

Fort Collins Police Services Policy Manual

 FORT COLLINS POLICE	POLICY	502
	TITLE	Traffic Accident Response and Reporting

502.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The public safety responsibilities of law enforcement include responding to traffic accidents, providing aid and assistance, documentation of the incident, and identification of criminal activity. Fort Collins Police Services prepares traffic accident reports in compliance with CRS § 42-4-1606 and as public service makes traffic accident information available to the public.

A “traffic accident” as defined in the Investigative Officer’s Accident Report Manual, is unintentional damage or injury caused by the movement of a motor vehicle or its load.

502.2 CALL RESPONSE

Officers should respond without delay when dispatched to a traffic accident. A traffic accident with injuries reported may include an emergency response if the officer reasonably believes such a response is appropriate.

502.2.1 RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

An officer responding to, and upon arrival at, a traffic accident should consider the following:

- (a) The most appropriate route to the incident
- (b) Proper placement of the emergency vehicle to provide protection for officers and the scene
- (c) Potential for involvement of hazardous materials
- (d) Providing first aid to any injured parties, if it can be done safely, including obtaining medical assistance as necessary
- (e) Traffic control which may require the placement of temporary traffic control devices (cones, barricades, etc.)
- (f) Protection of the scene
- (g) Clearance of the roadway

502.3 INVESTIGATION OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

- (a) Fort Collins Police Services is responsible for the investigation of traffic accidents that occur within the city limits of Fort Collins.
- (b) The appropriate State of Colorado Traffic Accident report forms, witness statement forms, and driver information forms, will be used for all traffic accident investigations.
- (c) The investigation of a traffic accident will generally involve responding to the scene, assessing physical damage to the vehicles involved, collection of evidence, and obtaining witness statements so as to reasonably conclude that the proximate cause for accident rests with one of the drivers. As a general rule, the officer investigating the accident will issue citation(s) upon determination of probable cause for a violation of traffic law or other

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violations that become apparent during the investigation. Exceptions must be approved by a supervisor.

502.3.1 EXCEPTIONS TO TRAFFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Exceptions to traffic accident investigations are:

- (a) Private property traffic accidents and property damage accidents which do not involve injury, hit and run, or alcohol/drugs, or property damage accidents in which the involved parties agree to file a report with Records or the online portal rather than have an officer respond to the scene.
- (b) Traffic accidents in which the officer responds to the scene where the vehicles have been moved and finds that no physical evidence exists.
 - 1. In such incidents, the officer's primary duty is the objective recording of accurate information obtained from the drivers of the involved vehicles and any witnesses.
 - 2. Even though a traffic accident is recorded rather than being fully investigated, a summons may be issued upon determination that probable cause exists that a violation of Colorado law or City ordinance has occurred.
- (c) Traffic accidents that occur during periods when the public has been advised to report such accidents in person at the Records counter (usually during extreme weather conditions).
 - 1. These traffic accidents will also be recorded rather than investigated unless investigation is warranted.

502.4 FILING OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS

The investigating officer of every traffic accident shall complete and file the appropriate traffic accident investigation report form(s) with Records at the end of their tour of duty unless a supervisor authorizes otherwise per Policy 344 – Report Preparation.

Traffic accident reports involving fatalities, serious injuries, City vehicles, or other circumstances of interest to the public may be made available to the news media in accordance with Policy 346 – News Media Relations.

502.5 TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVOLVING FORT COLLINS POLICE SERVICES VEHICLES

If a traffic accident involves a Fort Collins Police Services vehicle, an on-duty supervisor shall respond to the scene and supervise the investigation. A supervisor shall issue a citation to the officer if appropriate.

Photographs of the accident scene and the involved vehicles are mandatory.

Summonses issued to a sworn employee involved in a traffic accident in a City vehicle shall be written into the appropriate court, whether municipal or county.

502.5.1 TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVOLVING OTHER CITY-OWNED VEHICLES

Primary responsibility for investigating a traffic accident involving a City of Fort Collins vehicle may be assigned to either a CSO or a police officer.

Photographs of the accident scene and the involved vehicles are mandatory.

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Summonses issued to a City employee involved in a traffic accident in a City vehicle shall be written into the appropriate court, whether municipal or county.

502.6 FATAL TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Fatal traffic accidents will be investigated by per Policy 503 – Collision Reconstruction and Scene Handling (CRASH) Team.

Serious injury accidents may be investigated by CRASH at the discretion of a CRASH Team supervisor.