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Traffic Crash Investigations		



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Patrol SOP: 2.02

I. Policy Statements

- A. All traffic crash reports completed by sworn personnel shall be reported on the Ohio Traffic Crash Report, form OH-1, or current electronic crash report.
- B. Sworn personnel shall respond to, investigate, and complete an Ohio Traffic Crash Report for all traffic crashes involving **the following**:
 1. Death or injury
 2. Hit-skip
 3. No operator's license
 4. Reckless operation
 5. Impairment of an operator due to alcohol or drugs
 6. Damage to City-owned vehicles or property and damage to public safety vehicles from foreign jurisdictions
 7. A school bus
 8. Hazardous materials
 9. Disabling damage to a vehicle which causes a public roadway to be blocked and the vehicle must be removed/towed
 10. Disturbances between the involved parties
 11. The need for traffic control on public roadways
- C. Sworn personnel shall implement the Quick Clearance Policy. **Refer to the traffic crash procedures outlined in the "10-Code" section of the Patrol SOP.**
- D. When completing a traffic crash report, the preferred course of action is to issue a traffic citation/summons or arrest the at-fault operator as appropriate. Justification for deviation from this policy shall be provided in the narrative section of the traffic crash report.
- E. When there is evidence, or a claim of evidence, that a driver knowingly used a motor vehicle to strike or attempt to strike a person or object, the appropriate electronic incident report shall be completed in lieu of the Ohio Traffic Crash Report. The appropriate investigative unit shall be notified as necessary.

- F. Sworn personnel responding to a traffic crash should not advise any person who may be charged with a felony crime of his **or** her Miranda Rights. Contact the appropriate detective for direction.
- G. Sworn personnel shall not report traffic crashes occurring on private property unless one or more of the conditions in Section I,B are met.
- H. Traffic crashes that are not defined as “motor vehicle traffic accidents” by the Ohio Traffic Crash Procedure Manual, but result or are likely to result in death, shall be investigated by the Assault/Homicide Section (for example, a traffic crash involving a train and a pedestrian when the traffic crash is not at a railroad crossing).
- I. All reports and investigations shall be completed in conformance with the Ohio Traffic Crash Procedure Manual with the following exceptions:
1. The identifier “COP00” shall be entered in the box marked “NCIC #.”
 2. The reporting officer’s first initial, last name, and assignment shall be entered in the box marked “Officer’s Name.”
 3. The nearest intersecting street shall be entered in the box marked “At/Reference.” Only named intersecting streets will be used. The exact location of the traffic crash shall be entered in the narrative section.
 4. All occupants of the involved vehicles shall be entered in the occupant section, regardless of whether they sustained personal injury. The Traffic Crash Report-Occupant Addendum, form OH-1P, shall be used to list additional occupants when necessary.
 5. If injured parties are treated and released at scene, the reporting officer shall enter the treating unit’s identifier (for example, CFD Medic 8) in the box marked “Transported by” and enter the words “At Scene” in the box labeled “Injured Taken to.”
 6. If any involved party is transported to a medical facility, the name of the attending physician and a description of the injuries shall be documented in the narrative.
 7. The reviewing supervisor shall enter his or her last name and IBM number in the box marked “Checked By.”
 8. The cruiser district where the traffic crash occurred shall be entered in the box marked “Local Information.”
 9. The Social Security Number (SSN) sections shall remain blank. Do not put a SSN on any part of the report.
- J. When completing the Ohio Traffic Crash Report, the at-fault driver shall be listed as Unit #1.
- K. The first responding officer to a traffic crash scene shall coordinate the on-scene response until **the scene is released or** relieved by another officer, a supervisor, **or** a detective.

L. Traffic Crashes Involving City-Owned Vehicles

1. For Division of Police vehicles, sworn personnel shall follow the procedures in the “Traffic Crashes Involving Division Personnel and Vehicles” directive.
 2. Columbus Division of Fire (CFD) vehicles
 - a. Sworn personnel shall complete a traffic crash report on CFD vehicles operating within Columbus’ jurisdiction.
 - b. If a CFD vehicle was responding to an emergency, sworn personnel shall take into account the exceptions to traffic regulations provided by Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 4511.03 and 4511.041 for the driver of emergency vehicles. Those exceptions are granted when the driver of the emergency vehicle is operating with lights and siren activated and driving with due regard for the safety of all persons and property upon the roadway. The driver of the emergency vehicle is required to slow down as necessary for safety upon approaching a red light, stop signal, or stop sign.
 - c. If CFD personnel are responding on an emergency run using lights and siren and are at fault, do not issue a citation. The CFD Fleet Accident Review Committee shall make the final disposition.
 - d. Sworn personnel shall take appropriate enforcement action if these exceptions are not applicable.
 3. Sworn personnel shall treat traffic crashes involving all other City-owned vehicles as any other traffic crash and take appropriate enforcement action.
 4. The Accident Investigation Unit (AIU) will respond as needed and as determined by the severity of the traffic crash or upon supervisor request.
- M. Traffic Crashes Involving Privately Owned, Marked, Special Duty Cruisers
Sworn personnel shall follow the procedures in the “Traffic Crashes Involving Division Personnel and Vehicles” directive.

II. Procedures

A. Traffic Crashes With No Injury or Injury Less Than Serious Physical Harm

1. Responding Officer
 - a. Locate, identify, and **render medical aid** for injured persons and **summon** any necessary emergency medical services (**EMS**).
 - b. Make the traffic crash scene safe, detouring traffic if necessary.
 - c. Identify and take appropriate action for fire hazards and hazardous materials. If applicable, refer to the “Police and Fire Joint Operational Scenes” directive.
 - d. Identify the at-fault operator(s).
 - (1) Issue a citation/summons as appropriate.
 - (2) Arrest as appropriate.
 - (3) Issue a warning when justified and circumstances dictate.

- (4) Document the at-fault operator's voluntary statements.
 - (5) Document all information regarding any citation, summons, arrest, or warning on the Ohio Traffic Crash Report.
 - e. Identify and isolate potential witnesses.
 - Document any statements made by witnesses and the not-at-fault operator(s). The Ohio Traffic Crash Witness Statement, form OH-3, can be used for this purpose.
 - f. Protect the traffic crash scene.
 - g. Clear disabled or abandoned vehicles from the roadway after the necessary evidence has been collected or evaluated. Refer to the "Impounding and Towing" directive.
 - h. Re-establish traffic flow as soon as appropriate.
 - i. Provide the operators with the Exchange of Identification Information, form U-20.104, and ensure they exchange information.
 - j. Complete the Ohio Traffic Crash Report.
 - (1) If specific information is not available, leave the appropriate space blank on the report.
 - (2) If the traffic crash does not involve any of the required reporting criteria listed in **Section I,B** and the involved parties refuse or are unwilling to file a report at the scene, document refusal/unwillingness by adding notes to the CAD system.
 - k. Conduct LEADS and warrant checks on all involved operators and verify possible warrants when able.
- B. Traffic Crashes Resulting in Serious Physical Harm**
- 1. Responding Officer
 - a. Locate, identify, and **render medical aid** for injured persons and **summon** any necessary **EMS**.
 - b. Treat the crash scene as a serious crime scene and refer to the "Serious Crime Scenes, Threatened Officer Protection, and Guard Duty" directive.
 - c. Advise the precinct supervisor of the situation and request additional personnel as necessary.
 - d. Notify AIU personnel if:
 - (1) The at-fault operator is OVI, reckless, or driving under suspension; and
 - (2) Any person other than the at-fault operator sustained serious physical harm.
 - e. If AIU personnel respond, proceed with the investigation as directed.
 - f. If AIU personnel do not respond, follow the procedures listed in Section II,A or D as applicable.

2. Precinct Supervisor
 - a. Obtain information on the condition of any victims and the status of the at-fault operator (OVI, reckless, driving under suspension).
 - (1) Release the scene or turn the investigation over to AIU personnel.
 - (2) If needed, notify a Driving Impaired Criminal Enforcement/Drug Recognition Expert (DICE/DRE) officer to respond to the scene.
 - b. Coordinate traffic control and protection of the scene.
- C. Traffic Crashes Involving a Fatality or Potential Fatality
 1. Responding Officer
 - a. Locate, identify, and **render medical aid** for injured persons and **summon** necessary **EMS**.
 - b. Make the accident scene safe, detouring traffic if necessary.
 - c. Secure the traffic crash scene at the perimeter and establish a single point of entry. Treat the traffic crash scene as a serious crime scene and refer to the “Serious Crime Scenes, Threatened Officer Protection, and Guard Duty” directive.
 - d. Notify AIU.
 - e. Identify and take appropriate action for fire hazards and hazardous materials. If applicable, refer to the “Police and Fire Joint Operational Scenes” directive.
 - f. Request the presence of the precinct supervisor and additional personnel as necessary.
 - g. Detain and apprehend the at-fault operator, if possible and appropriate.
 - (1) Document the at-fault operator’s voluntary statements.
 - (2) If the at-fault operator is deceased, or fault cannot be immediately determined, detain all operators involved in the traffic crash if reasonable.
 - (3) Request a DICE/DRE officer to respond to make contact with the surviving operator if applicable.
 - h. Identify and isolate potential witnesses.
 - (1) Document any statements made by witnesses and all involved operators concerning the traffic crash. The Ohio Traffic Crash Witness Statement can be used for this purpose.
 - (2) Ask witnesses to remain at the scene until the arrival of investigative personnel.
 - i. Clear disabled or abandoned vehicles from the roadway after the necessary evidence has been collected and/or evaluated by AIU personnel. Refer to the “Impounding and Towing” directive.
 - j. Provide the operators with the Exchange of Identification Information form and ensure they exchange information.

- k. Complete an Ohio Traffic Crash Report and a supplemental summary on the Ohio Traffic Crash Diagram/Narrative Continuation, form OH-2, as needed and submit **the documentation** to AIU.
 - l. Conduct LEADS and warrant checks on all involved operators and verify possible warrants when able.
 - m. Re-establish traffic flow when appropriate.
2. Precinct Supervisor
- a. Coordinate traffic control and protection of the scene.
 - b. Ensure a cruiser is dispatched to the hospital to check on the condition of operator(s) and/or passenger(s).
3. AIU
- Investigate as directed by **the** Traffic Bureau SOP.
- D. Hit-Skip Investigation
1. Responding Officer
- a. Conduct hit-skip investigations if the traffic crash results in no injury or injury less than serious physical harm and the officer's supervisor determines it can be resolved within the tour of duty. Complete an Ohio Traffic Crash Report with all available information, and list all investigative actions in the narrative section.
 - b. Contact AIU for hit-skip traffic crashes resulting in serious physical harm, potential fatality, or fatality.
 - c. Gather evidence and witness statements to determine whether or not the hit-skip operator had knowledge of the traffic crash.
 - (1) Consider the following evidence when determining a hit-skip operator's knowledge of a traffic crash and list this information in the narrative section:
 - (a) Any statements made by the hit-skip operator to witnesses or sworn personnel
 - (b) Witness statements
 - (c) Damage such that a reasonable person should have been aware of the traffic crash
 - (d) Any other evidence or information leading to knowledge of the traffic crash
 - d. If the hit-skip operator can be identified, and there is evidence that the operator had knowledge of the traffic crash, issue a traffic citation/summons as appropriate.
 - (1) Document the witness statements and evidence on the Arrest Information, form U-10.100, and the investigative outcome in the Ohio Traffic Crash Report narrative.
 - (2) Do not impound for hit-skip only unless specifically directed by AIU personnel. Refer to the "Impound and Towing" directive.

- e. When a hit-skip operator cannot be positively identified:
 - (1) If there is evidence that the hit-skip operator had knowledge of the traffic crash, complete the following:
 - (a) Document all evidence and witness statements in the Ohio Traffic Crash Report narrative.
 - (b) Do not release any information to the traffic crash victim about the suspected hit-skip operator or the hit-skip vehicle of which the victim is not already aware.
 - (c) Advise the victim an AIU investigator will contact them if additional information is obtained.
 - (d) Advise the victim to contact AIU if they obtain any additional information.
 - (2) If there is no evidence that the hit-skip operator had knowledge of the traffic crash, complete the following:
 - (a) Provide the traffic crash victim with the hit-skip vehicle owner information listed on the Ohio Traffic Crash Report.
 - (b) Advise the victim the investigation is complete and to contact AIU if additional information becomes available.
 - (c) List unverified license plate and personally verified VIN information in the Traffic Crash Report narrative section.

2. AIU

- a. Conduct investigations of hit-skip traffic crashes that cannot be resolved within the initial responding officer's tour of duty or that involve any serious physical harm, potential fatality, or fatality.
- b. Do not cause a vehicle to be impounded for hit-skip only unless the vehicle will be processed for evidence.
- c. When evidence processing is complete on the impounded vehicle, cause the vehicle to be released.

E. Restricting Traffic Crash Investigations Due to Weather

1. Communications ***Personnel***

- a. Notify the zone lieutenant of an affected area during periods of inclement weather when calls to investigate traffic crashes exceed the number of cruisers available to respond.
- b. Notify the local news media when traffic crash response restrictions are implemented.
- c. When traffic crash response restrictions are implemented, broadcast notification to the affected zones.***
- d. Dispatch a cruiser to a traffic crash scene only when the traffic crash requires a Division response as stipulated in this directive.***

- e. If a cruiser will not be dispatched, advise the caller of the following information:**
- (1) Traffic crash response restrictions have been implemented due to severe weather conditions and the large number of reported traffic crashes.**
 - (2) Sworn personnel will not respond to the traffic crash scene.**
 - (3) The parties involved in the traffic crash are required by law to exchange information.**
 - (4) The parties involved may file a Columbus Division of Police Local Traffic Crash Report, form S-36.133, at the Police Headquarters Information Desk or download the form at www.columbus.gov/police.**
2. Zone Lieutenant
- a. Contact Communications personnel to implement traffic crash response restrictions, only when necessary, for the zone or for specific areas within the zone.
 - b. Monitor the situation and cancel the restrictions as soon as appropriate.
3. Precinct Sergeant
- a. Monitor traffic crash response restrictions and weather conditions to ensure adequate police service.
 - b. Keep Communications personnel advised of changing weather conditions during traffic crash response restrictions.
4. Sworn Personnel Encountering or Dispatched to a Traffic Crash
- a. If one or more of the conditions requiring a Division response exists, investigate the traffic crash and complete an Ohio Traffic Crash Report.
 - b. If none of the conditions requiring a Division response exist, complete the following actions:
 - (1) Inform the operators that traffic crash response restrictions have been implemented.
 - (2) Provide the operators with the Exchange of Identification Information form and ensure they exchange information.
 - (3) Advise the operators involved in the traffic crash that they may either:
 - (a) File a Columbus Division of Police Local Traffic Crash Report at the Police Headquarters Information Desk or download the form at www.columbus.gov/police; or
 - (b) File an Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles Crash Report, form BMV 3303, with the BMV within six months.

F. Traffic Crashes on Private Property or Involving Animals

1. Communications Personnel

- a. Dispatch a cruiser to a traffic crash scene only when the traffic crash requires a Division response as stipulated in Section I,B.

Note: Dispatch a cruiser to traffic crashes involving animals if the animal carcass is obstructing a public roadway or the animal is seriously injured and requires humane destruction.

- b. If a cruiser will not be dispatched, advise the caller of the following information:
 - (1) Traffic crashes on private property are not investigated unless specific criteria are met.
 - (2) Sworn personnel will not respond to the traffic crash scene.
 - (3) The parties involved in the traffic crash are required by law to exchange information.
 - (4) The parties involved may either:
 - (a) File a Columbus Division of Police Local Traffic Crash Report at the Police Headquarters Information Desk or download the form at www.columbus.gov/police; or
 - (b) File an Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles Crash Report with the BMV within six months.

2. Sworn Personnel Encountering or Dispatched to a Traffic Crash on Private Property

- a. If one or more of the conditions requiring a Division response exists, investigate the traffic crash and complete an Ohio Traffic Crash Report.
- b. If none of the conditions requiring a Division response exist, complete the following actions:
 - (1) Inform the operators that traffic crashes on private property are not investigated unless specific criteria are met.
 - (2) Provide the operators with the Exchange of Identification Information form and ensure they exchange information.
 - (3) Advise the operators involved in the traffic crash that they may either:
 - (a) File a Columbus Division of Police Local Traffic Crash Report at Police Headquarters Information Desk or download the form at www.columbus.gov/police; or
 - (b) File an Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles Crash Report with the BMV within six months.

3. Sworn Personnel Encountering or Dispatched to a Traffic Crash Involving Animals

- a. Refer to the "Discharged Firearms" directive for the **humane** destruction of a seriously injured animal.

- b. If one or more of the conditions requiring a Division response exists, investigate the traffic crash and complete an Ohio Traffic Crash Report.
- c. If none of the conditions requiring a Division response exist, complete the following actions:
 - (1) Inform the operators that traffic crashes involving animals are not investigated unless specific criteria are met.
 - (2) Advise the operators involved in the traffic crash that they may either:
 - (a) File a Columbus Division of Police Local Traffic Crash Report at Police Headquarters Information Desk, or download the form at www.columbus.gov/police; or
 - (b) File an Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles Crash Report with the BMV within six months.

G. Traffic Crash Location Analysis

- 1. Traffic Operations **Section** Lieutenant
 - a. Complete a semi-annual review of traffic crash data.
 - b. Cause traffic officers to work the identified locations for enforcement action. Selective enforcement techniques and procedures should be used and documented on the appropriate form.
 - c. Analyze and evaluate enforcement action results to determine whether further action is necessary.
 - d. When deemed necessary, forward enforcement action results and feedback from assigned personnel to the Division of Traffic Management.