POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. 610

Crashes Involving Police Department Vehicles

Date Issued: February 14, 2005
Date Effective: October 16, 2026
Review Date: October 16, 2027 3 Pages

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the reporting, review, and administrative handling of crashes involving Worcester Police Department vehicles.

2. POLICY:

The Worcester Police Department is committed to the safe operation of all Department vehicles. The Department recognizes the need to balance active and proactive police initiatives with the safety of its members and the public. When crashes involving Department vehicles occur, they shall be promptly reported, thoroughly documented, and reviewed to identify opportunities for training and improved vehicle operation. The intent of this policy is to improve the operation of Department vehicles through training, review, and corrective action, not solely through punitive measures.

3. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all sworn and civilian personnel of the Worcester Police Department who operate Department vehicles.

4. PROCEDURES:

A. Crash Scene Response

A member operating a Department vehicle that is involved in a crash shall stop immediately, render or summon aid as needed, and immediately notify a supervisor. Except as provided in the following paragraph, a supervisor shall respond to the scene, and an officer other than the involved operator, or the Crash Reconstruction Unit where deployed, investigates and reports the crash under Policy 675 Motor Vehicle Crashes: Response, Investigation, and Reporting.

When another police agency investigates the crash, including any crash outside the City, that agency's crash report is included in the documentation package in place of the Department's crash report, and a supervisor should respond to the scene when practicable.

B. Reporting Requirements

In the event of a crash involving a Department vehicle, the following documentation package shall be compiled, approved by the commanding officer, and forwarded as soon as possible through channels to the Chief's Office for review by the appropriate Deputy Chief: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Crash Police Report; copy of any citation(s) issued; Incident Report, if applicable; Worcester Police Department Motor Vehicle Damage

Report (Form 23A); Commonwealth of Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Crash Operator Report; Interdepartmental Correspondence (IDC) from the operator of the vehicle; and Interdepartmental Correspondence (IDC) from the supervisor.

If a member is injured, the injury is reported under Policy 80 Injured on Duty. If the operator may face criminal charges arising from the crash, the operator's IDC is subject to the self-incrimination protections of Policy 210 Rules and Regulations, and any criminal investigation proceeds under Policy 500 Bureau of Professional Standards Investigations.

After the Deputy Chief finds the package in order, it is sent to the Chief of Police for approval. The Chief's Office keeps a copy of the package on file, forwards a copy with an Automobile Loss Notice to the Law Department, and forwards the original crash reports to the Records Division.

C. Crash Review Board

The Department shall maintain a Crash Review Board consisting of one Deputy Chief, the Traffic Division Commander, a crash reconstruction officer, and one member each of the Patrol Officers Union and the Officials Union Executive Boards, who shall be asked to participate. When the operator is a civilian employee, a representative of that employee's bargaining unit shall also be asked to participate. The Crash Review Board shall meet on an as-needed basis or at the request of a Deputy Chief, a commander, or a union official. At least three Board members must be present for a quorum.

The Crash Review Board's sole function is to review each crash involving a Department vehicle and find it Avoidable or Unavoidable. A crash is Avoidable when the operator failed to exercise the care reasonably expected under the circumstances and that failure contributed to the crash. In making its finding, the Board considers the demands of emergency response under Policy 420.1 Emergency Response Driving and of an authorized pursuit under Policy 420 Motor Vehicle Pursuits. The Board's finding is documented in writing and provided to the operator.

D. Immediate Loss of Driving Privileges

The operator of a Department vehicle involved in a crash shall immediately lose driving privileges of Department vehicles until the Crash Review Board convenes and makes a finding. The immediate loss of driving privileges is omitted when the operator's commanding officer determines that the crash was clearly unavoidable (e.g., the Department vehicle was parked or was rear-ended) or upon the written recommendation of the Official in Charge when the crash is minor in nature. The Board should convene as soon as practicable. A Deputy Chief may restore driving privileges before the Board convenes.

E. Progressive Corrective Action

When the Crash Review Board finds that a crash involving a Department vehicle was Avoidable, the operator may be subject to corrective and/or disciplinary action. Corrective action in the form of training, counseling, and/or loss of driving privileges shall be the prerogative of the Chief of Police or, as circumstances dictate, the operator's commanding officer. Disciplinary action is imposed under Policy 500 Bureau of Professional Standards Investigations.

The Chief of Police, in applying corrective action to members with multiple Avoidable crashes within the same aggregate time period, shall use the following guidelines: two (2) Avoidable crashes in a 24-month aggregate period shall result in additional training; three (3) Avoidable crashes in a 36-month aggregate period shall result in intensive training with three months of no driving privileges; four (4) Avoidable crashes in a 48-month aggregate period shall result in no driving privileges for a period not less than six months; and five (5) Avoidable crashes in a 60-month aggregate period shall result in no driving privileges for a period not less than one year.

The Chief of Police or a designated Deputy Chief may at any time, based solely on an overall driver history, determine that a member is in need of additional vehicle operation training. If such a determination is made, the member shall attend an appropriate level of training commensurate with the circumstances and may lose driving privileges until the training is completed. The member shall have the opportunity to discuss their driving history with the respective Deputy Chief. In all other cases, the loss of driving privileges shall progress in the increments stated above.

Per:

Paul B. Saucier
Chief of Police

Revisions:

October 16, 2026–

Replaced the title Accidents Involving Police Department Vehicles with Crashes Involving Police Department Vehicles, and the term accident with crash throughout; the Accident Review Board is now the Crash Review Board. Replaced the Policy 615 Contributory Negligence Subject to Discipline standard, which allowed discipline of an officer found more than fifty percent contributorily negligent, with corrective or disciplinary action following a Crash Review Board finding of Avoidable, defined as a failure to exercise the care reasonably expected under the circumstances, including the demands of emergency response and authorized pursuits, that contributed to the crash; Policy 615 is retired. Added crash scene requirements for immediate supervisor notification, supervisor response, and investigation by an officer other than the involved operator, and use of the investigating agency's crash report when another police agency investigates. Removed injury and medical documentation from the crash reporting package; injuries are reported under Policy 80 Injured on Duty. Added that the operator's IDC is subject to the self-incrimination protections of Policy 210 Rules and Regulations when the operator may face criminal charges arising from the crash. Added a representative of a civilian operator's bargaining unit to the Crash Review Board and written notice of the Board's finding to the operator. Added that the Board should convene as soon as practicable and that a Deputy Chief may restore driving privileges before it convenes. Replaced the involved officer with the operator as the member who loses driving privileges and is subject to corrective action. Expanded driving privilege and corrective action provisions to civilian members who operate Department vehicles.

Original Issue Date: February 14, 2005