



WRITTEN DIRECTIVE	No. FO16-0813	Page: 1 of 8
Subject: VEHICLE CRASH RESPONSE	Effective Date:	01-13-16
	Supersedes/ Amends:	FO11-0813
	Reference:	61.1.5, 61.2.1, 61.2.2, 61.2.3, 61.2.4



I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for officers in the investigation and reporting of vehicle crashes, and in providing necessary services to persons involved in vehicle crashes.

II. Policy

It shall be the policy of the Field Operations Bureau that all officers follow established guidelines in handling vehicle crashes.

III. Procedure

A. RESPONSE TO CRASH SCENE

1. The Lynchburg Emergency Communications Center (LynComm) has been instructed to dispatch an officer to the scene of any vehicle crash (including personal injury accidents, property damage accidents and all hit & run accidents) occurring on a public street or highway.

2. LynComm has been instructed to dispatch an officer to the scene of any vehicle crash on private property involving:

61.2.2 A

a. death or personal injury,

61.2.2 B

b. hit and run if there is an identifiable suspect (i.e. a partial or full license plate from the suspect vehicle or a means of immediately locating the suspect and/or suspect vehicle),

61.2.2 C

c. driving under the influence of intoxicants or drugs,

61.2.2 F

d. disturbance among persons on the scene,

61.2.2 G

e. major traffic congestion,

61.2.2 E

f. hazardous materials, or

g. as required to meet other crash scene contingencies as they occur.

3. When dispatching an officer to a vehicle crash scene, LynComm will:

a. dispatch a Traffic Safety Officer if one is available, or

b. if no Traffic Safety Officer is available, a patrol officer will be dispatched.

4. LynComm has been instructed to refer all hit & run accidents that occur on private property with no personal injury and no identifiable suspect to the Complaint Desk for completion of an IBR.

B. ASSESSMENT OF THE CRASH SCENE

1. On approach to the scene of a motor vehicle crash, officers will assess the following factors:

61.2.3 B

- a. the presence of personal injuries and the need for a medic unit,
- b. the presence of any special problems which would pose difficulties for officers, EMS/fire personnel or citizens,
- c. the requirement for dispatch of special equipment or assistance,
- d. the option for disregarding of any unnecessary equipment or assistance already dispatched, and
- e. the practicality of moving involved vehicles out of the roadway (depending upon the circumstances, officers should attempt to clear the roadway as soon as possible in order to facilitate the safe flow of traffic).

61.2.3 C

2. Fire hazards

- a. Officers should remain mindful of the fire hazard inherent in any crash involving vehicles that are overturned, have damaged fuel tanks or damaged electrical wiring, etc.
- b. Officers should request Fire Department units to stand by at any crash scene where:
 - 1) the hazard of fire is deemed significant, or
 - 2) a person is trapped in a vehicle, regardless of the perceived threat.

61.2.1 E / 61.2.3 C

3. Hazardous materials

- a. Officers arriving on the scene will be alert for hazardous material placards displayed on any involved vehicles.
- b. In case of a hazardous materials spill, officers will follow procedures outlined in PD-2013: *Hazardous Material Incidents*.

61.2.3 A

C. OFFICER IN CHARGE AT CRASH SCENE

1. Assigned officers are expected to adhere to the guidelines established in *PD-2022 Incident Command System*.

2. Authority for care of injured persons shall be entrusted to emergency medical personnel upon their arrival on the accident scene.
3. Officers are expected to cooperate with officers of contiguous or concurrent jurisdictions who may respond to the same accident scene.
4. Officers who are involved in a traffic accident will, to the extent possible, exercise charge over the accident scene until the arrival of a supervisor or the officer assigned to investigate the crash. That officer, if physically able, will be responsible for completing a *City of Lynchburg Vehicle Crash Report*.
5. The on-call Traffic Safety Unit supervisor will be notified of all reportable crashes involving police vehicles and a determination will be made as to who will investigate the crash. Field supervisors may use discretion in notifying the Traffic Safety Unit supervisor in the case of non-reportable accidents. DMV reportable vehicle crashes involving police vehicles will not be handled by field supervisors unless requested to do so by a Traffic Safety Unit supervisor or a higher authority (division or bureau commander). The investigating officer will be responsible for:
 - a. completing a *Police Crash Report* (state form FR-300P), before the end of that tour of duty and submitting it to the Report Review Office for proper routing and filing,
 - b. notifying the City Risk Management Office immediately when death or serious bodily injuries are sustained by persons not employed by the City,
 - c. submitting an *Employee Traffic Accident Document Form* (form LPD – 0207-01) within 24 hours through the chain of command to the Deputy Chief of the employee involved in the crash, which will:
 - 1) detail all information obtained regarding the crash, including statements by involved parties (officers, citizens or witnesses),
 - 2) detail the results of the crash investigation,
 - 3) indicate the following:
 - a) any deviation from police department policy or procedures(s)
 - b) any possible civil liability incurred by the City

D. CRASH INVESTIGATION

1. For safety reasons, officers will wear reflective vests when:
 - a. directing traffic at accident scenes, or

61.2.1 F

- b. engaged in activities such as collecting evidence or taking measurements that expose them to the flow of traffic.

61.2.1 A

- 2. Officers will be required to investigate and document (by means of the *Police Crash Report* [state form]) reportable vehicle crashes occurring on public property involving:

61.2.1 B

- a. death or personal injury,

61.2.2 D

- b. property damage of an amount equal to or exceeding the amount specified as reportable to DMV in Code of Virginia 46.2-373,

61.2.1 C

- c. a city-owned vehicle, or

61.2.3 D

- d. hit and run involving property damage of an amount equal to or exceeding the amount specified as reportable to DMV.

- 3. Officers will be required to investigate and document (by means of the *Police Crash Report* [state form]) vehicle crashes occurring on private property and involving death or serious personal injury.

- 4. Accidents involving city-owned vehicles on private property will have an accident report filed at the discretion of the police supervisor or Lynchburg City Risk Management.

- 5. Responsibilities of an officer investigating a vehicle crash will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- a. preliminary investigation of the crash to include:

- 1) interviewing involved drivers, passengers and witnesses,

- 2) examining and recording:

- a) injuries to persons involved,

- b) damage to vehicles,

- c) damage to property other than vehicles, and

- d) damage to the roadway,

- 3) taking necessary and accurate notes,

- 4) collecting and maintaining evidence where appropriate, including:

- a) measurements,

61.2.4

- b) photographs, and
 - c) vehicle parts,
 - 5) taking appropriate enforcement action, and
 - 6) completing required documentation,
- b. follow-up investigation of the crash, to include as necessary:
- 1) collecting related information from off-scene sources,
 - 2) obtaining/recording formal statements from those involved,
 - 3) submitting collected evidence,
 - 4) reconstructing the crash scene, and
 - 5) completing follow-up or supplement documentation.
6. In addition to any appropriate traffic enforcement and reporting responsibilities, officers will:
- a. ensure that vehicle operators exchange necessary identifying information by means of an *Exchange of Information Form*,
 - b. verify, as practical, the license and registration information presented by persons involved,
 - c. take action as necessary to render assistance or preserve the peace in situations involving:
 - 1) disturbance or conflict between persons involved,
 - 2) traffic congestion or hazard resulting from the crash, and
 - 3) vehicles damaged so as to necessitate towing.
7. Specialized technical assistance in crash investigation may be sought by the investigating officer through his supervisor, and may include:
- a. TSU officers who have received advanced training in crash investigation,
 - b. CID investigators,
 - c. Evidence Technicians (for photography, measurements, crash scene sketch, evidence collection, etc.),

- d. James River Regional Crash Team
- e. the State Forensic Laboratory,
- f. mechanics, and
- g. physicians.

E. USE OF ACCIDENT REPORT AND RELATED FORMS

1. All reportable vehicle crashes will be documented on the *Police Crash Report* (state form).
2. In the event that complete information is not available during the initial crash investigation, an officer may:
 - a. submit an Accident Report containing the information available at the time, and
 - b. submit a revised Accident Report upon completion of the investigation.
3. Depending on the circumstances, forms that may be used in conjunction with Accident Reports include:
 - a. An IBR, to report:
 - 1) hit and run (whether or not an Accident Report is required),
 - 2) driving under the influence of intoxicants or drugs,
 - 3) a fatality,
 - 4) towing of vehicles when VCIN entry is necessary or as a police requested tow (towing procedures will be handled in accordance with PD-0801: *Towing of Vehicles*), or
 - 5) any situation where the officer determines that an IBR will be appropriate or beneficial.
 - b. A *Fatal Accident Report*, which is:
 - 1) to be filled out by the officer investigating the fatal crash,
 - 2) to be completed by the end of the officer's tour of duty, and
 - 3) on completion, is to be teletyped by Complaint Desk personnel to the VCIN Control Center.

- c. A *Supplementary/Follow-up Report* be used as necessary to document supplementary information or investigative follow-up information.
- d. An *Exchange of Information*:
 - 1) may be completed by the officer or the involved drivers, and
 - 2) each driver involved in the crash should receive an *Exchange of Information Form* for every other driver involved in the crash.
- e. A *Virginia Uniform Traffic Summons* may be used to cite violators or subpoena witnesses at the accident scene.
- f. A Department of Motor Vehicles *Driver Review Request* (state form) is to be completed by the officer as documentation of any apparent driver deficiency that the officer feels warrants DMV review.

61.1.5 K

F. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

- 1. Prior to taking any enforcement action, the officer must first establish all the elements of the violation.
- 2. Elements of a violation not personally witnessed by the officer must be established through investigation.
- 3. Any enforcement action pursued by officers will be:
 - a. appropriate to the nature of the alleged violation, and
 - b. consistent with department policy.

61.2.3 F

G. CONTROL OF PROPERTY BELONGING TO CRASH VICTIMS

- 1. Officers should remain alert to the possibility of theft from any accident scene and will, as soon as practical, take measures to secure unclaimed or unattended property.
- 2. In addition to evidence collection responsibilities, the officer investigating a vehicle crash should make efforts to secure:
 - a. property taken from victims who are deceased or incapacitated, and
 - b. any item of apparent value, the ownership of which cannot be determined at the scene.
- 3. All evidence collected and property seized will be transported to the police department and entered into the property and evidence system:

- a. as soon as practical, but
 - b. no later than the end of the seizing officer's tour of duty.
4. Whenever a vehicle is towed or seized at the officer's direction, the officer will ensure that a thorough inventory of the vehicle's contents is conducted and is documented on the IBR report.
 5. Officers will seize any contraband located during vehicle crash investigation or vehicle inventory.
 - a. Such contraband will be seized whether or not a criminal charge may be forthcoming.
 - b. Such contraband will be entered into the property and evidence system.

Original Signed

Major K.T. Swisher, Deputy Chief
Field Operations Bureau

January 13, 2016

Date