

Greer Police Department

General Order 730.1 Traffic Collision Investigation

This order consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. COLLISION INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING
- II. TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL
- III. AT-SCENE PROCEDURES
- IV. COLLISION REPORTS AND RECORDS

By Order of: *Matt Hamby*
Chief of Police

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CALEA 61.1.5; 61.2.1; 61.2.2

I. TRAFFIC COLLISION INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING

A. Investigating/Reporting

1. Uniformed officers dispatched to handle a traffic collision, either on the road way or on private property, are to investigate and/or report the collision in a thorough and professional manner.
2. All collisions requiring police investigation regardless of location will be completed on a Code 6 collision Report (See I.B.3 of this General Order for exception). A more thorough investigation, possibly including photograph, measurements, collection of evidence, etc., is required on serious collisions, to include:
 - a. Death or serious injury.
 - b. Property damage of \$1000.00 or more (including private property).
 - c. Hit and run accidents.
 - d. Impairment due to alcohol or drugs.
 - e. Hazardous materials.

3. Submission of Traffic Collision Reports

It is important that traffic collision reports be submitted promptly and in compliance with the requirements of the South Carolina Code of Laws and the Uniform Traffic Collision Report Instruction Manual for Investigating Officers. Collision reports must be submitted within 24 hours of completion of the investigation. It is the investigating officer's responsibility to finish the investigation and report in a timely manner.

4. Hit and Run Collisions

All hit and run collisions will be followed up by the reporting officer. The report will be submitted in at the end of shift and supplemented as additional becomes available.

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B. Law Enforcement Response

1. Officers will respond to all reported collisions in a Code 1 response, unless specific circumstances exist that justify response of another nature. A Code 3 response will be determined and approved by the on duty Supervisor who will articulate the facts that led to a Code 3 response in writing to the Patrol Commander by the end of the shift.
2. Private Property Collisions
 - a. A motorist is required to submit a written report to the South Carolina Department of Public Safety of a collision that occurs on private property.

- b. There is nothing to prevent a law enforcement officer from entering private property in order to investigate the probability of a violation of the law, especially when the area to be entered is an open area, such as a road or parking lot to which the public is invited. When a motor vehicle collision has occurred on such an area, police are empowered to conduct routine investigations and to prefer charge when there is valid evidence to support such charges, 1973-74 Opinion, Attorney General, No. 3689, Pg 36.
 - c. The criteria for private property collision investigation by Greer police officers shall be the same as for public roadway collisions.
3. During weather emergencies and when extremely poor road conditions exist, field collision reporting may be suspended by the on-duty supervisor. Non-injury, minor damage collisions which involve no other factors requiring a report may be reported by issuance of a Form 309/SR21 (white sheet).

The supervisor will notify the Communications Section to respond to citizen requests by informing them of the weather emergency, instructing them to exchange information, and to obtain the white sheet from either the Police Headquarters or the South Carolina Motor Vehicles Office. The news media will be advised of this when they inquire of road conditions during the emergency. Greer Police social media sites may also be used to assist in informing the public

4. Collisions involving Police Department vehicles will be reported immediately to and an investigation conducted by the South Carolina Highway Patrol.

C. First Officer on the Scene

1. Immediately upon arrival, the first officer on the scene of a collision will check for injuries, fire hazards, hazardous materials, and/or electrical wires down and will summon appropriate fire, medical or utility assistance. The officer will provide emergency medical aid and fire suppression services until fire/medical personnel arrive. Injured persons will not be transported in Police Department vehicles.

In the case of hazardous material incidents, the officer will isolate the hazard area, evacuate non-essential personnel, identify the vehicle and container placards and will notify responding fire units of this information.

2. The officer will park the police vehicle in such a manner as to protect the scene, preserve evidence and protect the public, but not in such a manner that would create an additional hazard. Overhead emergency lights will be activated while the cruiser is in the roadway.
3. If damage to vehicles will require them to be towed, a tow truck should be summoned as quickly as possible so normal traffic flow can be resumed.

D. Investigative Responsibility

1. In general, the assigned investigating officer will remain in charge of the scene until completion of the investigation. Exceptions include subsequent arrival at the scene by supervisory personnel or by other officers with special investigative skills appropriate to the circumstances of the particular collision.

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2. In cases of serious injury or death, a member or members of the Traffic Team will be called to the scene to assume responsibility for the investigation. Initial responding officers will maintain the scene until the arrival of Traffic Team.
3. Officers are expected to take charge of collision scenes immediately upon arrival. Unless specifically directed to do so by a supervisor, officers shall not surrender charge of the scene to non-law enforcement personnel.
4. When authorized emergency medical personnel arrive, authority for the care of injured persons should be entrusted to them.
5. Officers of the Greer Police Department are expected to cooperate constructively and efficiently with officers of other law enforcement agencies of overlapping contiguous jurisdictions.
6. Officers involved in traffic collisions will, to the extent possible, exercise charge over the collision scene only until the arrival of another Department member or Highway Patrol Trooper, to whom the responsibility will be surrendered.

E. Collision Scene Procedures

1. When investigating collisions, the officer will ensure that a South Carolina traffic collision report is filled out completely and accurately. The information to be collected may include:
 - a. Interviews with involved parties and witnesses.
 - b. Obtaining necessary witness statements.
 - c. Listing occupants as required.
 - d. Examining and recording damage to vehicles, roadways or other public or private property.

(For detailed instruction about the South Carolina Traffic Collision Report, refer to the Uniform Traffic Collision Instruction Manual for Investigating Officers.)
2. If evidence needs to be collected or if photographs or measurements need to be taken, the investigating officer will take whatever actions are necessary to safeguard that evidence.

F. Follow-up Investigation

Collision investigation follow-up is the responsibility of the initial reporting officer. If a collision needs further investigation, the following duties will be completed as needed:

1. Collection of off-scene data.
2. Vehicle safety inspections by qualified personnel.
3. Obtaining/recording formal witness statements.
4. Collision re-construction by personnel trained in re-construction.

5. Preparation of formal reports to support criminal charges arising from the investigation.

G. Technical Assistance

1. Should additional technical assistance beyond the capabilities of the Department's personnel be needed, it should be arranged by the on-duty supervisor, Traffic Sergeant, or investigators. Such technical assistance may include surveyors, mechanics, traffic engineers, physicians or other specialists.
2. When investigating a serious traffic collision involving a question about mechanical failure, the officer may order the vehicle impounded for an inspection by a certified mechanic.
 - a. Care should be taken when ordering this inspection that the examination is pertinent to the collision investigation. Examples would be:
 - (1) Fatalities.
 - (2) Serious injury accidents where a strong possibility of civil litigation exists.
 - (3) City vehicle collisions with mechanical failure in question.
 - (4) Any time liability may possibly be attached to the City.
 - b. When the privately-owned vehicle is impounded, it should be towed directly to the City garage and a request directed to the Patrol Division Commander for an inspection.
 - c. When a city-owned vehicle is involved in a collision where mechanical failure is suspected, the request will be made directly to the investigating Highway Patrol Trooper who arrange for a prompt, impartial inspection.

- H. Whenever the investigating officer determines that a violation of law has occurred and a sufficient amount of evidence exists to establish a case to support prosecution in a court of law, enforcement action may be taken. If the violation was a causal factor in the collision, enforcement action should be taken.

In cases where no enforcement action is taken, it shall be the policy of this Department that the party who contributed most to the cause of the collision will be listed as the number one vehicle on the collision report.

II. TRAFFIC DIRECTION AND CONTROL

- A. At collision scenes, officers will use the patrol vehicle's emergency blue lights, flashers and other appropriate warning devices, including traffic vests, as necessary to protect personnel, the scene and alert approaching traffic.
- B. Once the scene has been cleared of vehicles and debris, the officer will extinguish overhead lights to minimize the confusion to on-coming traffic.
- C. During the on-scene investigation, sufficient uniformed officers, properly equipped with traffic vests, will be utilized as needed to safely direct or divert traffic around or away from the collision scene.

III. AT-SCENE PROCEDURES

- A. An important responsibility of officers responding to any collision scene is to keep the situation from becoming worse. This responsibility may become more important and complex when injuries, actual or potential fire hazards, or hazardous materials are present at the scene. Officers may be called upon to perform certain special activities and to coordinate their activities with those of other agencies. Priorities for action are likely to be affected by the extent and nature of the hazards present. The following procedures apply:

1. Injury Collisions

- a. Officers sent to the scene of collisions involving injury will immediately call for medical assistance if the request has not already been made. In the absence of immediate medical assistance, it may be necessary to stabilize an injured person until medical help arrives. Victims complaining of neck or back injuries or with possible broken limbs should only be moved by threatening rescue personnel unless conditions at the scene become life threatening to the victim, such as a fire.
- b. Once rescue personnel have arrived, officers will provide what assistance the rescue personnel request while controlling traffic and conducting the investigation.

2. Fire Hazards

- a. If a fire exists or there is a great potential for fire (spilled fuel or live, sparking wires), the Fire Department will be immediately summoned.
- b. Any injured victim who cannot leave the immediate hazardous area should be assisted. All other persons in the immediate area should be evacuated.
- c. Officers will then isolate the area to prevent unauthorized persons from entering.

3. Hazardous Materials

- a. Officers should be aware that any traffic accident involving a cargo vehicle is a potential hazardous material incident and should be observant for any evidence of hazardous material before approaching cargo vehicles involved in collisions.
- b. When there is a question whether spilled material at a collision scene may be hazardous, officers will avoid contact with the material and will keep others from contact with the material.
- c. Upon arrival at the scene of a traffic collision involving a cargo vehicle displaying hazmat placards, officers will immediately contact the Fire Department and attempt to make preliminary identification of the cargo from a safe distance on the basis of the visible placards. Officers may also refer to the Hazmat booklets provided in each Patrol vehicle.
- d. Officers will follow the procedures specified in the US Department of Transportation Emergency Response Guidebook to complete the

identification of hazardous materials and take appropriate emergency action until the situation is remedied.

B. Property Control Safeguards

1. The officer at the scene of a collision should ensure that property belonging to collision victims is protected from theft and is removed to a place of safekeeping if the owner is unable to care for it.
2. When an injured driver is removed from a collision scene and/or it is necessary to tow his vehicle, a tow report will be completed and an inventory made of the vehicle contents. If the owner or his/her designee is unable to accept control of items in the vehicle such as cash, firearms, and other items of value, they will be tagged and placed in the property room and held as found property for safekeeping.

IV. COLLISION REPORTS AND RECORDS

A. Report Forms

1. Officers will use the provided state-approved uniform traffic collision report form in Report Beam.
2. The following report forms are available for use:
 - a. TR310, Uniform Traffic Collision Report - used for all collisions involving police investigation.
 1. Collisions investigated by Greer Officers that involve a City owned vehicle, regardless of extent of damages, occupied or unoccupied, will require a Uniform Traffic Collision Report and a City Incident Report. Collisions involving vehicles assigned to the Police Department will be investigated by the Highway Patrol
3. The following forms may also be necessary when investigating certain types of collisions:
 - a. DUI Incident report.
 - b. Request for Re-examination of licensed driver.
 - c. Refusal form.