



Colorado Springs Police Department

General Order

1305 Traffic Crash Investigations

Section 1300 – Traffic Functions

Effective Date: 10/26/2023

Supersedes Date: 11/22/2021

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to furnish guidelines for traffic crash investigations, in general, and to refer to specialized directives for certain kinds of crashes.

.02 Cross Reference

[GO 1060 Blood Alcohol Procedures](#)

[GO 1077 Issuing Summonses and Complaints](#)

[GO 1320 Towing and Impound Procedures](#)

[DL-1220-10 Interstate 25 Incident Management](#)

[DL-1840-06 Callout Criteria for the Major Crash Team](#)

.03 Discussion

The purpose of crash investigations is to properly determine the causative factors involved in an automobile crash and utilize these factors to develop enforcement that will reduce the incidence of crashes.

The police function in relation to traffic crashes is varied and includes aiding the injured, providing traffic control, properly investigating the causation, taking enforcement action, and working to minimize similar events from taking place in the future.

.04 Policy

Use of consistent methodology in investigating traffic crashes is essential to ensure that proper action is taken for each kind of crash. Department members will conduct traffic crash investigations that are consistent with policy and the procedures established for different kinds of traffic crashes.

.05 Definitions

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.10 Immediate Steps

Upon arrival at the scene of a traffic crash, the responding department member will take all necessary actions to prevent the crash from becoming worse. This includes:

- Caring for injured persons
- Determining the need for additional resources
- Preserving evidence
- Protecting property

Officers should attempt to move any vehicles involved in the crash from the roadway as expeditiously as possible to minimize a disruption to the traffic flow and the possibility of other crashes taking place. Crash scenes involving felony serious bodily injury (e.g., driver impairment and serious bodily injury, reckless driving and serious bodily injury, or probability of death), death, or the possibility of significant city liability (e.g., injury in a traffic crash involving a city owned vehicle) will be preserved pending consultation of the Major Crash Team.

If the fire department is called to assist at a crash scene, the investigating police officer at the scene will be in command until relieved by a supervisor. Officers will ensure that after medical/fire personnel have attended to victims, the medical/fire personnel and associated apparatus will be removed without further contamination to the scene.

.12 Crashes on I-25

When responding to non-injury traffic crashes on I-25, the first responding officer will seek to determine if the involved vehicles are capable of being driven. If all of the involved vehicles are drivable or moveable, the officer will direct the drivers to meet at a location off the interstate where the investigation and report can be completed.

If any of the vehicles cannot be driven, the officer will complete the required investigation and request a tow truck as quickly as possible so that the vehicles can be moved.

.14 Removal of Debris

The investigating officer will ensure any debris that could reasonably create a risk to the motoring public is removed from the roadway after the crash scene is processed.

.20 Field Investigations

The following steps will be taken to assure the crash is properly investigated and documented:

- Locate, identify, and interview all involved drivers. The first officer on the scene will obtain each driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- Complete or have the involved drivers fill out and exchange the CSPD Driver's Statement and Exchange of Information Form. Additionally, follow up with drivers after statement is completed to get a verbal statement for clarification.
- Locate, identify, and interview all witnesses, if possible. The first officer on the scene will be responsible for having witnesses fill out written statements. Additionally, follow up with witnesses after statement is completed to get a verbal statement for clarification.
- Observe each driver's physical condition for any signs of impairment. If a driver appears to be under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances, the appropriate procedures will be followed.
- Examine the involved vehicles for defects, mechanical or otherwise, that may have contributed to the crash. If a defect is found that would make the vehicle unsafe to drive, it will be towed from the scene.
- Note all physical conditions at the crash scene, to include obtaining scene measurements of point of impact, skid/yaw marks, and position of rest of vehicles if vehicles are still in place or point of impact can be located. Additionally, measurements will be taken if the driver is transported from the scene due to injury. This information will be detailed in the narrative or in a diagram (as required).
- Obtain all physical and photographic evidence necessary to confirm the sequence of events.
- Evaluate the scene/area for hazards and contributing conditions (e.g., poor lighting, signs/signals working improperly, crash debris, etc.).

.22 Crashes Involving City Property

If city property has been damaged in the crash, communications is to be notified of the type of city property damaged and its location. In such cases, the investigating officer will obtain liability insurance information, including, if known, the name of the company, policy number and local agent from the responsible driver(s).

.24 Crashes Involving Unattended Vehicles or Property

In crashes involving unattended vehicles or property, it is the investigating officer's responsibility to make reasonable efforts to notify the owner of the vehicle or property of the crash, either in person or writing. Such notification will include:

- The date/time of the crash
- The crash location
- The crash report number
- The investigating officer's name and contact information

If crash victims are unable to take custody of their personal property at the scene, the investigating officer is responsible for assuring the items are properly protected. If no authorized person can assume custody of such items, the investigating officer will follow the same procedures as for personal items found in impounded vehicles (e.g., make an inventory, enter the items as personal property into EvidenceOnQ (EoQ)).

.26 Hazardous Conditions

The investigating officer will notify communications of any existing hazardous condition that requires immediate attention or repair (e.g., downed powerline, damaged power box, etc.).

.28 Crashes Involving Injury

Any time a traffic crash involves an injury or complaint of pain (regardless of whether they seek medical treatment), officers will cite the driver for C.R.S. § 42-4-1402 Careless Driving **Resulting in Injury and for the action determined to be the proximate cause of the crash (e.g., Vehicles Turning Left, etc.)**.

.30 Completion of Reports

All reports of investigated traffic crashes will be made using the department-approved traffic crash report **and narrative template** that will be consistent with the state's reporting form (currently the DR3447). Such a report will be submitted prior to the end of the officer's shift unless otherwise authorized by an on-duty supervisor.

.32 Completion of State Reports

Officers who are responsible for completing a crash report will ensure the following reporting protocols are followed:

Report Details

Officers will describe the location of a crash using complete street names (e.g., avenue, street, drive, lane, etc.). The crash location requires a minimum of two entries: one must be the GPS coordinates in decimal degrees, the other can be either “on road/at road” or “highway/mile marker” with any necessary offset to direction and distance. The coordinates for the crash location should be as close as practical to the area of impact of the vehicles.

All north-south alleys will assume the name and hundred block of the street to the west of the alley. All east-west alleys will assume the name and hundred block of the street to the north of the alley.

Crash Description

The crash description is based on the officer's investigation. Officers will author a chronological narrative detailing the crash using the following parameters:

- Set the stage (e.g., Vehicle One was southbound on Main Street, Vehicle Two was eastbound on First Street)
- Crash the involved parties together (e.g., Vehicle One failed to stop for a posted stop sign, resulting in Vehicle One’s front right quarter panel striking Vehicle Two’s rear right quarter panel)
- Bring the parties to rest (e.g., Vehicle One came to an uncontrolled stop 150’ northeast of the intersection, Vehicle Two spun counterclockwise and came to an uncontrolled stop 75’ east of the intersection)
- Officers will not include any personal identifying information in the crash description (e.g., dates of birth, home addresses, telephone numbers, etc.)

Crash Narrative

Officers will provide a brief synopsis of their interviews with the involved drivers and any witnesses, even if statements have been provided.

Officers may include personal identifying information for those contacted during a crash investigation (e.g., witnesses, etc.) in the narrative. Officers should avoid referencing that information throughout the narrative to avoid the possibility of the department releasing a party’s personal identifying information.

Data Entry Boxes

Officers will accurately complete the applicable data entry boxes in the DR3447 form as they apply to each crash. This includes officers deciding as to the seriousness of any injuries sustained because

of the crash (e.g., 0 - No Apparent Injury, 01 - Possible Injury, 02- Suspected Minor Injury, 03 - Suspected Serious Injury, 04 - Fatal Injury)

Diagram Requirements

Officers will complete a diagram on all crashes where any of the occupants have or are suspected to have sustained serious injuries or death.

.34 Supervisor Review

Supervisors in each area command will review all traffic crash reports completed by officers assigned to their division. Divisional Crash Unit (DCU) officers' reports will be reviewed by the DCU traffic sergeant. The review will seek to ensure that the crash was thoroughly investigated, and the report was completed appropriately using the departments traffic template.

.40 Traffic Crashes Involving Snowplows

When a snowplow is conducting snow removal operations, has warning lights operating, is actively pushing snow with a snow blade and/or deploying sand or ice treatment, the operator is generally absolved of responsibility for a minor crash. For example, if a snowplow is clearing a city street and strikes a parked car or other stationary object, the operator should not receive a traffic summons, noting that the incident is not considered a traffic crash. Instead, the incident will be documented in the department's reporting database as a *Non-Criminal Incident*.

If the traffic crash occurred between a snowplow and a motor vehicle in motion while on a public roadway, it is a crash and should be investigated as such. If the snowplow driver is determined to be at fault, they should be appropriately cited for the actions that contributed to the crash. For example, if a snowplow turns left in front of a vehicle resulting in a traffic crash, the resulting incident should be investigated as a crash and the driver cited for the appropriate charge.

Should a crash occur where the snowplow is traffic unit one, but the actions do not rise to careless or reckless, officers will complete a traffic crash report in MFR but will not cite the operator. These types of investigations will be forwarded to the Major Crash Team for follow-up investigation, to include determining whether a summons will be issued. If the snowplow is traffic unit two, officers should investigate the incident like any other crash.