TRAFFIC CRASH INVESTIGATIONS

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This directive outlines procedures for the investigation of traffic crashes. All police vehicle crashes shall be investigated in accordance with *General Order 7.4 – Police and Other Department of Public Safety Vehicle Crashes and Damage*.

POLICY

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) shall investigate and document motor vehicle accidents in accordance with IC 9-26-2-1. Any employee who encounters a traffic or road hazard is responsible for promptly reporting the issue to support public safety and facilitate the flow of traffic. A report is required by law if a crash involves $2,500 or more in property damage or when personal injury or death has occurred, regardless of whether an involved vehicle was moved prior to the employee's arrival.

DEFINITIONS

Certified Accident Investigator (AI) – An employee trained and certified to investigate fatal crashes or investigate and reconstruct fatal crashes (i.e., Level II and Level IV Crash Investigators, respectively).

Crash Investigator – An employee trained to investigate a vehicle crash, inclusive of Public Safety Officers (PSOs) and district Accident Investigators (AIs).

Motor Vehicle Crash (i.e., "Crash") – Any incident involving one (1) or more moving motor vehicle(s) originating on a traffic way or private property where injury or apparent property damage occurred.

PROCEDURE

I. General

A. Any Public Safety Officer (PSO) assigned to work traffic or in-service uniformed officer who witnesses or is dispatched to a crash shall:

1. Investigate and complete the reports required by this order; or
2. Request the appropriate investigator (e.g., officer or certified AI) based on:
   a. The severity of any injuries (e.g., fatality or possibility of death); and
   b. The investigative requirements of the crash.

B. Officers must respond to, investigate, and/or make a report as applicable on any crash involving:

1. A disturbance [a response by two (2) police vehicles is required];
2. Any personal injury accident, including those resulting from a pursuit in accordance with *General Order 4.12 – Vehicle Pursuits*;

NOTE	If an injured person is transported before a statement can be obtained, officers shall follow up at the hospital and attempt to obtain a statement when the person's medical condition permits and without interfering with medical care. Officers shall document any inability to obtain a statement.

3. Property damage of at least $2,500;
4. The transportation of hazardous materials;
5. A hit and run that results in personal injury, causes more than $2,500 damage or has credible suspect information; and/or
6. A driver suspected of impairment or intoxication.

C. If a crash is reported after one (1) or more of the involved parties have left the scene, the run shall be added to the Public Assistance Officer (PAO) queue, unless:

1. The incident involves a hit and run; and/or
2. An involved party requires or is requesting medical attention.

D. Employees shall assess the scene and request additional resources as needed. Crash scene considerations include, but are not limited to:

1. The need to establish incident command;
2. The presence of injured persons requiring medical assistance or any fatalities;
3. Hazards (e.g., fire, hazardous materials, and/or inclement weather);
4. The identification and isolation of witnesses;
5. Major traffic congestion or the need to divert traffic around the scene;
6. Protecting any personal property belonging to collision participants; and
7. Other beneficial resources (e.g., additional officers, cones or flares, manual operation of traffic lights, etc.).

NOTE	Other on-scene employees shall assist and follow the directions of the crash investigator. Any disputes must be resolved by a district supervisor.

E. Traffic may be halted, rerouted, or restricted as necessary to ensure the safety of the victims, officers, and uninvolved motorists/pedestrians. Employees directing traffic shall:

1. Wear department approved reflective clothing or a vest at all times;
2. Use uniform hand signals for traffic direction and control to ensure the efficient and safe movement of all traffic; and
3. Coordinate with the initial officer or incident commander, if established.

F. Third-party technical experts may only be used during an investigation with approval from the Chief of Police or designee.

G. The IMPD shall annually compile traffic crash data and submit it to the Deputy Chief of Operations for a documented review of that data and selective enforcement activities. The Operations Division and Traffic Enforcement Unit shall use the review to:

1. Appropriately allocate resources; and
2. Adjust the time, location, and duration of directed patrols and details.

II. Crash Scene Response

A. Arriving vehicles must:

1. Be positioned to protect the scene, victims, public safety personnel, and any evidence; and
2. Have their police vehicle's emergency lights activated.

B. The first employee on scene shall:

1. Render aid as needed;
2. Advise Communications of:
   a. Any injuries;
   b. The possibility of impairment or intoxication; and
   c. Whether the crash is a hit and run.
3. Request appropriate resources and/or investigators; and
4. Monitor involved drivers for potential signs of impairment due to a medical condition or intoxication, including but not limited to:
   a. Odors of alcohol;
   b. Alcoholic beverages in plain view; and/or
   c. Behavior and appearance of the driver (e.g., speech, eyes, dexterity, balance, etc.).

NOTE	PSOs must request an officer if OVWI is suspected in accordance with *General Order 4.18 – OVWI Arrest Procedures*.

5. Assume responsibility for the scene, including the safety of uninvolved motorists and pedestrians (i.e., traffic direction and control), until relieved.

C. Crashes involving serious bodily injury (SBI), a fatality, or other special circumstances must be investigated under the incident command model in accordance with *General Order 1.9 – Incident Command*.

1. The initial responding officer shall establish incident command and treat the scene as a crime scene.

2. Any evidence of intentional injury or property destruction must be investigated by the appropriate unit.

3. Follow-up investigations shall not be performed for the purposes of civil litigation unless it involves:

   a. An SBI or a fatality;

b. The department; and/or

c. Another government agency.

D. All involved drivers must be instructed to produce a **driver's license and insurance information** for inclusion in the crash report.

1. Any passengers and/or witnesses may be requested to remain on scene to provide a statement.

2. District headquarters or investigative offices may be used to take formal statements as needed.

E. Involved vehicles may be towed in accordance with *General Order 7.3 – Towing/Impounding Vehicles* if:

1. Creating a hazard; or
2. Requested by the individual(s) involved in the accident.

III. Hazards

A. Employees should be mindful of potential threats (e.g., fire, explosion, hazmat, etc.) and take the following actions as needed:

1. Establish a perimeter;
2. Remove persons from areas of danger;
3. Request a response by the fire department while providing as much detailed information as possible; and
4. Address the threat as feasible (e.g., use a fire extinguisher if the fire can be contained without further risk of injury).

B. Hazmat and chemicals should be evaluated from an upwind position. Employees should evaluate the risks to their personal safety before attempting to rescue victims in a fire or hazardous materials incident.

C. Employees may prepare for an evacuation of the immediate area as needed while awaiting further direction from the appropriate authorities.

D. Hazmat crash scenes will be managed by the fire department until the area is contained. Investigation and reporting will only be conducted once the scene has been declared safe by the appropriate authorities.

IV. Reporting

A. Crash reports must be submitted within twenty-four (24) hours of marking in service from the run, preferably prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty, for the following incidents:

1. Hit and run accidents resulting in injury, involving over $2,500 in damage, and/or with suspect information; and
2. Any custodial arrest.

NOTE	Officers may refer to the *Indiana Officer's Standard Crash Report Instructional Manual* if needed, which is available upon request at each district headquarters.

B. Crashes involving property damage may be handled by:

1. The parties involved by exchanging information or using the CarFax Driver Exchange Program; and
2. The completion of an *IMPD Crash Information Exchange Form*, if requested, which must be provided to the involved drivers.

C. Employees shall request that Communications send the involved parties a secure link to the CarFax Driver Exchange Program as applicable.

D. All hit and run crashes that result in personal injury, have over $2,500 in damage or where credible suspect information exists require an *Indiana Officer's Standard Crash Report* and an *incident report*.

1. Officers shall document the following information in the incident report for follow-up by detectives:

   a. Suspect vehicles;
   b. Suspect drivers; and
   c. Any other lead information.

2. A suspect vehicle or driver should only be entered into the *Indiana Officer's Standard Crash Report* if either is physically located. Lead information must not be included in the crash report. The sections involving the suspect vehicle and suspect should be left blank as necessary.

E. Officers, or a district crash car if available, shall investigate any property damage or personal injury crash resulting from a vehicle pursuit.

1. The crash investigator shall complete an *Indiana Officer's Standard Crash Report*.

2. If a department vehicle is involved, the crash investigator shall provide the pertinent information to the investigating supervisor in accordance with *General Order 7.4 – Police and Other Department of Public Safety Vehicle Crashes and Damage*.

F. Crashes in the PAO queue must be titled by the crash-type (e.g., PI ACC, PD ACC, etc.) and contain all information provided by the caller. PAOs shall not draw any conclusions or document information that was not provided by the caller.

G. Completed *Crash Reports* are available for public purchase online or at Citizens' Services; however, any information obtained from other agencies (e.g., coroner, crime lab, or BMV) is only released at the discretion of such agencies.

H. Crash reports submitted through the CarFax Driver Exchange program are available at https://www.crashdocs.org/. The submitting party will receive an email or text with an access link once the report is submitted.

I. Any complaints, suggestions, or perceived traffic congestion concerns or deficiencies should be:

1. Monitored;
2. Evaluated; and
3. Reported to the appropriate authority for further action (e.g., chain of command, Department of Public Works, etc.).