



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE

TO: Jo Custead, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Troy Cooper
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2021 May 03

SUBJECT: Final Review – 2020 Evade Police Incidents

FILE NO.: 10,040

ISSUE:

Criminal and non-criminal evade police incidents/pursuits create special concerns for police agencies due to the risk to the public, persons involved, and the officers involved. The reasons for evade police incidents vary from violent criminal acts, such as home invasions, robberies, and assaults to property offences, including possession of stolen vehicles, as well as the very concerning issue of impaired driving. The goal of the Evade Police Review Committee is to ensure all evade police events are conducted in a manner as safe as possible, lawful, and in line with the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) Policy and Procedure.

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report is received as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

This report focuses on the core theme of Crime and Safety, with specific attention to maintaining core-policing operations and addresses community concerns that affect public safety.

DISCUSSION:

The Evade Police Review Committee consists of four senior members of the SPS. Three of the members are of the rank of Staff Sergeant and the Committee is chaired by an Inspector that oversees the Investigative Services Division. All Committee members work under the umbrella of Criminal Investigations, separated from operational Patrol oversight, where the vast majority of evade police incidents originate. The separation from Patrol is viewed as a benefit, providing the Committee with objective oversight, critical evaluation, and constructive feedback.

“PUBLIC AGENDA”

The Committee reviews every pursuit incident to evaluate police officer conduct in terms of the legal authority, SPS Policy and Procedure, and public safety. The Committee reviews supervision, communication, and accountability involved in these incidents and where required will make recommendations. Policy is consistent with provincially mandated guidelines and is designed to provide supervisory accountability while balancing public safety with effective law enforcement.

When an officer becomes engaged in an evade police incident, outside of the initial incident response, a reporting mechanism is triggered where the monitoring Sergeant initiates an Evade Police/Use of Force form. This form is completed by the Sergeant in charge of the incident, the Sergeant in charge of the Communications Section, and the Staff Sergeant (Watch Commander) in charge of the shift. The supervising Staff Sergeant reviews the incident for both completeness and adherence to Policy and Procedure. Should any major or minor violations occur, it is addressed at the time.

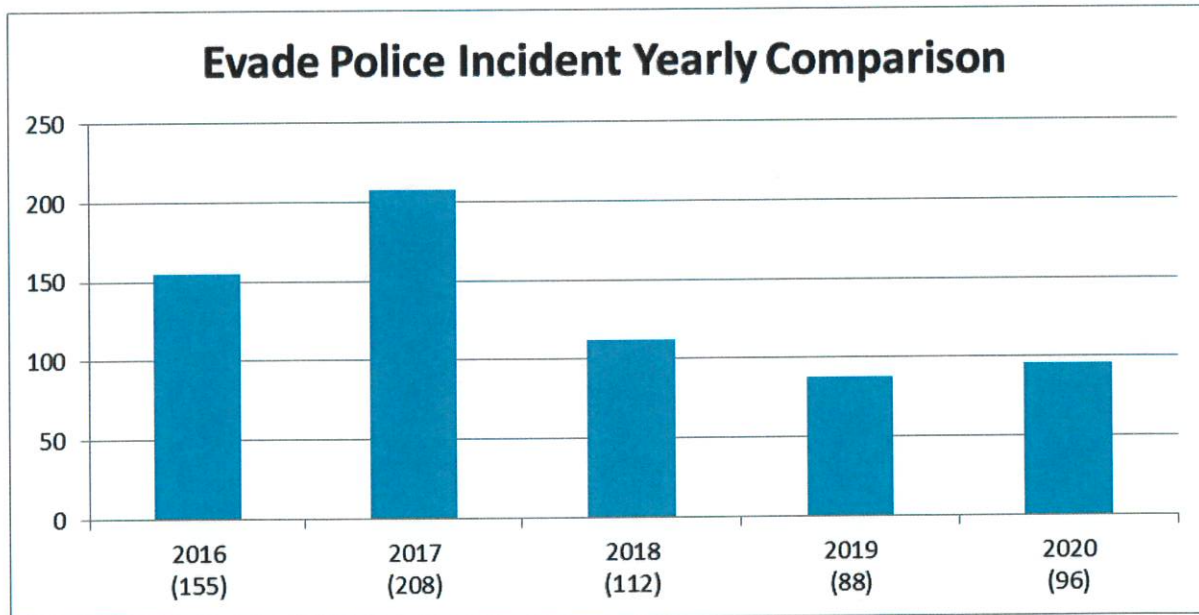
Upon completion, the form is forwarded to the Inspector in charge of the Investigative Services Division who ensures it is complete and assigns it to one of three Committee Staff Sergeants for final review. After final review, including viewing in-car cameras, gps data, occurrence reports, and reviewing radio communication, the reevaluating Staff Sergeant submits a memorandum to the Inspector with recommendations. After recommendations are received, they are reviewed by the Inspector who designates a date for the Committee to meet and review all evade police incident recommendations, collectively. After each incident is presented and reviewed by the Committee, the file is either concluded, or when deemed necessary the involved officers are given further coaching, advice, training, or discipline. Any discipline is referred to the Chief of Police for evaluation. In 2020 there were no files that required review by the Professional Standards Division to be forwarded to the Chief of Police. There were a total of 18 policy violations which were all relatively minor in nature, compared with 31 policy violations in 2019. The officers involved were provided coaching or further training in response to these infractions.

Comparison of 2020 to 2019 Evade Police Incidents

Pursuits	2020	2019
Number of Pursuits	96	88
Pursuits in the City	95	86
Average time in City Pursuit	2 minutes 59 seconds	2 minute 55 seconds
Pursuits Leaving City	8	5
Average time of Pursuit leaving the City	30 minutes 1 seconds	30 minutes 3 seconds
Pursuits Aborted	54	58
Arrests	95	77
Injuries	2	9

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Injury breakdown	Police (0), Suspect (2), Civilian (0)	Police (0), Suspect (9), Civilian (0)
Damaged Vehicles	37	51
Damage breakdown	Police (5), Suspect (25), Civilian (7)	Police (10), Suspect (39), Civilian (2)
ASU Assistance	24	18
Canine Assistance	27	28
Confirmed Stolen Vehicles	41	54
Policy Violations	18	31
Professional Standards Investigations	0	0



As illustrated above, there was a slight 7.87% increase in pursuits in 2020 as compared to 2019. Of note, 43% of all pursuit incidents involved a stolen vehicle, which is a decrease from 2019 wherein there was a total of 61%. Stolen vehicles remain a significant driver overall of evade police incidents.

When reviewing the 5-year pursuit activity breakdown, it's apparent that overall activity is down over the last 2-years. 2016-2018 averaged 158 pursuits, compared to 88 in 2019, a 44% decrease. In 2020, there were 96 pursuits, a decrease of 39% compared to the 2016-2018 average of 158 pursuits. Not captured in the above information were 59 incidents in 2020 where officers initiate a vehicle stop for offences concerning a municipal bylaw, a provincial statute, or regulation where the suspect vehicle failed to stop and the officer disengaged and no pursuit ensued. Of the 96 pursuits, 54 were terminated either by the officer involved or a supervisor.

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The engagement of an evade incident by the police requires a criminal code threshold had been met. Examples include impaired drivers, stolen vehicles, known operator wanted for criminal code offences/warrants and fleeing the scene of a criminal act. In all cases, however, pursuits are to be aborted when the concern for the safety of the public, offender, or the police exceeds the need to apprehend the suspected criminal. Pursuits can be self-terminated by the originating officer or at the discretion of a supervisor.

The average 2020 pursuit time within the city marked a negligible change at 2 minutes and 59 seconds, compared with the 2019 incident time of 2 minutes and 55 seconds. The Air Support Unit (ASU) assisted in 24 incidents for an average time of 20 minutes and 32 seconds. Of note, ASU's assistance in the 24 incidents resulted in 41 arrests of suspects directly engaged in the incident.

Also noted above is a relatively consistent duration of both in and out of town incidents. A few in-town incidents pushed the overall evade duration time up, driven by a few specific incidents where officers were permitted to continue the evade incident beyond normal time parameters due to slow speeds coupled with time of day and overall traffic conditions. It should be noted that the majority of evade incidents are aborted due to public safety concerns (54%). The vast amount of SPS officers show excellent judgment, not only with self-terminating incidents when the need for justice is outweighed by safety concerns but in overall approach and tactics.

As a general rule, evade incidents leaving the city limits are aborted by either the officers involved or by a supervisor, depending on offence related circumstances. In the majority of incidents leaving the city, ASU is engaged as the primary unit monitoring the suspect vehicle from a distance, undetected. Patrol units on the ground are directed as required by ASU until the suspect has stopped, or until the RCMP is in a position to assume responsibility for the incident.

There were 37 vehicles with reported damage resulting from an evade police incident, 25 of which were damaged to suspect vehicles, generally limited to tire damage caused by tire deflation devices that were used to safely conclude the incident. There were 5 incidents where a police vehicle was damaged, all of which were a result of a low-speed contact. Unrelated civilian vehicles were damaged in 7 incidents, most at low speeds, parked, and unoccupied. One incident of note, the officer self-terminated within the first 22 seconds of initiation, the suspect vehicle struck another vehicle in an intersection several blocks away and after the incident was terminated. There were no injuries as a result of the collision, nor was the suspect identified as members focused their attention on the accident scene.

There were no injuries reported in 2020 to civilians or officers as a result of police evade incidents. There were 2 minor suspect injuries after the suspect vehicle struck a berm and rolled onto its roof.

As commented on earlier in this report, a larger percentage of incidents involve a stolen vehicle, 43% in 2020, which is a decrease from 62% reported in 2019. Annually, SPS provides messaging and education campaigns focusing on not leaving keys in vehicles and leaving vehicles running, unattended. Regardless of consistent messaging, stolen automobiles continue to be an aggravating factor in evade police incidents.

CONCLUSION:

In the collective view of the Evade Police Committee, officers are educated and extremely aware of their role and responsibilities during Evade Incidents. The officers are mindful of the high standard and continuous engagement review held by this Committee. The safety of the public, the suspect, as well as members of the SPS will continue to be our highest priority when balancing the need to apprehend offenders.

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Submitted by:



Troy Cooper
Chief of Police

Dated:

May 11, 2021