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STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES CONDUCTED AN ESTIMATED 68,000 VEHICLE PURSUITS IN 2012

WASHINGTON — General purpose state and local law enforcement agencies conducted an estimated 68,000 vehicle pursuits in 2012 for an average of 186 pursuits per day, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. Local police departments conducted most of these pursuits (about 40,000) followed by sheriffs' offices (about 18,000) and state police and highway patrol agencies (about 10,000).

These findings are based on data from the most recent (2013) BJS Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey, which included a nationally representative sample of general purpose state and local law enforcement agencies. It excluded federal agencies and special jurisdiction agencies (such as campus and park police).

In 2012, all local police departments serving 250,000 or more residents and nearly all (95 percent) of those serving 50,000 to 249,999 residents conducted vehicle pursuits. In comparison, fewer than half of local police departments serving fewer than 10,000 residents conducted vehicle pursuits.

Among sheriffs' offices, about 9 in 10 agencies serving 100,000 or more residents, 8 in 10 agencies serving 25,000 to 99,999 residents and 7 in 10 agencies serving 10,000 to 24,999 residents conducted vehicle pursuits in 2012. In comparison, 43 percent of sheriffs' offices serving fewer than 10,000 residents conducted vehicle pursuits.

During the 20-year aggregate period from 1996 to 2015, police vehicle pursuits resulted in more than 6,000 fatal crashes, according to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, which is maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration within the U.S. Department of Transportation. These fatal crashes resulted in more than 7,000 deaths, an average of 355 per year (about one per day). Fatalities peaked in 2006 and 2007, with more than 400 deaths each year.

As of January 2013, all state police and highway patrol agencies and all local police departments serving 25,000 or more residents had a written vehicle pursuit policy. At least 95 percent of sheriffs' offices in each population category of 10,000 or more had a written vehicle pursuit policy.

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An estimated 2 percent of local police departments and 1 percent of sheriffs' offices prohibited vehicle pursuits. No state police or highway patrol agencies prohibited pursuits. Most local police departments (71 percent), sheriffs' offices (63 percent) and state law enforcement agencies (53 percent) had a policy that restricted pursuits based on specific criteria, such as speed, type of offense and surrounding conditions.

About 30 percent of state police and highway patrol agencies permitted officers to use their own discretion when deciding to initiate a vehicle pursuit. Smaller percentages of sheriffs' offices (17 percent) and local police departments (13 percent) had discretionary pursuit policies.

Agencies with a policy that left pursuit decisions to an officer's discretion had the highest vehicle pursuit rate (17 pursuits per 100 officers employed), while agencies that discouraged or prohibited pursuits had the lowest pursuit rate (2 per 100 officers). Agencies with a restrictive policy conducted 8 pursuits per 100 officers employed. Agencies with discretionary pursuit policies employed 11 percent of all officers and conducted 19 percent of all vehicle pursuits. In comparison, agencies with restrictive pursuit policies employed 78 percent of all officers and accounted for 69 percent of all pursuits.

The report, *Police Vehicle Pursuits, 2012-2013* (NCJ 250545), was written by BJS statistician Brian A. Reaves. The report, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at www.bjs.gov.

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