



**CHAPTER 44 – SECTION B
TRAFFIC CRASH INVESTIGATION**

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44B.1 TRAFFIC CRASH INVESTIGATION

The department will investigate traffic crashes in accordance with part 16 of article 4 of title 42, C.R.S. Members will follow the guidelines in the *State of Colorado Investigating Officer's Traffic Accident Reporting Manual*. The manual provides guidance for the completion of the *State of Colorado Traffic Accident Report*.

44B.2 WHEN TO USE THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT REPORT (DR2447)

The *Investigating Officer's Traffic Accident Reporting Manual* directs the use of the *State of Colorado Traffic Accident Report* if the following questions can all be answered "yes":

- A. Is there unintentional damage or injury?
- B. Is at least one motor vehicle in motion involved?
- C. Did the situation involve a traffic way?

The manual also provides specific exclusions and examples of situations that are and are not considered a traffic crash.

44B.3 TRAFFIC CRASH RESPONSE, INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

For traffic crashes that occur on public property and/or on a traffic way, a response and investigation will be conducted and reported to the State for the following types of traffic crashes:

- A. Damage to any single vehicle and/or property of \$1000 or more.
- B. Injury or death as a result of the crash.
- C. One or more drivers are suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- D. Evidence that one or more of the drivers has no insurance.

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E. Under \$1000 crash if one of the drivers does not have insurance or one of the drivers specifically requests that a report be completed. To qualify as an under \$1000 crash, these points must be true:

1. No injuries: A complaint of pain is not classified as an injury.
2. No alcohol or drugs suspected; and
3. Vehicles involved have less than \$1000 each in damage.

In addition to the situations listed above, there will be a police response to the following traffic crash situations:

- A. Hit and run.
- B. Public vehicles or property.
- C. Hazardous materials.
- D. Disturbances between principals.
- E. Major traffic congestion.
- F. Damage to vehicles to the extent that they are unable to move from the roadway.
- G. Any situation where police response is demanded.
- H. Any crash situation where there is any question for the need of a police response.
- I. Crashes that are on boundary lines with other jurisdictions where the responsibility for the crash investigation is not clearly delineated, or if there is a discrepancy over responsibility for doing the investigation.

Upon officer arrival, if both involved parties agree to exchange information and complete an online report, they will be referred to the Colorado Online Accident Report website and no further action is needed by the responding officer.

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For crashes occurring on private property, the department will generally not respond. Citizens will be directed to the Colorado Online Accident Reporting website, unless one or more of the following conditions exist:

- A. Injuries or fatalities.
- B. Crash involving persons under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- C. Hit and run crashes where follow-up leads exist.
- D. Involvement of public property or vehicle.
- E. Crash caused by reckless driving.
- F. Any crash situation where there is any question for the need of a police response.

If the crash meets any of the above criteria, the department must complete the crash report.

44B.4 PRIMARY RESPONSE TO TRAFFIC CRASHES

Members assigned to the patrol division will be primary responders to property damage and private property traffic crashes. Members assigned to the traffic unit will be primary responders to all injury, unknown injury, fatal traffic crashes as well as traffic crashes in high accident locations which include Highway 93, Highway 6, Highway 58, I-70, C-470 and South Golden Road.

If a member arrives and determines the crash involves serious bodily injury, a fatality, or the crash is beyond their technical abilities, they should notify the watch commander to assess / determine the need to call out the Traffic Crash Investigation Team to conduct the investigation. If a member investigating a crash has technical questions, nothing herein will prohibit them from contacting a member of the Traffic Unit or the Traffic Crash Investigation Team.

If no one from the Traffic Unit or Traffic Crash Investigation Team is available, another law enforcement agency can be contacted for assistance.

44B.4.1 Duties and Responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities of the initial member(s) on scene will include, but are not limited to:

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A. Determine:

1. If there are injuries and if so, summon aid as needed and administer first aid.
2. The need for other emergency response, i.e., hazmat or fire.
3. The need for other police assistance, i.e., traffic control, assistance with injured persons, etc., and make the needed assignments.

B. Protect the scene until relieved or reassigned.

Duties and responsibilities of the member assigned to conduct the crash investigation (may differ from initial member on scene):

- A. Determine the need for additional crash investigation expertise or the need of a DUI member or other special skill response.
- B. Determine if legal requirements for investigation exist.
- C. Establish and maintain control of the scene and start the investigation unless or until relieved.
- D. If needed, request assistance from other members to locate and interview witnesses, respond to the hospital for statements from victims, and collect / photograph physical evidence.
- E. Ensure that property belonging to crash victims is cared for properly and, if necessary, removed to a place of safekeeping.
- F. Complete all necessary crash and supplemental reports.
- G. Diagram completion
 1. A diagram will be completed for all accidents involving the below classes of injury:
 - i. Suspected Serious Injury Class 03 – A suspected serious injury is any injury other than fatal which results in one or more of the following types of injuries:

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- Severe laceration resulting in exposure of underlying tissues/muscle/organs or resulting in significant loss of blood
 - Broken or distorted extremity (arm or leg)
 - Crush injuries
 - Suspected skull, chest, or abdominal injury other than bruises or minor lacerations
 - Significant burns (second and third degree burns over 10% or more of the body)
 - Unconsciousness when taken from the crash scene
 - Paralysis
- i. Fatal injury – Class 04 – For the purposes of the accident report, a fatal injury is any injury that results in death within thirty days of the accident.

44B.4.2 Traffic Control

Members should provide traffic control in accordance with *GPD PPM Chapter 44 – Traffic Enforcement and Regulation, Section C – Traffic Control and Direction*.

44B.4.3 Assistance to Crash Victims

Members should ensure that crash victims receive needed assistance. They should consider the use of a victim advocate, especially for victims of serious crashes.

44B.4.4 Crash Investigation Follow-Up

Crash investigation follow-up is the responsibility of the assigned member to be completed as necessary and on a case-by-case basis. Follow-up investigation may include, but is not limited to:

- A. Collecting off-scene data such as medical records, physician reports, blood or other chemical tests, mechanical inspections, and laboratory reports.
- B. Interviewing and collecting statements from victims, witnesses and suspects.
- C. Reconstruction and analysis of the crash.

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- D. Using expert and/or technical assistance as needed.
- E. Filing of formal charges and completing formal reports.
- F. Other procedures as necessary as part of a follow-up investigation.

Special attention is required for crashes involving serious injuries and fatalities, especially if such crashes will require a case filing with the District Attorney's Office. Detailed follow-up is necessary to ensure all possible witnesses have been located and interviewed and all physical evidence has been properly identified, recovered, and logged. Investigating members are encouraged to consult with the District Attorney's Office in determining the appropriate charges to be filed.

44B.4.5 Reporting Crash Data to Traffic Engineering

Traffic crash reports will be shared with the city traffic engineer.

44B.5 TRAFFIC CRASH INVESTIGATION TEAM

The department's Traffic Crash Investigation Team is comprised of members based on their experience, skills, abilities and training related to traffic crash investigation. Generally, members on the Traffic Unit will be assigned to the team. Coordination of the Team is the responsibility of the Support Services Division Head, or designee.

Additional information regarding the on-call procedure is outlined in *GPD PPM Chapter 6 – Notification, On-Call, Call Out*.

44B.6 ACCIDENT ALERT

Conditions that can warrant an accident alert status include such things as severe weather conditions when the number of crashes exceeds the ability of on duty personnel to respond or when calls for service exceed the ability of on duty personnel to respond.

The watch commander is authorized to implement accident alert status.

The watch commander initiating accident alert status will immediately notify Jeffcom.

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44B.6.1 Police Response During Accident Alert

During accident alert, members will generally not be dispatched to property damage crashes where the vehicles are moveable. Crashes that will require a police response during accident alert:

- A. Known injuries or fatalities.
- B. Unknown injuries or fatalities.
- C. Suspected alcohol or drug involvement.
- D. Hit and run crashes where follow-up leads exist.
- E. Disabled vehicles, i.e., blocking traffic, requiring tows, etc.
- F. Crash involving public vehicles or property.

44B.6.2 Member Responsibilities

When dispatched to a crash scene and it is determined accident alert response criteria is not present, members should assist the driver / principals with exchange of information, including insurance and drivers' information. The driver / principal should also be directed to respond to the department for a counter report as soon as practical.

If there is a question about the need for on scene investigation, the member should complete an investigation and report.

44B.6.3 Cancellation of Accident Alert Status

When conditions that caused the alert have improved and allow for a more normal response to calls for service, the watch commander will cancel the accident alert status.

The watch commander will notify Jeffcom of the cancellation.