

## **TRAFFIC HOMICIDE UNIT- OPERATING PROCEDURES**

1. **PURPOSE:** To define administrative and organizational structure of the Traffic Homicide Unit (THU) and to establish guidelines for operation of the unit.
2. **POLICY:** The Huntsville Police Department will maintain a Traffic Homicide Unit. This unit's chief objective is to provide support for field operations through use of specially trained Investigators who have been trained in advanced investigative techniques. Primary areas of investigation will include traffic accidents involving serious injuries or death as a direct result of a crash and /or any other function requiring specialized assistance.
3. **SCOPE:** This directive is applicable to all sworn personnel.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** All sworn personnel will comply with standards and procedures set forth in this written directive.
5. **ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION:**
  - A. **CHAIN OF COMMAND:** The Traffic Homicide Unit operates under the command of the Major Crime Unit. The chain of command, as applicable to members of the Traffic Homicide Unit, shall be as follows: Chief of Police, Investigations Bureau Deputy Chief, Criminal Investigation Division Captain, Criminal Investigation Division Lieutenant, Major Crime Sergeant and Traffic Homicide Investigator (THI).
  - B. **UNIT STRUCTURE AND DESCRIPTION:** The basic structure and staffing strength of the Traffic Homicide Unit is established by the Investigations Bureau Deputy Chief, subject to approval of the Chief of Police, via Chain of Command. Unit strength may change as a result of transfers or reassignment of personnel. Current structure is as follows:
    1. Major Crime Unit supervisor: (Sergeant) Responsible for unit supervision.
    2. Traffic Homicide Investigators: Responsible for crash investigations.
6. **TRAFFIC HOMICIDE INVESTIGATOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
  - A. **PRIMARY DUTIES:**
    1. Respond to, and act as the lead investigator, to all serious accidents involving life threatening injuries and/or death, unless a Huntsville Police Department vehicle is involved, in which ALEA Highway Patrol Division will investigate as requested by the Chief or his designee.
    2. Ensure the integrity of the scene has not been compromised.

3. Investigate to determine if the accident is drug or alcohol related.
4. Collect evidence at the hospital if necessary.
5. In the case of an accident involving death, coordinate evidence collection efforts with the Crime Scene Unit before the scene is disturbed in any manner.
6. Determine if additional Traffic Homicide Investigators are needed, and if so, make those notifications.
7. In the case of an accident involving death at the scene, the Investigator will make the death notification to the deceased's next of kin, in a coordinated effort with the shift commander or their designee, in the precinct in which the accident occurred.

**B. SECONDARY DUTIES:**

1. As soon as reasonable possible, notify the THU supervisor and detail the events of the accident, if death has occurred or potentially may occur.
2. Handle all follow up investigations regarding the accident. These items could consist of follow up interviews with witnesses/offenders, completing the necessary paperwork involved in the accident, returning to the scene of the accident and mapping it using the Total Station, obtaining search warrants and/or subpoenas, and any and all investigation measures needed to thoroughly investigate a major traffic accident.
3. Due to the extensive investigation that is sometimes required for serious accident involving death, and or, life threatening injuries, the THI's working status shall immediately be considered other duty and noted on their timecard as OTHDY. The Investigator shall remain in other duty status to conduct the investigation and any follow up elements that are necessary. Depending on the severity of the accident and complexities involved, this status may remain in effect for three (3) to five (5) days, contingent on the approval of the THU supervisor.

**7. SELECTION OF TRAFFIC HOMICIDE INVESTIGATOR:**

**A. BASIC REQUIREMENTS:** Any candidate who does not meet the basic requirements will be precluded from participation in the process.

1. **EXPERIENCE:** Candidates must be full time police officers with a minimum of 3 years law enforcement experience. At least one (1) of the three (3) years must be service with the Huntsville Police Department.
2. **PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS:** Candidates must have an overall effective rating on their most recent evaluation.

3. **POSITIVE SUPERVISORY RECOMMENDATION:** Candidates must receive a positive recommendation from their immediate supervisor. The recommendation should describe in detail the candidate's work performance and suitability for the position. This recommendation will be sent to the Investigations Bureau Deputy Chief through the candidate's chain of command.

**B. SELECTION PHASE:**

1. **201 FILE REVIEW:** A comprehensive review of the candidate's 201 file will be conducted by the unit supervisor.
2. **SUPERVISORY RECOMMENDATION:** The recommendation as to the candidate's performance and suitability for the position will be a consideration in the review of each candidate.
3. **REVIEW BOARD:** Candidates will be scheduled for an interview before a review board. The board will consist of the unit supervisor and no more than three additional unit members selected by the unit supervisor. The candidate evaluation will include, but not be limited to the following categories: specific skills, background, oral communication skills, confidence, judgment, resourcefulness, honesty, interest, motivation and compatibility.
4. **SELECTION FILE:** A file will be compiled to determine the candidate's performance during the selection phase. All aspects of a candidate's performance in the selection phase will be considered. The file will include: 201 File Review, Supervisory Recommendation and performance during the Review Board.
5. **RECOMMENDATION:** The unit supervisor will submit a written recommendation to the Chief of Police via chain of command outlining each candidate's suitability for the position and listing eligible candidates in order of preference. The selection file will be attached to the recommendation. All assignments will be made by the Chief of Police. The list of eligible candidates will remain active for six months from the date of selection.
6. **SERVICE AGREEMENT:** If selected, members will be required to commit to 3 years of service in the unit (see HPD Form 601.3 F1).

**8. TRAINING**

- A. **PRIMARY TRAINING:** All candidates selected for a position in the Traffic Homicide Unit shall be required to successfully complete the Alabama State Trooper Academy's Traffic Homicide Investigation course located at The Alabama State Troopers Academy, Selma Alabama, or another school equivalent of similar curriculum and stature. The Officer shall be given only one (1) opportunity to graduate from this school, and failure to do so shall result in removal from the unit. Before attending a Traffic Homicide

Investigation course, the candidate will be “on call” and will respond to all call outs involving Traffic Homicide Investigators. The candidate will be allowed to attend training with the traffic homicide unit members for a reasonable time period to gauge both the units input and to ensure passage of the Traffic Homicide Investigation course.

- B. TRAINING DAYS / UNIT MEETINGS: The Huntsville Police Department Traffic Homicide Unit will train periodically as directed by the Investigations Bureau Commander. All Investigators shall be required to participate in training, and only those with a legitimate, documented excuse will be released from training. No Investigator shall be excused from training without approval from the Traffic Homicide Unit supervisor.
9. PROBATIONARY PERIOD: If an Investigator does not demonstrate the necessary abilities to investigate traffic crashes during his/her initial training period, which will consist of six (6) months, a recommendation regarding removal from the unit shall be forwarded via chain of command.
10. REMOVAL: All appointments to the Traffic Homicide Unit are conditional. A recommendation to remove an appointee from the Traffic Homicide Unit may be made if, in the opinion of the Traffic Homicide Unit Supervisor, the Investigator fails to meet standards or exhibits any negative traits which make him/her a liability to the Unit. The Investigator may be temporarily removed by the Unit Supervisor and permanently removed by the Chief of Police.
11. ON CALL STATUS: All members of the Traffic Homicide Unit shall be subject to a recall to duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One (1) Traffic Homicide Unit member shall be “on call,” with a phone, on a rotating roster.
12. CALL OUT
- A. Traffic Homicide Investigators work their set hours for normal duty. They are available by police radio contact. If the assistance of a Traffic Homicide Investigator is required, a Police Supervisor will authorize the HPD dispatcher to make contact with the Traffic Homicide Investigator on duty. If no Investigator is on duty, or the Investigator on duty is not available to respond to the incident, the Investigator who is on call will respond.
  - B. If the Traffic Homicide Investigator on call cannot be reached by telephone, the Traffic Homicide Unit Supervisor will be notified. The Unit Supervisor will ensure that a Traffic Homicide Investigator responds to the scene.