

Annapolis Police Department



GENERAL ORDER

Number: E.1

**Issue Date: March
2002**

TO: All Personnel

SUBJECT: Motor Vehicle Collision Investigation

PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to define the motor vehicle collision investigation policy of the Annapolis Police Department.

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Annapolis Police Department to respond to all collisions occurring in the City of Annapolis. The primary objective at a collision scene is the safety of the public. Exceptional Circumstances such as the declaration of a "Snow Emergency", may require the Chief of Police or his designee to suspend or modify this policy.

I. Responding to Collisions

A. Officers will respond to all collisions occurring in the City of Annapolis.

B. At least one officer will respond to the scene of any reported:

1. Hit and run collision;
2. Collision involving government vehicle or property;
3. Property damage collision; and
4. Collision in which towing of a vehicle is required.

C. At least two officers will respond to the scene of any reported:

1. Personal injury or fatal collision;
2. Collision involving a disturbance between principals;
3. Collision involving an alcohol/drug impaired driver; and

4. Any collision involving major traffic congestion because of the collision.
- D. Officers will continue to be aware of the fact that driver impairment, due to alcohol and/or drugs is a factor in many collisions. Officers will be alert to clues or evidence of such impairment when carrying out collision reporting or investigation duties and will take appropriate enforcement action when sufficient evidence is obtained.
- E. When directed to respond to a traffic collision, the officer(s) will be informed of the location, the reported severity of the collision and whether traffic is blocked.
1. Based on available information, officers shall choose the quickest route based on traffic and weather conditions and congestion in the area of the collision.
 2. Officers will drive safely to the scene, consistent with the need for a prompt response.

II. Required Action

The initial responding officer(s) at a collision will:

1. Position police vehicle(s) to protect the collision scene.
2. Evaluate the need for medical care and provide basic life support. When requesting fire/rescue assistance, officers will notify communications of the number of injured persons, the nature of injuries, and if any persons are trapped or if the vehicle is on fire. If a fatality or serious injury is involved, the Platoon supervisor will be notified who shall then have the Communications Section contact the T.S.U. refer to **General Order E.2.**
3. Separate drivers/passengers if involved in any altercations/disturbances and take appropriate action.
4. Summon additional assistance, if necessary.
5. Insure that the collision scene is preserved so that necessary physical evidence can be accurately gathered and recorded.
6. Establish a safe and efficient traffic pattern around the scenes utilizing personnel, flares, traffic cones, barricades, and/or emergency vehicles.
7. If damage is such that the vehicles require to be towed refer to **General Order C.21.**
8. If the collision involves property damage only, arrange for the removal of the vehicle(s) from the travel portion of the roadway as soon as possible.
9. Collisions involving hazardous material will be investigated, maintaining the primary objectives of officer safety, the safety of persons/property that may be affected by the hazardous material(s), and the containment of the area and the hazardous materials(s). If the collision involves a vehicle transporting hazardous materials the initial officer shall:
 - a. Notify the Communications Section of the incident for notification to the Fire Department.
 - b. Request that the Platoon supervisor respond to the scene.
 - c. Coordinate the maintenance of a wide perimeter by closing off all roads leading to the collision scene.

- d. Evacuate non-essential people from within the perimeter scene.
- e. Attempt to identify the hazardous materials involved in the collision through the identification of placards on the vehicles or containers. It is important to note that this identification should be made as far away as possible. At no time shall an officer jeopardize his or her safety for material identification purposes.
- f. The Platoon supervisor shall coordinate all activities with the Fire Department for the safe resolution of the collision scene.

III. Collision Investigation

- A. Collisions will be investigated, and reports made (regardless of weather conditions) only in the following circumstances:
 1. Where the collision involves a fatality or a personal injury, regardless of the severity of the injury.
 2. Where the collision involves property damage occurring on a public street or highway, and;
 - a. One or more of the vehicles involved is completely disabled or cannot be safely operated from the scene.
 - b. The collision involves a government owned vehicle, regardless of the level of government.
 - c. The collision involves a school bus, whether publicly or privately owned.
 - d. The collision involves a public conveyance, such as a taxi cab or bus.
 - e. The collision involves a hit and run; where:
 - i). There is a description or partial description of the striking vehicle, or;
 - ii). There is a witness to the collision, or;
 - iii). There is physical evidence which may link the striking vehicle to the collision scene.
 - f. Where the operator's license or vehicle registration is either not available or not in order.
 - g. Where the collision involves or results from a violation of the Transportation Article (such as failure to yield right of way or driving while under the influence of alcohol/drugs. DUI's refer to **General Order E.3**) and the officer issues a citation.
 3. Where the collision involves property belonging to the City of Annapolis or any other governmental agency.
 4. Where the collision involves property damage to a vehicle owned by the City of Annapolis, whether on public or private property.
 5. Collisions involving any vehicle transporting hazardous materials. Hazardous material is defined as any vehicle displaying a Hazardous Material Placard.

- B. An officer conducting a collision investigation will:
1. Interview principals and witnesses.
 2. Examine/record vehicle damage.
 3. Examine/record effects of the collisions on the roadway.
 4. Take measurements, if necessary.
 5. Take photographs, if necessary.
 6. Notify the owners or agents of property or vehicles that are involved, where the property or vehicles are unattended of the collision and provide them pertinent information regarding the party(s) or vehicle(s) involved.
 7. Assume custody of property belonging to incapacitated collision victim *and return to the victim/owner as soon as possible to prevent theft or pilferage. The recovering officer shall be responsible to notifying the victim or relative for return of the Property. Items submitted as recovered property should be marked "To be Returned" as in indicated in **General Order K.1.***
 8. Insure that the free flow of traffic is restored before leaving the scene, and
 9. Document the collision on a MAARS report (MSP accident report form #1).
- C. Communications shall assign the initial responding (can be reassigned by the Platoon supervisor) officer who shall be responsible for the investigation of the collision unless circumstances demand the need for Traffic Safety Unit personnel and/or a reconstructionist.
- D. If available Traffic Safety Unit personnel will have primary responsibility for investigating all collisions involving government vehicles.
- E. Officers investigating motor vehicle collisions may make appropriate traffic violation charges when the violation can be substantiated by witnesses, through investigation, or through the officer's observation of the violation. Officers not investigating a motor vehicle collision will not make any judgement concerning liability nor will they issue a traffic citation to persons involved in the collision.
- F. Photographs depicting the scene and damage shall be taken of all collisions involving the City of Annapolis Vehicles.

IV. No Investigation Required

- A. Collisions will not be investigated, and no report will be made under the following circumstances:
1. Where the collision is a property damage accident and occurs on private property, regardless of the extent of damage.
 2. Where the collision is a property damage collision that occurs on a public street or highway and all of the vehicles involved can be safely operated from the scene.
 3. Where the collision is a hit and run, involving only property damage, where there is no witness, physical evidence or information which to conduct an investigation.
- B. If dispatched to the scene of a collision and no report is required, the officer will:

1. Provide each driver with form 99/04 Exchange of Collision Information .
2. Ensure the exchange of information as required by law.
3. Assist in moving the involved vehicle(s) from the travel portion of the roadway.
4. Ensure that all operators possess a valid drivers license.
5. Ensure that all vehicles involved are properly registered and are properly insured.
6. If a discrepancy exists regarding license status or vehicle registration, a report shall be written even if the officer does not intend to place charges.

V. Follow-Up Investigations

- A. Collision investigation follow-up is the responsibility of the initial reporting officer. However, the Traffic Safety Unit will conduct follow-up investigations on serious injury collisions, serious hit and run collisions and collisions which are forwarded from the commander of the Operations Division.
- B. When follow-up investigations are conducted, the following activities will addressed on an as-needed basis:
 1. Collect off scene data, i.e., breath test results, blood test result and lab reports.
 2. Obtain and record formal statements from witnesses.
 3. Reconstruct collisions (reconstructionist from the Traffic Safety Unit).
 4. Prepare formal reports to support criminal charges arising from the collision.
- C. When an officer is collecting off-scene data and/or obtaining formal statements, accurate notes should be made regarding the date and time of the follow-up. Formal written statements should be obtained from the witness(s) and it should be signed and dated by the witness. Supplemental or other reports should be completed reflecting the outcome of any follow-up investigation. A copy of all reports pertaining to the collision shall be made available to the State’s Attorney’s Office upon request.

Joseph S. Johnson
Chief of Police

References
1. Accreditation Standards 61.2.1, 61.2.2, 61.2.3, 61.2.4 2. General Order C.21 Towing and Impounding Vehicles, E.2 Collision Investigation by the Traffic Safety Unit (T.S.U.), E.3 Traffic Offenses Involving Alcohol/Drugs

Revision: This General Order replaces General Order E.1 Motor Vehicle Collision Investigation dated July 2000