




City of Manassas Police Department General Duty Manual



Effective Date: 09-09-2006	GENERAL ORDER	Number: 08-08
Subject: Accident Investigations		
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Accreditation Standards: 41.2.4/ 46.3.2/ 61.1.5/ 61.2.1/ 61.2.2/ 82.2.1/ 83.1.1/ 83.2.6	By Authority Of:  Douglas W. Keen, Chief of Police	Total Pages: 6

PURPOSE:

To establish procedures to ensure that motor vehicle crash reporting and investigation responsibilities are efficiently and effectively carried out.

POLICY:

Two or more officers should respond to the scene of a serious or complex motor vehicle crash to provide emergency services, investigate the crash, record short lived evidence, and restore the normal flow of traffic. In less serious crashes, officer response is governed by the criteria in this directive. When not on an assignment, Motorcycle Officers may be given primary assignment to crash cases. Upon investigation, enforcement action should be taken when evidence exists to satisfy the elements of particular traffic violations.

DISCUSSION:

Traffic safety and traffic congestion is a primary concern to the citizens of the City. Officers are encouraged to make every effort to expedite the movement of traffic during the course of an on-site crash investigation, whenever possible. This directive provides procedures and guidelines for:

- A. Providing emergency assistance to the injured.
- B. Protecting the crash scene.
- C. Conducting on-scene and follow-up investigations.
- D. Preparing reports.
- E. Taking proper enforcement action relative to the incident.

PROCEDURE:

I. Initial Crash Response

- A. An officer must respond to the scene of a crash involving any of the following factors:
 1. Death or injury to any person.
 2. Property Damage where a total of \$1,500 or more damage to all vehicles involved is observed.
 3. Hit and Run.
 4. Suspected impairment of an operator due to alcohol or drugs.
 5. Damage to publicly owned vehicles or property.
 6. Hazardous materials.
 7. Disturbances between principals.
 8. Major traffic congestion as a result of the crash.
 9. Vehicles rendered inoperable requiring towing
 10. When any party involved in the crash requests police response.
- B. Unless otherwise specified, reporting and investigation are required for crashes, that occur on private or public property, involving any of the following factors:
 1. Death or injury
 2. Property damage crashes occurring on a public roadway with total damages estimated to be in excess of \$1,500
 3. Hit and Run

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- 4. Suspected impairment of an operator due to alcohol or drugs.
- 5. Hazardous materials
- C. The type of report required varies by crash type, conditions, and location. Section II A of this General Order specifies the type of report to be used.
- D. Generally, no crash investigation is required for the following:
 - 1. Property damage only crashes occurring on private property except for hit and run.
 - 2. Property-damage-only crashes occurring on a public roadway, but involve less than \$1500 total damage.
 - 3. Hit and run crashes being reported in excess of 24 hours after discovery.
- E. An officer responding to the scene of a non-reportable crash should determine if any other conditions exist requiring his assistance, included but not limited to the following:
 - 1. Protecting the scene of the crash until the involved vehicles are moved from the roadway.
 - 2. Assisting with the exchange of information between principals
 - 3. Ensuring that crash-related debris that poses a potential roadway hazard is reported to the PSCC for referral to Public Works or the Street Department.
 - 4. Assisting with the towing of vehicles from the scene when necessary.
 - 5. Providing traffic direction and control to alleviate any traffic congestions resulting from the crash.
- F. The Duty Supervisor and the Public Safety Communications Center may suspend, amend or abbreviate the crash response and investigation policy of the Department during snow emergencies or other emergencies influencing the effective deployment of personnel. Such suspension, amendment or abbreviation should be communicated to the Public Information Officer when applicable, and is to be noted on the Supervisor's Daily Activity Report.
- G. Patrol vehicles are checked by the assigned officer prior to use, and should contain basic equipment and supplies to enable officers to respond adequately to crashes or other emergencies. Each patrol vehicle is minimally equipped with:
 - 1. Basic emergency supplies.
 - 2. Fire extinguisher.
 - 3. Traffic flares.
- H. The Commander of Patrol Services appoints a Lieutenant as the Vehicle Coordinator. Missing equipment is reported to the Duty Supervisor upon discovery. The officer finding the deficiency resupplies flares and the Vehicle Coordinator Lieutenant is notified for the replacement of any other missing or expended items.
- I. Crash investigation officers have access to specialized crash investigation equipment, including but not limited to:
 - 1. 100-foot measuring tape or other measuring device.
 - 2. Camera.
 - 3. Marking chalk or other marking device.
 - 4. Perimeter warning tape.

II. Crash Reporting

- A. The types of crashes for which a report is required are listed in Section I B of this General Order. In certain instances as listed below, an FR-300 is completed in accordance with mandated State reporting procedures. In those instances where an FR-300 is not required to be completed, an IBR or other documentation such as a detailed memorandum is used.
- B. The FR-300 is a statistical report, and is not intended as a comprehensive report of any investigation conducted. A Police Crash Report (FR-300) is prepared under any of the following circumstances for crashes occurring within the City:
 - 1. Reportable:
 - a. Death or injury to any person on the highway.
 - b. Property-damage only crashes that occurred on the highway, and have in excess of \$1500 in total damage to all vehicles and property involved.
 - c. Hit and Run Crashes that can be substantiated and over \$1,500 in total damage to all vehicles and property involved are to be reported within 24 hours of the owner's first knowledge of its occurrence,

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2. Non-Reportable - Prepared for "Department Use Only":
 - a. Any crash involving vehicles belonging to the City School Board, City vehicles, or City property.
 1. Occurred on the highway - less than \$1500 in total damage to all vehicles and property.
 2. Occurred on private property - regardless of amount of damage.
 - b. Any other crash in which it is deemed necessary.
- C. The Police Officer's Instruction Manual for Investigating Traffic Crashes FR-300M, prepared by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles published separately is used for reference when completing the FR-300 Report.
- D. Other reports used in Crash Investigations are as follows:
 1. An IBR is prepared under the following circumstances:
 - a. For the initial report of a "reportable" or "non-reportable" (see Section II, A) hit and run investigation, in addition to the submission of the FR-300 (when required).
 - (1) When used, the Supplement Report is to have all known information contained in the report. This includes the victim's name, vehicle information, address and phone number, any witness information, the date, time and location of the incident, and all information known about the suspect and suspect vehicle.
 - b. As a supplement to any fatal crash or complex crash investigation where the FR-300 has been filed, but a more detailed report of the investigation is necessary.
 2. An IBR may be used to document crashes occurring on private property and other crashes where documentation is desirable, but an FR-300 is not required.
 3. Officers must complete appropriate arrest paperwork for any charges made as the result of the crash.
 4. A detailed memorandum from the member involved is required to supplement the crash report for crashes involving Department vehicles. See General Order 3-16.

III. Crash Scene Responsibilities

- A. First officer on the scene.
 1. Protect the crash scene by means of flares, traffic cones, and turbo flares and / or police vehicle equipped with emergency lights as appropriate.
 2. Summon rescue and / or additional assistance as necessary. To expedite rescue services, the number of injured and type of injuries should be included in the radio request.
 3. Administer emergency medical care, including basic life support, pending the arrival of rescue personnel. Victims should not be moved prior to the arrival of rescue personnel unless there is imminent danger of fire.
 4. Assess and report any potential fire hazard.
 5. Determine if any HAZMAT material is involved, and notifies the PSCC to contact fire personnel as necessary.
 6. Preserve short-lived evidence (debris, skid marks, etc.).
 7. Establish a safe traffic pattern around the crash scene. Officers who establish a detour notify the Duty Supervisor and the PSCC of the detour and its route.
 8. Protect property from theft or pilferage.
 9. In the event that the first officer on the scene is not the investigating officer, locate witnesses and record crash information pending the arrival of the investigating officer.
 10. Ensure removal from the roadway of vehicles, persons and debris at the proper time. In minor, property-damage-only crashes, when possible, officers have the roadway cleared as soon as possible to prevent traffic congestion and the possibility of additional crashes.
 - a. In the case of major crashes, and those involving death or injury, the vehicles should be left at the point of rest position until the investigating officer has arrived.
 11. In cases where a wrecker is not being called to tow involved vehicles and there are large amounts of glass or other debris on the roadway, Public Works or Street Department assistance may be summoned.

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- B. Investigating officer.
1. The investigating officer is designated by the PSCC and may be reassigned at the direction of the Duty Supervisor.
 - a. The investigating officer is often the first officer on the scene.
 - b. In this event, the investigating officer delegates some duties from Section A, above, to other officers on the scene, or summons additional officers as required to adequately manage the scene.
 2. If no supervisor is present on the scene, the investigating officer is in charge and responsible for the scene.
 3. At the scene, the investigating officer collects / obtains information concerning the crash for subsequent use in completing necessary report forms. Information to be collected at the scene may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Interviewing principals and witnesses.
 - b. Examining and recording vehicle damage with notes, diagrams and photographs as appropriate.
 - c. Examining and recording effects of the crash on the roadway.
 - d. Taking measurements as appropriate.
 - e. Collecting and processing evidence.
 - f. Exchanging information among the principals.
 4. In fatal or complex crashes involving personal injury, the investigating officer may be assisted in the investigation by other Department members, such as evidence technicians, officers trained in advanced crash investigation, or outside experts, upon approval of the Duty Supervisor.
 - a. In some cases, the Duty Supervisor may request a call-out of an advanced crash investigation specialist as the investigating officer.
 5. The investigating officer is responsible for the control of property belonging to crash victims. When the driver is not present or able to take possession, property is inventoried in accordance with tow-in procedures or taken for safekeeping in accordance with current property procedures.
 6. The investigating officer is responsible for ensuring that wrecker drivers clear debris or injurious materials from the roadway, in accordance with applicable statutes and agreements. Public Works or Street Department crews may be needed in cases beyond the ability of the wrecker driver.
 7. Enforcement action should be taken whenever believed appropriate by the investigating officer, when that officer has detected a violation of a traffic law or ordinance and when evidence exists to satisfy all elements of that particular violation.
 8. At the scene of the crash or the hospital immediately following the crash, the officer may take immediate enforcement action and issue a Virginia Uniform Summons. For any charges to be filed after the crash, officers must obtain the proper paperwork from the magistrate. Officers subpoenaing witnesses after on-scene investigation (including the hospital immediately following the crash) must do so through the magistrate or the Clerk of the Court using a Subpoena Request Form.
 - a. The first court hearing in crash cases is administrative in nature, and does not involve the actual trying of the case. For this reason, witnesses should not be subpoenaed for the first hearing of crash cases.
 9. Crash investigation follow-up activities that may be necessary include:
 - a. Collecting off-scene data.
 - b. Obtaining and recording formal statements from witnesses.
 - c. Reconstructing crashes.
 - d. Submitting evidentiary materials for laboratory examination.
 - e. Preparing crash and / or offense reports to support criminal charges arising from the crash.

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10. A trip to the hospital immediately following the on-scene investigation is routine. Officers conduct more extensive follow-up activities as time permits with the approval of the supervisor. In fatal or complex crashes involving personal injury, the Chief of Police or his designee may assign a crash reconstruction team to complete the investigation.

C. Secondary officers.

1. Secondary officers primarily assist with crowd control and expediting traffic flow.
2. Secondary officers coordinate their assistance through the investigating officer unless a supervisor is on the scene.

D. Duty Supervisor.

1. The Duty Supervisor is in charge of any crash scene whenever he is present on the scene.
2. The Duty Supervisor should respond to, and take command responsibility whenever possible for:
 - a. Fatal crashes.
 - b. Complex crashes.
 - c. HAZMAT crashes.
3. The Duty Supervisor should respond to and conduct his own investigation of:
 - a. Crashes in the City involving members of the Department.
 - (1) An officer of equal or greater rank should investigate any such crash involving a supervisor officer.
 - (2) If the officer involved outranks the Duty Supervisor, the appropriate Division Commander or the Chief of Police should be notified for direction on who should investigate the crash.
 - b. Crashes involving Department vehicles:
 - (1) When the crash occurs within the City limits, the Duty Supervisor is responsible for the investigation and completion of necessary reports.
 - (2) When the crash occurs outside the City limits, the supervisor is responsible for obtaining the name of the investigating officer, deputy or trooper and a copy of his FR-300 report. When no FR-300 is completed by the outside jurisdiction, one must be completed by the supervisor for Department use.
4. Appropriate next of kin notifications of death or injury are assigned and command notifications made at the direction of the Duty Supervisor.

IV. HAZMAT Crashes

- A. Officers arriving at the scene of a crash and observing hazardous materials placards or a possible HAZMAT spill or leak must immediately notify the PSCC for Fire /Rescue response, and the Duty Supervisor. The Fire Department should also be called in cases of leaking engine fluids that constitute a hazard. The Duty Supervisor should implement emergency contingency plans if necessary.
- B. Extreme caution is called for when approaching a HAZMAT crash. Toxic fumes may be present at a considerable distance from the source and wind conditions may increase this danger rapidly. Only properly trained and equipped HAZMAT personnel should enter areas where hazardous materials may be present.
- C. Flares and other fire sources must be kept from the area, and evacuation of the immediate area expedited.
- D. Upon arrival, the Fire Chief or the senior Fire Department official assumes control of any scene involving hazardous materials. Officers provide assistance as necessary, i.e., traffic control, evacuation in accordance with current contingency plans, etc.
- E. Any on-scene crash investigation is coordinated with the Fire Department supervisor.
- F. The Duty Supervisor, and / or Command Official responds to the command post established by the Fire Department and coordinates police services in accordance with their request and allowing the Department's contingency plans.

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V. Crashes Involving Deer

- A. A crash involving a deer is “reportable” and requires a Police Crash Report (FR-300), when any of the conditions of Section II, A, are met.
 - 1. When determining total property damage in the crash, the deer is assigned no dollar value.
- B. An IBR report is prepared for “non-reportable” crashes involving deer as necessary.
- C. When deer are killed by a motor vehicle and the driver or another person requests to have the body of the deer, a Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Game Check Card shall be completed by the investigating officer.
- D. The Animal Control Section supplies supervisors with Game Check Cards.
- E. The original copy of the Game Check Card is forwarded to the Animal Control Section for delivery to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- F. The second copy of the Game Check Card (marked Hunter’s Copy) is provided to the person taking possession of the deer.
- G. In cases where the deer is disposed of by other means, it is not necessary to complete a Game Check Card.

VI. Safety and Visibility at Crash Scenes

- A. Safety and visibility should be the concern of all officers present at the scene of crashes.
- B. For their personal protection, officers on the scene of crashes are required to wear issued traffic vests while working in the roadway.
- C. Officers should take whatever steps are reasonable and necessary to prevent further injury and damage.
- D. The police vehicle should be used to effectively protect and illuminate the scene. Traffic cones, flares or turbo flares as appropriate are used a suitable distance from the front and rear of the crash scene. Flares should not be used near a HAZMAT crash.
- E. Less serious crashes or property-damage-only crashes should be cleared from the roadway as soon as possible. If necessary, the vehicle locations can be marked on the roadway with a marking crayon for later reference or measurement in lighter traffic.
- F. Flares should be used for fixed roadway direction and should not normally be used as a hand-held traffic control device. Departmentally issued flashlights with attachable traffic wands are used as hand-held devices at night, along with other issued traffic warning devices.

Attachments: N/A

Index as: Crash Investigation.
Cruiser Equipment.
Deer Killed by Motor Vehicles.
FR-300 Crash Reports.
HAZMAT Crashes.

References: N/A