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**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE – 112.042**  
**TRAFFIC CRASH PROCEDURES**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: February 4, 2009**  
**AFFECTS: All Personnel**

**REVISION DATE: October 20, 2025**

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**I. PURPOSE**

This Administrative Directive establishes the procedures for all department personnel involved in the handling and investigation of a traffic crash.

**II. POLICY**

The Texas Transportation Code defines the responsibility of persons involved in a traffic crash, as well as investigating officers, for reporting to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The primary emphasis of the department will be on traffic crash investigation rather than reporting. Therefore, it is paramount the investigating officer collects sufficient information to determine the cause of the crash, existing conditions at the time of the crash, and persons involved in the crash.

It is the policy of the department that any employee working in the roadway at the scene of a traffic crash shall wear the ANSI Level 2 reflective coat or vest.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

Traffic Crash – An unintended and unforeseen injurious occurrence; something that does not occur in the usual course of events or that could not be reasonably anticipated.

**IV. PROCEDURES**

**A. Authority to Investigate Traffic Crashes**

An officer shall make a written report of a traffic crash if the crash resulted in injury to, or death of, a person or damage to the property of any one person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more. An officer should investigate and file applicable charges in the following circumstances:

1. The traffic crash occurred on a public street, highway, or other public property.
2. The traffic crash occurred on a road owned and controlled by any water control and improvement district, whether or not a fee is charged for the use of the road.
3. The traffic crash occurred on private property commonly available to and used by the public.
4. The traffic crash occurred on a parking area provided by any business establishment for the convenience of their customers.
5. The traffic crash occurred on a parking lot owned and operated by the State.

**B. Officers will not generally be required to investigate those traffic crashes that:**

1. Occur on privately owned residential parking lots.
2. Occur on parking lots where a fee is charged for parking.

**C. Traffic crashes requiring investigation:**

1. A traffic crash investigation is required in the following cases:
  - a. When death or injury occur;
  - b. A hit and run traffic crash;
  - c. When there is impairment of an operator due to alcohol and/or drugs;
  - d. A traffic crash involving city vehicles or property;
  - e. When there are hazardous materials at the scene of a traffic crash;
  - f. When there is damage to the extent towing is required or traffic is congested;

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- g. When disturbances between principals occur.
  - 2. Crashes Occurring on Private Property
    - a. Crashes occurring on parking lots, whether accessible to the public or not, will not be dispatched.
    - b. The driver/owner will be instructed to go to any police station, Department of Public Safety (DPS) office, or TxDOT website to obtain a CR-2 (Blue Form). The involved parties can receive an explanation of the CR-2 form and answers to any questions they might have from whatever agency the form is obtained.
    - c. Exceptions to this procedure are:
      - 1) Any injury crash.
      - 2) Crashes involving governmental vehicles; Local, State, or Federal, will be investigated by an officer unless specifically advised by all parties involved that no report is required.

Crash investigations with possible criminal violations involving any injuries or occupied (victim) vehicles but not limited to Intoxication Assault and Fail to Stop Render Aid (FSRA), shall complete a CR-3 crash report and offense report. Crash investigations involving criminal violations with an unoccupied (victim) vehicle or property damage including but not limited to Fail to Leave ID (FLID) or Reckless Damage shall complete an offense report and may complete a CR-3 crash report if the officer determines it will assist in the investigation. Other criminal violations that result in damage of a motor vehicle or a pedestrian being injured by a motor vehicle i.e. aggravated assault, criminal mischief, etc. will be worked as any other criminal act and are not considered a crash.
      - 3) At the insistence of the citizen, an officer shall respond to the crash scene. At the time of arrival, the officer shall determine what actions, if any are necessary.
- D. Officer Responsibilities at the Traffic Crash Scene
  - 1. Officers who are the first to arrive at the traffic crash scene shall, if appropriate or necessary:
    - a. Administer emergency medical care and provide basic life support, if needed.
    - b. Summon an ambulance, additional officers, crime scene personnel, or tow truck as needed.
    - c. Implement Incident Command if a significant number of resources shall be utilized, or if coordination with any other department or agency is required to mitigate the situation. Implementation should follow the guidelines established in Administrative Directive 114.001 Incident Command System.
    - d. All operative vehicles should be moved out of the lanes of traffic and to a place of safety, where the investigation can be completed.
    - e. Preserve short-lived evidence and protect the scene in cases where criminal charges related to serious injury or death could be filed.
    - f. Establish a safe traffic pattern around the scene deploying appropriate temporary traffic control devices and summoning additional officers to assist with traffic control as needed.
    - g. Locate witnesses and record traffic crash information.

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- h. Expedite the removal of vehicles, persons, and debris from the roadway to restore normal roadway capacity as quickly as possible. The goals for quick clearance are:
    - 1) Improve and enhance responder and public safety by reducing the amount of time spent at the incident.
    - 2) Improve roadway efficiency.
    - 3) Reduce the potential for secondary crashes by reducing the amount of time the roadway is impacted.
    - 4) Reduce traffic congestion to minimize congestion's negative economic and environmental impacts.
    - 5) Improve public image.
  - i. Notify highway department/utilities to restore essential services by:
    - 1) Contacting Public Safety Communications (PSC) by MDC or radio.
    - 2) Requesting notification for necessary restoration services.
    - 3) Provide information about the request and of the best route for approach.
2. The first responding supervisor shall implement the Incident Command System if a significant number of resources will be needed to resolve the incident, and/or coordination with any other agency or department is necessary for the resolution of the incident. These types of incidents include, but are not limited to fatality crashes, hazardous material crashes, crashes on the freeway or roadway requiring lane closers and/or traffic diversion, etc.
- The principles of Incident Command will be followed in accordance with Administrative Directive 114.001 Incident Command System. It is imperative the Incident Commander contact the agency/department representatives at the earliest possible moment. This will ensure coordination of efforts, decrease the amount of time necessary to resume normal operations, reduce duplication of work, and emphasize the safety of first responders as well as uninvolved personnel.
3. The primary officer dispatched shall normally oversee the investigation and shall have the responsibility of ensuring the traffic crash follow-up is completed in a timely manner. The first officer to arrive at the scene shall be in charge until the primary arrives.
- a. All traffic fatalities shall be investigated by a member of the Traffic Unit. A designated traffic officer may be called out for this purpose.
  - b. A patrol officer shall investigate a traffic crash involving city equipment. A traffic officer may also investigate a traffic crash involving city equipment if available. A patrol supervisor shall investigate traffic crashes involving a patrol or any departmental vehicle.
  - c. In any traffic crash, an officer may request the assistance of one of the designated traffic officers or a supervisor.
4. The following information is required as part of the at-scene traffic crash investigation.
- a. Names of principals and witnesses at the scene shall be entered in the traffic crash report, as well as ensuring an exchange of information between principals. All principals and witnesses shall be interviewed for information regarding the traffic crash.

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- b. Vehicle and property damage examination and rating as prescribed in State traffic crash investigation manuals.
  - c. Measurements on traffic crashes involving potential serious personal injury and/or damage to city property and any effects upon the roadway.
  - d. Photographs of traffic crashes involving known or probable fatalities and/or traffic crashes involving city vehicles.
  - e. Collection and storage of any evidence from the scene.
  - f. Providing any assistance that may be necessary to the principals involved. Drivers should also be given any specific instructions on how to obtain copies of the reports.
  - g. Impound information to include the location of the vehicle storage facilities.
  - h. Notification of appropriate family members, if requested by the driver or any passenger, and arranging for exchange of information between principals.
- E. Follow-up Investigation
- 1. Certain types of traffic crashes may require follow-up investigation to obtain information that may not be available and/or accessible at the scene. These follow-up activities may include, but are not limited to the following:
    - a. The collection of specific off-scene data about the drivers, pedestrians, vehicles, and roadway controls, etc.
    - b. Obtaining/recording formal statements from witnesses in traffic crashes involving death and/or serious bodily injury or damage.
    - c. Reconstructing traffic crashes based on data gathered at the traffic crash scene when the cause or sequence of events cannot be initially determined.
    - d. Preparing formal reports to support criminal charges arising from the traffic crash.
  - 2. In cases where the initial investigating officer cannot complete the follow-up investigation, the watch commander may assign the completion of the investigation to any other patrol unit.
  - 3. Obtaining expert and technical assistance in traffic crash investigations such as that offered by surveyors, mechanics, physicians, etc., may be authorized by the Support Services Division Commander.
- F. Traffic Law Enforcement in Traffic Crash Investigations
- 1. If criminal charges are to be filed in conjunction with a traffic crash, certain actions should be taken to facilitate the successful prosecution of the suspect. These actions include but are not limited to the following:
    - a. Securing of statements from witnesses.
    - b. Providing the driver/suspect with their Miranda rights (when applicable).
    - c. Gathering physical evidence from the scene.
    - d. Completing all related reports (i.e. DWI, hit and run).
  - 2. Officers may take enforcement actions relative to public and private property traffic crashes as permitted by state and local law.

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3. Citations should be issued when:
  - a. The traffic crash is witnessed by the officer, or:
  - b. There is evidence from the traffic crash scene that will substantiate filing of traffic charges against one or more of the drivers (i.e. fail to yield, disregard traffic control devices, following distance violations, no driver's license, FMFR, etc.)

Note: Not issuing a citation when there is evidence to substantiate filing of traffic charges simply because the officer did not witness the offense is not justified.
4. Victims of traffic crashes may file an application for complaint with the Municipal Court, against other drivers involved in a traffic crash.

**G. Establishing Control of the Traffic Crash Scene**

1. The first officer on the scene should arrange temporary traffic direction and crowd control, if needed. Traffic direction and crowd control may include the use of flares, barricades, traffic cones, etc. Additional personnel may be summoned at the request of the first officer at the scene.
2. Officers should provide whatever first aid possible within the limits of their training and abilities, until medical personnel arrive on the scene.
3. When a traffic crash involves a hazardous material or presents a fire hazard, the officer should attempt to isolate the area as quickly as possible and begin to evacuate non-essential personnel. Fire Department personnel should be summoned as soon as possible.
4. The investigating officer at the traffic crash scene shall ensure that all personal property belonging to the victims is properly protected and secured if the owner is unable to take custody of it.

**H. Required Reports and Records**

1. The following guidelines apply to reports that are to be forwarded to TxDOT. The traffic crash classification system will conform to the Manual on Classification of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes.
  - a. CR-3 Texas Peace Officer's Traffic Crash Report Forms and any applicable supplements are filled out using the Crash Records Information System (CRIS) system. They will be submitted within ten (10) days to TxDOT in accordance with their guidelines.
    - 1) The CRIS system will purge a crash that has not been submitted after 30 days.
    - 2) Crash reports will be processed in a two-step process that may result in change requests being made from approving sergeants or Records Unit. Notification will be made via email.
    - 3) TxDOT will notify Records Unit personnel and the officer of corrections via email if a crash report is rejected.
    - 4) Paper CR-3 forms will only be used when the CRIS system is offline.
    - 5) All revised or amended reports will be marked by checking the "amendment/supplement" checkbox on the form and submitted using the same format as the original report (electronic by electronic; paper by paper).

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- 6) The date of the supplement will be entered on the field titled "Date Report Made" on paper submissions, it is automatic on electronic submissions.
    - b. Damages below the reporting requirements of \$1,000 are not entered into the driver history files, nor are they used for driver improvement purposes by TxDOT.
  2. In the case of delayed traffic crash reports, the following general guidelines shall apply.
    - a. If the vehicles have been moved, and it is not possible for the officer to conduct a meaningful investigation, the drivers will be given copies of the Driver's Confidential Traffic Crash Report (CR-2) and Motorist's Exchange Forms.
    - b. If the officer feels they can reconstruct the traffic crash based on information provided by the drivers, they may do so. The officer should state in the report the reconstruction is based on witness information.
    - c. Reports with confirmed information shall be completed with as much detail as the investigating officer has available prior to the end of their tour of duty. If information is accurate or unconfirmed, a supplement should be completed prior to the end of the investigating officer's tour of duty detailing as much as possible about the traffic crash, victims, phone numbers, and any notification efforts for next-of-kin.
- I. Traffic Crashes on the Tollways

DPS is responsible for investigating traffic crashes on the tollways. When the Plano Fire Department is dispatched to traffic crashes on the tollways, a Plano officer will also be dispatched to help safeguard the Fire Department, secure the traffic crash scene, control traffic flow, and assist as necessary. The Plano officer may clear when DPS arrives and is no longer needed. DPS will maintain responsibility for the traffic crash report and investigation. A Plano officer may be required to complete the investigation and crash report if a DPS Trooper is not immediately available. A Plano officer may also choose to take responsibility for the investigation and reporting if, in the officer's opinion, it will result in faster clearance of the scene so normal traffic patterns can be restored.

J. Traffic Crashes

The following guidelines for crash investigations must be considered in coordinating functions between the Traffic Unit and Patrol Units. For this section, the term "traffic unit" indicates those officers assigned to the Traffic Unit. The term "patrol officer" includes all other Patrol Services Division officers.

Patrol officers shall investigate and report property damage only and injury crashes. Traffic units may respond at their discretion, depending upon their assignment at the time, or if no beat officer is available. Patrol sergeants are expected to work property damage only crashes and non-serious injury crashes if beat officers or traffic units are unavailable within a reasonable period.

1. Traffic Crash with Property Damage

Crashes involving property damage only with no injuries that occur on public roadways will be dispatched to an officer based on priority ranking with existing calls.

2. Traffic Crash with Injuries

Crashes with non-incapacitating/non-life threatening injuries that occur on public or private roadways shall be dispatched to an officer immediately.

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3. Crashes with Serious Injury

- a. Crashes with Serious Injury are those involving apparent serious bodily harm or where a fatality is anticipated or possible.
- b. Two patrol officers and a supervisor shall initially be dispatched to crashes with serious injury. The initial responding supervisor shall determine if the crash should be investigated by a Traffic Unit when such units are on duty. If a Traffic Unit is not reasonably available because of other duties or assignments, the patrol officer will be expected to work the crash. The Traffic Unit shall work all fatality crashes and crashes that will likely result in a fatality, regardless of the time of day. For crashes involving felony charges (i.e. Intoxication Assault, FSRA, etc.), a Traffic Unit supervisor shall be contacted by the on-scene supervisor before clearing the crash scene of any involved vehicles or evidence. The Traffic Unit supervisor will determine if a Traffic Unit callout will be initiated based on the information provided.
- c. Hit and Run Crashes

Hit and Run crash follow-up procedures are detailed in the Support Services Division Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Initial response to hit and run crashes shall be conducted by a patrol officer unless it is a fatality or will likely result in a fatality, as outlined above.

4. Hit and Run Crashes

- a. Hit and run crashes shall be dispatched to an officer based on their priority ranking with existing calls, whether they occurred on a parking lot or public street.
- b. Officers, who do not believe the crash occurred as reported by the complainant, may refuse to complete a State Crash form. The officer must document reason(s) for their doubts on the call for service notes. The complainant will be provided a CR-2 form for their completion.
- c. Follow-up on hit and run reports will be the responsibility of the Traffic Unit according to this directive and the Support Services Division SOP related to hit and run crashes. If circumstances allow, the primary responding/reporting patrol officer shall attempt to locate the vehicle which fled the scene to verify any damage and to identify the driver at the time of the crash. If located, the primary officer shall take those steps necessary to preserve evidence and to facilitate the investigation.

5. Delayed Crashes

- a. Traffic crashes with property damage only occurring on public roadways and not called into the department for dispatching at the time of discovery, will not be investigated later.
- b. Since delayed crashes cannot be thoroughly investigated without a crash scene and the officer having knowledge of the circumstances existing at the time of occurrence, persons reporting delayed crashes will be given a CR-2 form and given instructions for its use.

This will not apply to crashes in which the vehicles have been moved a reasonable distance for safety consideration AND hit and run crashes delayed due to the owner not knowing the crash occurred.

K. Traffic Fatality Review Board

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A Traffic Fatality Review Board may be convened at the discretion of the chief or their designee for fatal crashes involving unusual circumstances, significant public interest, or when a review may yield insights relevant to department policy, training, or traffic safety initiatives. The board may include essential personnel from the police department and other city departments for the purpose reviewing fatality crashes thoroughly and making recommendations to mitigate identified contributing factors.

1. Members of the Traffic Fatality Board may include:
  - a. Traffic lieutenant
  - b. Traffic engineering manager
  - c. Risk management manager
  - d. City personnel deemed essential to conduct a thorough review
2. Traffic lieutenant responsibilities:
  - a. Ensure minutes from each review are transcribed.
  - b. Prepare a summary report of incident including any findings and/or recommendations made by the Traffic Fatality Board.
  - c. Distribute a copy of the summary report to the Traffic Fatality Review Board members, chief, assistant chief, and the deputy chief over the Traffic Unit.