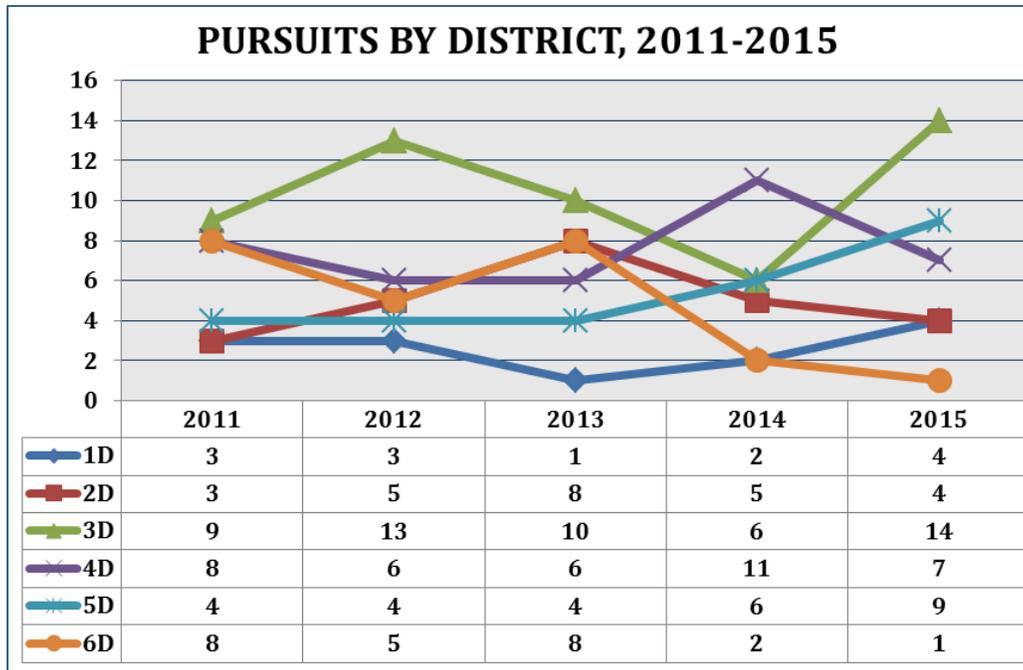
In 2015, there were 39 pursuits, seven more pursuits than 2014, or an increase of 21.9% over last year. This number is just below the department’s 10-year pursuit average of 40 pursuits per year.



## 2015 PURSUIT ANALYSIS

### By District

The graph below illustrates the frequency by district in which Montgomery County police officers initiated a pursuit in 2015. The number of pursuits occurring in the 4<sup>th</sup> District dropped off after an increase in 2014, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> District and 5<sup>th</sup> District saw significant increases in 2015, of 133.3% and 50%, respectively.



### By Justification

In 2015, apprehension of a felony suspect was the primary reason for initiating a pursuit; 20 of the 39 pursuits (51.3%) started for this reason. Seventeen (43.6%) pursuits were initiated for a subject driving under the influence. Two pursuits were initiated as a result of *other* reasons (i.e., traffic charges).

- One pursuit was terminated because the officer did not explicitly articulate a reason for initiating the pursuit beyond traffic charges. However, shortly after the pursuit was discontinued, the suspect returned to a nearby residence and the officer arrested him at that time.
- One pursuit was determined by a supervisor to not comply with the department's policy because the pursuit was initiated for minor traffic charges.

There were four pursuits that extended outside the county's jurisdictional boundaries in 2015. Function Code 135 states that "Officers may pursue into a neighboring jurisdiction only when an officer has probable cause to believe the crime committed was a felony of a violent type." In three of the cases, the officers pursued beyond the County's boundaries for felonies, including a homicide, strong arm robbery, and an aggravated assault (firearm) of two victims.

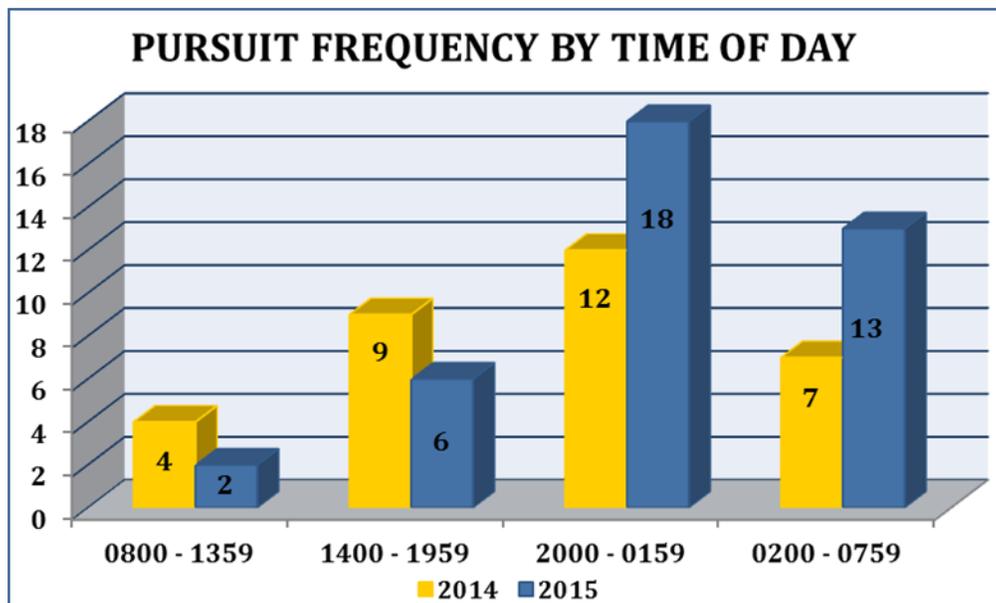
- The pursuit for the homicide suspect was the longest pursuit in 2015, lasting 25 minutes and covering 15 miles. Officers pursued the suspect into Frederick County before the suspect re-entered Montgomery County and failed to negotiate a curve, striking a tree. The suspect suffered minor injuries, but no officers or other bystanders were injured.
- The pursuit for the suspect(s) of the aggravated assault lasted 12 minutes and covered 16 miles, as that vehicle traveled north toward Baltimore before the officers lost sight of it and the pursuit was terminated by the supervisor.
- The pursuit for the strongarm robbery lasted only four minutes and covered nearly three miles as the suspects struck a Metro Bus and a parked vehicle and continued travelling into the District of Columbia. The pursuit was terminated and suspect information passed along to the Metropolitan Police Department.

The termination of these two pursuits was in accordance with the policy, which states that pursuits will be terminated “regardless of the seriousness of the crime when weather, traffic, road conditions, or locale make further pursuit unreasonably hazardous, or when the distance from the pursued vehicle is too great to justify continuing the pursuit.”

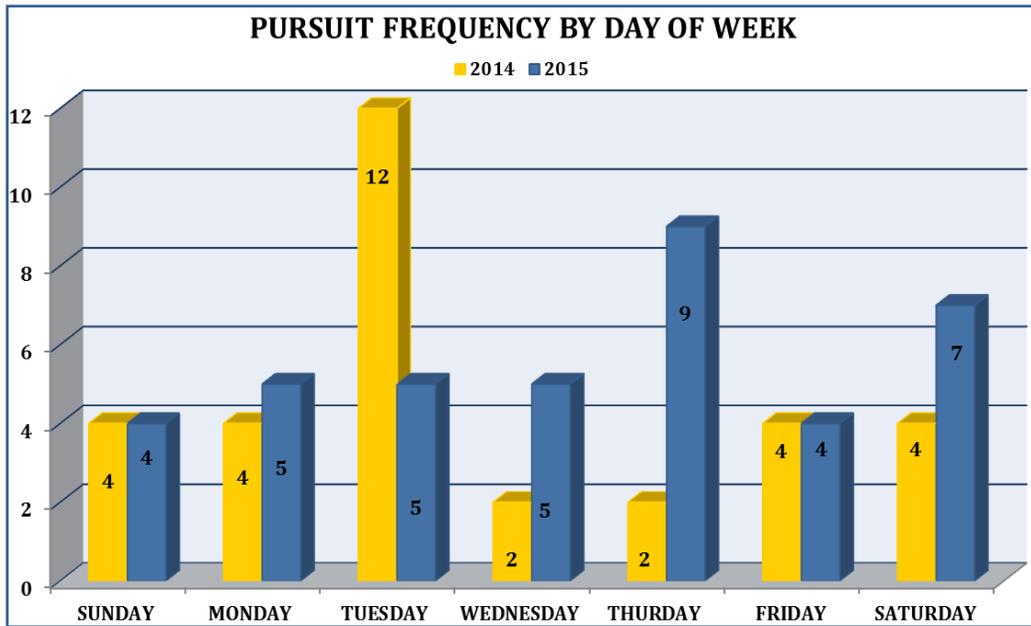
In the fourth incident, the pursuit went slightly outside the County’s boundaries after an officer had stopped a driver suspected of DUI. The driver fled toward Prince George’s County, and officers from that agency were able to stop him. The pursuit lasted for a total of 1.5 miles, and was found to be in compliance with the department’s policies.

### By Time of Day & Day of Week

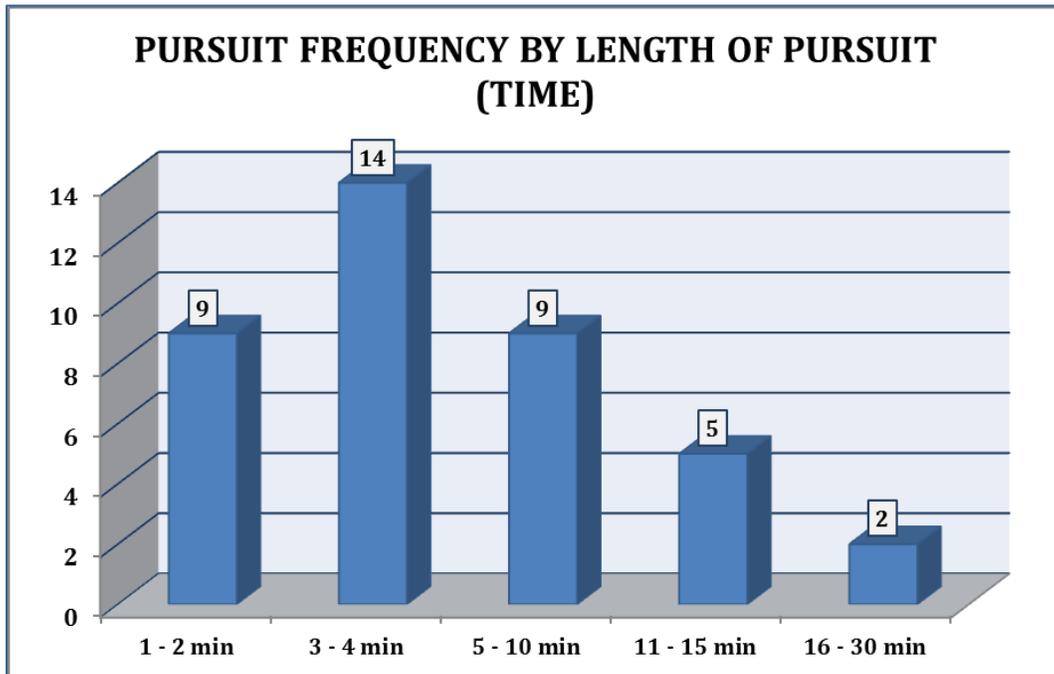
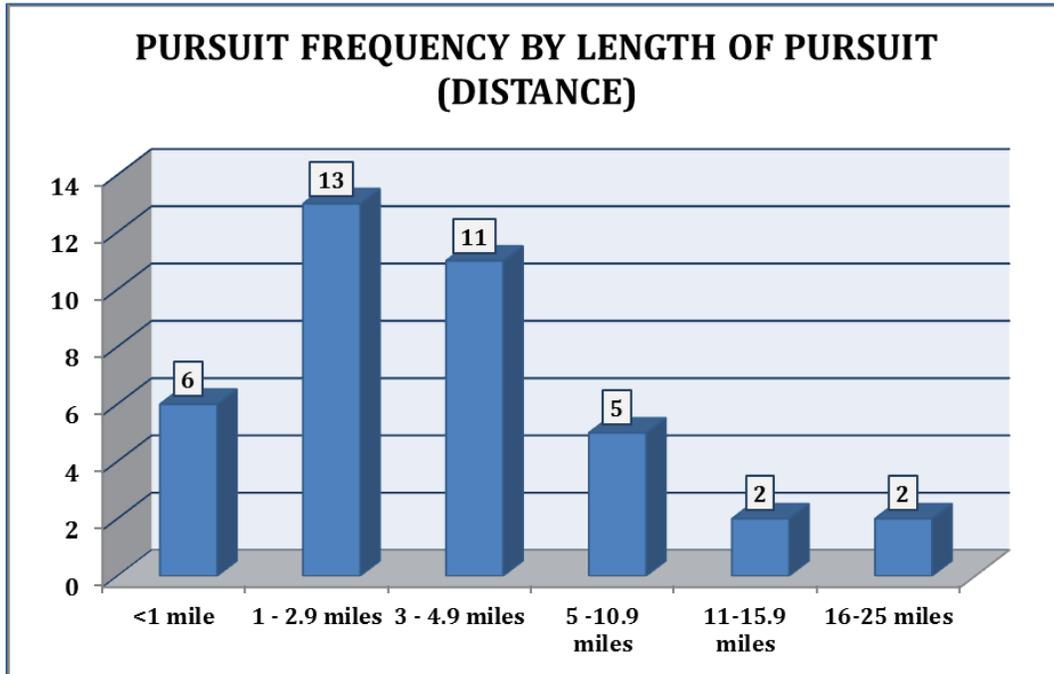
Pursuit data in 2015 indicate that there was a slight shift in the time of day in which pursuits tend to occur. In 2014, 40% of the pursuits occurred between the hours of 8:00am and 8:00pm, while the remaining 60% occurred in the overnight hours. In 2015, there were five fewer pursuits during the daytime hours, while 80% of the pursuits occurred between the hours of 8:00pm and 8:00am.



There was also a shift in the frequency trends according to the day of the week on which the pursuits occurred. In 2014, 37.5% of the pursuits occurred on Tuesday, three times more than any other day of the week. In 2015, there were significantly fewer pursuits that occurred on Tuesday, and more that occurred on Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. In fact, 54% of the pursuits in 2015 occurred on one of these three days, whereas only one quarter of the pursuits in 2014 fell on those same days.



## By Distance & Duration

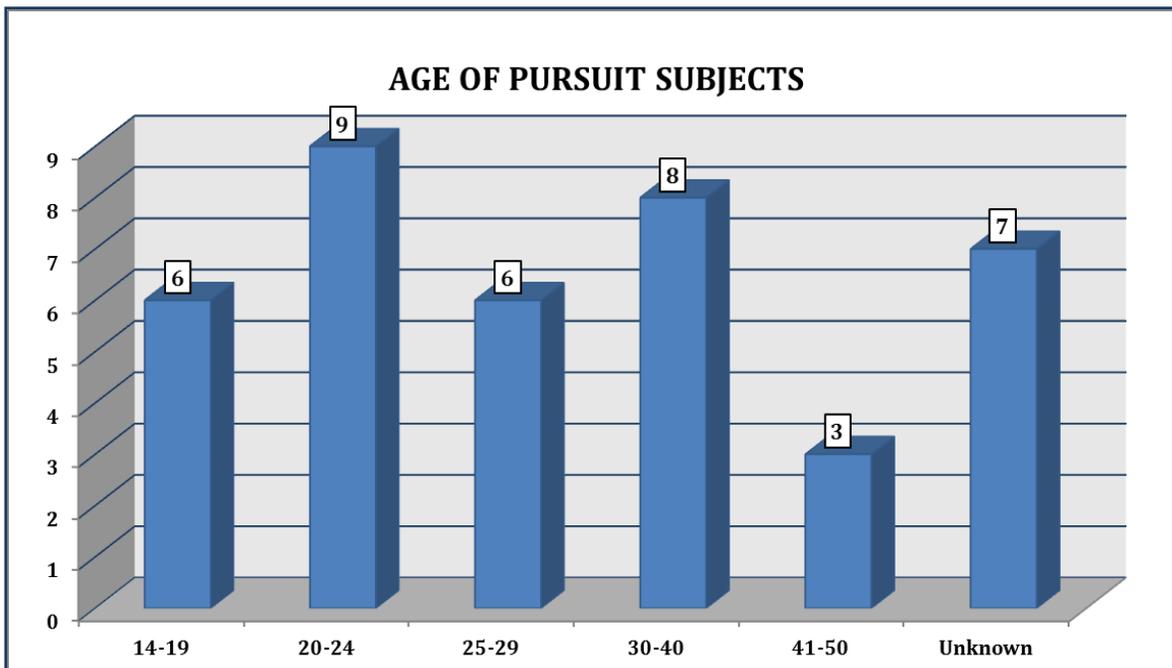
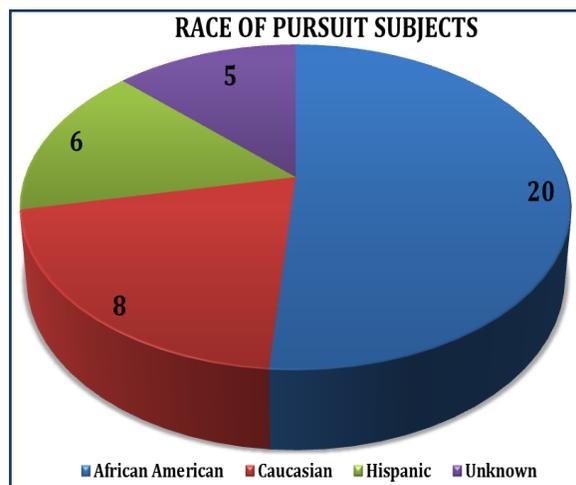
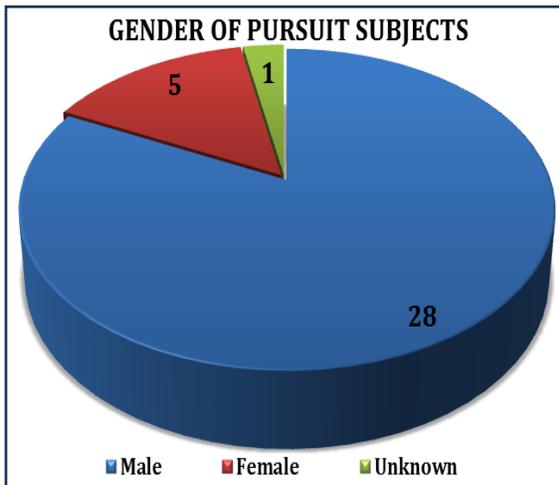


While the frequency of pursuit distances is similar to last year, the trend illustrates pursuits of longer duration (time). In 2014, nearly 69% of the pursuits were over in less than five minutes, and there were only two pursuits which lasted for more than 10 minutes. In 2015, approximately 58.9% of the pursuits in Montgomery County lasted less than five minutes. There were seven pursuits that lasted longer than 10 minutes in 2015, two of which lasted for more than 20 minutes.

## SUSPECT ANALYSIS

Apprehension is not the primary goal of a police vehicle pursuit. The safety of the officer and the public are the most important aspects; the risks are high for all involved. Suspects were able to successfully evade police officers in 10 of the 39 pursuits in 2015. Officers were unable to identify the suspects in seven of these pursuits, but in the other three in which the subjects initially evaded the police, officers were able to submit applications for statements of charges because they gained knowledge of the drivers' identities through the circumstances of each traffic stop.

The demographic data below reflects information for the 29 subjects that were apprehended during pursuits, as well as some random data that was known about the suspects who were able to make good their escape.



## NOTABLE ANALYSIS

### Additional Resources

Police pursuits can be dangerous. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis nationally on utilizing tactical maneuvers to end police pursuits. Montgomery County Police Department policy prohibits the use of rolling roadblocks and tactical vehicle intervention. In nearly 72% of the pursuits, there were no special tactics or additional resources used. Twelve pursuits involved the use of other resources, including other agencies or aircraft, and in three incidents, the police department successfully deployed stop sticks to end the pursuit without injury to those involved or nearby.

### Use of Force

Eleven of the 39 pursuits (28.2%) in Montgomery County resulted in a “bailout”, which occurs when the subject(s) stop or crash the vehicle and flee on foot. Officers consequently used force during or after only **four** of these pursuits/bailouts, all of which involved the suspect crashing and either fighting with the officers (a “Signal 13” was generated in one incident) or resisting arrest when officers were able to catch them. The Electronic Control Device (ECD) was used by officers in three of these incidents.

There was a separate pursuit for a DUI offense in which the suspect did not bailout, but did resist arrest, so officers had to use force (hands/feet) to remove the suspect from the vehicle and place him in handcuffs. Overall, there were only five pursuits in which force was used by officers, or only 12.8% of all pursuits in 2015.

### Collisions

Of the 39 pursuits that occurred in 2015, fourteen (35.9%) resulted in a collision, an increase over the seven collisions (21.9%) that occurred in 2014.

The 14 collisions were distributed across the following districts:

District	Collisions	Damaged Suspect Vehicles	Suspects Injured	Damaged Civilian Vehicles	Civilians Injured	Damaged MCPD Vehicles	Police Officers Injured
1D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2D	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
3D	6	5	1	4	1	1	0
4D	3	2	0	1	0	1	0
5D	3	3	2	1	0	2	0
6D	1	1	0	0	0	2	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

Of the 14 pursuits that ended in collision, the suspect’s vehicle was involved in 12 of the collisions and a total of three people (suspects/passengers) were injured in those collisions. Residents’ vehicles were struck during seven pursuits, and one resident was injured. Despite sustaining damage to police vehicles during six pursuits, there were no police officers injured during the pursuits in 2015. None of the injuries sustained during any of these pursuits were severe.

## SUMMARY

With more than one million people living in Montgomery County and thousands more travelling through the county, pursuits rarely occur. There were more than 130,000 traffic stops in 2015, yet only 39 pursuits, a .03% occurrence rate.

Nationally, automobile crashes continue to be one of the leading causes of death for police officers. The Montgomery County Police Department continues to be proactive in this area, in an effort to reduce the number of law enforcement officer deaths, disabilities, and injuries caused by traffic-related incidents. Through the Public Safety Training Academy, the Montgomery County Police Department has embraced the **Arrive Alive** initiative: Buckle Up, Slow Down, Pay Attention, Arrive Alive. The Training and Education Division also instituted other modifications in 2015 to better prepare all officers, including the recruits, for emergency driving:

- Introduced a more focused approach to defensive driving and emergency driving remediation, and increased driver training practical time for police recruits prior to testing, thereby reducing the number of failures;
- Initiated design changes to the defensive driving cone course to better address issues that were raised by the Collision Review Committee;
- Instituted an emergency driving course in which the instructor rides with the student to remind them of the fundamentals of emergency driving; and
- Developed and conducted shift training in pursuit management/felony stops.

The Montgomery County Department of Police remains dedicated to creating a culture of safety and accountability. As such, a copy of this report will be distributed to all Patrol Services Bureau Commanders and the Director of the Training and Education Division for review and identification of any additional training or policy review which may be necessary on an operational level.

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF POLICE**

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