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			Distribution: All
Title: TRAFFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION		Section: Traffic	
Issued: 06/28/2011	Effective: 07/06/2011	Revised: 09/22/2016	
Rescinds: All Previous		Amends:	
CALEA References: 61.2.1 thru 61.2.4			
Review: Annual	Authority: Chief Michael A. Keller 		

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to establish procedures for investigating traffic accidents.

## II. Policy

The Andover Police Department is responsible for investigating traffic accidents to determine causation, identify and enforce traffic law violations, protect the rights of those involved and to assist in traffic education. Therefore, it will be the policy of this department to document motor vehicle traffic accidents in accordance with guidelines established by the Kansas Department of Transportation.

## III. Definitions

**A. Motor Vehicle Traffic Accident:** For the purposes of this General Order, traffic accidents will be defined as stated in the most current version of the Motor Vehicle Accident Report Coding Manual published by the Kansas Department of Transportation.

## IV. Regulations

**A.** Officers are expected to reasonably comply with the procedures provided within this General Order [A].

## V. Procedures

### A. Traffic Accident Scene Responses

1. Officers will respond to and thoroughly investigate and complete reports on all accidents involving:
  - a. Death or injury (61.2.2a);
  - b. A vehicle or driver leaving the scene of an accident (61.2.2b);
  - c. Impairment of an operator due to drugs or alcohol (61.2.2c);
  - d. Property damage to public vehicles or property (61.2.2d);
  - e. Hazardous materials (61.2.2e);
  - f. Disturbances between individuals involved in an accident (61.2.2f);
  - g. Major traffic congestion (61.2.2g); or

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- h. Damage to vehicles where towing is necessary (61.2.2h).
- 2. Officers will normally be dispatched to accident scenes involving damage to one or more vehicles and/or property that do not include any of the conditions listed above. In all cases an accident report should be filed.
- 3. Responses to certain types of accidents may be suspended during emergency conditions pursuant to General Order O2605 Emergency Accident Reporting Plan.
- 4. Except in the case of an accident involving death or apparent injury of any person, or the transportation of hazardous material, the officer should instruct the owner or driver of a vehicle to move their vehicle from the roadway, if, moving the vehicle may be done safely, does not require towing and may be operated under its own power without further damage to the vehicle or roadway and without endangering other vehicles or persons upon the roadway.

#### **B. Traffic Accident Scene Reporting and Investigation**

- 1. Officers will document motor vehicle traffic accidents reported to the Department in accordance with guidelines established by the Kansas Department of Transportation Coding Manual.
- 2. Fatality and Injury Accidents – For serious accidents involving fatalities and injuries or the possibility of fatalities and injuries, the officers' first priority is to secure the accident scene to ensure no further accidents or injuries occur. Once the scene has been secured, officers should provide emergency aid to those involved (61.2.1a).
  - a. A full investigation and report is required for all fatality and injury accidents, to include the appropriate Kansas Standard Motor Vehicle Accident forms, narrative, diagram, DC-66 Insurance Verification form, photographs and witness statements.
  - b. The accident may be investigated by members of the department with advanced training in motor vehicle accident investigations and diagrammed by specially trained personnel as needed.
  - c. Other personnel such as the coroner, or specially trained personnel such as the Kansas Highway Patrol advanced accident investigation team may be requested as appropriate.
  - d. Citations should not be issued or charges filed for violations related to the accident until the investigation of an injury or fatality accident has been completed and all evidence analyzed.
- 3. Major Damage Accidents – An accident report will be filed to include the appropriate Kansas Standard Motor Vehicle Accident forms, narrative, diagram, DC-66 Insurance Verification form, photographs and witness statements when estimated damages meet or exceed the state guidelines for a major damage accident (61.2.1b).



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- a. A report will be filed regardless of the desires of those involved as it is required by the State of Kansas reporting guidelines.
  - b. Officers should provide each driver with APD Form 36 – Accident Information Exchange containing the other driver’s personal and vehicle information.
  - c. Citations may be issued for obvious violations at the discretion of the investigating officer.
4. Minor Damage Accidents – An accident report should be filed to include an incident report in the department’s Records Management System (RMS), narrative, and witness statements when estimated damages are below the state guidelines for a major damage accident (61.2.1b).
- a. The parties involved in a minor accident may choose not to make a formal report; however, the investigating officer should collect the parties personal and vehicle information and make a incident report in case the parties later decide to file a formal accident report.
  - b. Minor damage accidents involving a major traffic offense (DUI, reckless driving, vehicular homicide, fleeing and attempt to elude, etc.) will be investigated thoroughly and appropriate reports completed, to include the appropriate Kansas Standard Motor Vehicle Accident forms, narrative, DC-66 Insurance Verification Form, diagrams and witness statements.
  - c. Officers should provide each driver with APD Form 36 – Accident Information Exchange containing the other driver’s personal and vehicle information.
  - d. Citations may be issued for obvious violations at the discretion of the investigating officer.
5. Hit and Run Accidents – Hit and Run accidents will be fully investigated and a report will be filed to include the appropriate Kansas Standard Motor Vehicle Accident forms, narrative, diagram, DC-66 Insurance Verification form, photographs and witness statements when estimated damages meet or exceed the state guidelines for a major damage accident (61.2.1c).
6. Private Property Accidents – An incident report should be filed in the same manner and under the same guidelines as Minor Damage Accidents (61.2.1f).
7. Accidents Involving Impaired Drivers – An accident report will be filed according to the proper accident classification for the incident (61.2.1d).
- a. Driver(s) will be evaluated according to General Order O2201 Driving Under the Influence and the appropriate action will be taken.
8. Accidents Involving Department Vehicles
- a. Major Damage Accidents, Injury accidents or multiple vehicle accidents involving department vehicles shall be investigated and documented by an outside law enforcement agency.
  - b. Minor Damage Accidents involving only department vehicles, or between department vehicles and non-vehicle objects, shall be investigated and



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documented by a department supervisor and the reporting and investigation guidelines for minor damage accidents will be followed.

- c. In all cases involving a department vehicle, a supervisor will respond to the scene, conduct an internal investigation, and gather information to present to the accident review committee. The supervisor will ensure compliance with General Order M1117 Workplace Safety.

### C. Traffic Accident Scene Responsibilities

1. Officers assigned to an injury accident shall respond as assigned by Communications or a supervisor.
2. The first officer on the scene is in charge of the scene, unless relieved by a supervisor, and will evaluate what additional personnel or equipment will be needed (61.2.3a).
3. Officers should park their patrol vehicles in such a manner as to protect the scene, provide other traffic with a warning of hazards, and avoid creating any additional traffic hazards.
4. Identifying and Dealing with Injured Persons (61.2.3b):
  - a. Evaluate injured individuals and administer first aid for all parties involved.
  - b. Notify Communications of the extent of injuries and number of injured.
  - c. Request EMS if necessary and provide triage information to Communications for relay to EMS.
  - d. Determine if injured parties may require evacuation by air ambulance and notify Communications.
  - e. Determine if special equipment may be necessary.
  - f. Enlist the assistance of other citizens as necessary.
  - g. Make every effort to provide the ambulance with quick and safe access to the injured.
  - h. When possible, assist medical personnel with caring for the injured.
  - i. If injured person(s) are transported by EMS, follow-up at a later time to document their status and obtain written statements.
  - j. If necessary, officers should identify potential helicopter landing zones.
5. Identifying and Dealing with Hazardous Materials – The fire department and Emergency Management should be notified immediately if hazardous materials are identified. The following procedures should be followed when arriving at the scene (61.2.2e, 61.2.3c):
  - a. Approach cautiously from an upwind direction.
  - b. From as great a distance as possible, attempt to locate identification placards.
  - c. Identify the hazardous material by using the Emergency Response Handbook and the coded ID number from the identification placard.
  - d. Note fire or explosion hazards, health hazards, first aid and safety zone distances.



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- e. Acquire information from anyone at the scene who can provide specific details about the hazardous material.
  - f. Secure the scene and establish an appropriate perimeter around the area using the distances in the Emergency Response Handbook.
  - g. Assume that gasses or vapors may be present at the scene, as many gasses are colorless and odorless.
  - h. Notify Communications of the substance involved, size of spill, potential threats to life or property as a result of the spill, additional support personnel needed and any injuries.
  - i. Establish a safe route for emergency personnel responding to the incident.
6. Vehicle Fire or Fire Hazard – The fire department should be immediately summoned to the scene of vehicle fires or any fire hazard. Additionally, on-scene officers should (61.2.3c):
- a. Determine if the vehicle is occupied.
  - b. Attempt to extricate persons safely.
  - c. Use patrol unit fire extinguisher on small flames.
  - d. Route traffic around the fire or fire hazard.
  - e. If the vehicle was in motion when the fire began an accident report is required.
7. Collecting information – After ensuring the injured are cared for and the scene is determined to be safe, the investigating officer will make every effort to determine all pertinent facts. If multiple officers are working the accident, various tasks may be divided between them, such as diagramming and recording information. The following procedures should be followed (61.2.3d):
- a. Identify and separate drivers, witnesses and occupants and interview them as soon as feasibly possible.
  - b. Document statements and observations.
  - c. Collect written statements (APD FORM 16 – Witness Statement).
  - d. Compare damage to statements to determine vehicle paths prior to contact.
  - e. Determine point or area of impact if possible.
  - f. Determine final resting places.
  - g. Locate and collect evidence, if appropriate.
  - h. Observe and record damage.
  - i. Examine roadway for tire prints, liquid spillage or debris which may be evidence of causal factors.
8. Photographs – Photos should be taken in all fatality accidents, injury accidents, major property accidents and accidents involving police vehicles. Particularly in the case of fatality accidents, officers and supervisors may consider videotaping the accident scene to include the following (61.2.3d):
- a. Surrounding environment (road conditions, lighting, traffic, visibility of lack thereof, etc.).
  - b. Final resting positions of the vehicles.



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- c. Locations of injured or deceased persons.
  - d. Vehicle damage, to include license number.
  - e. Tire mark evidence on the roadway.
  - f. Liquid spillage.
  - g. Detached parts of the vehicles and any debris.
  - h. The overall accident scene from the direction of travel to show sight obstruction.
  - i. Point or area of impact.
9. Measurements – Officers should obtain and record the following information for the accident diagram (61.2.3d):
- a. Roadway dimensions.
  - b. Positions of vehicles at rest.
  - c. Gouges and scratches on the roadway.
  - d. Pertinent tire marks.
  - e. Pertinent ruts, furrows or other scars on the roadway.
  - f. Objects on or near the roadway, or other indicators of factors apparently contributing to the accident.
  - g. Items projected from the scene by the collision.
  - h. Pre-collision movements and directions of travel.
  - i. Locations of ejected persons or pedestrians involved in the accident.

#### D. Protecting the Accident Scene

Officers should secure and maintain the scene ensuring that evidence including roadway marks, vehicles and bodies are not disturbed prior to processing the scene. This includes re-routing vehicular and pedestrian traffic to prevent the disturbance of evidence. In case of accidents involving death or hazardous material, officers should secure and maintain the scene. Effective traffic control is critical in stabilizing an accident scene for safe and thorough investigation (See General Order O2606 Traffic Direction & Control).

1. Arrival/Parking
  - a. Activate appropriate emergency lights.
  - b. Park patrol unit in a manner which protects the scene.
  - c. Don reflective safety garments.
  - d. Establish a safe traffic pattern around the scene.
  - e. If a traffic lane is blocked, park the unit in the blocked lane between the accident and the oncoming traffic.
  - f. Place traffic cones if necessary.
2. Securing and Stabilizing the Accident Scene: High Traffic Volume
  - a. If possible, direct traffic until a second unit arrives to assist with traffic control.
  - b. Increase driver awareness using traffic cones or flares to block or reroute traffic in desired angle of flow.

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3. Road Blockage
  - a. Accidents resulting in a road blockage anticipated to last in excess of one hour may be regulated by using barricades and temporary road closures.
  - b. Officers may request that appropriate city, county or state personnel place and staff barricades.
  - c. If an entire traffic way is blocked and vehicles cannot pass in either direction, the shift supervisor will establish a traffic detour.
  - d. Sufficient personnel must regulate each detour point.
  - e. Four lane roadways may be reduced to two lanes by directing traffic through median crossovers.
4. Vehicle Removal, Restoring Normal Traffic Flow
  - a. Once the scene has been properly stabilized and assessed, operable vehicles will be removed and tow trucks will be summoned for the inoperable vehicles.
  - b. Drivers/owners may request a tow truck of their choice. If they express no preference or are incapacitated, the officer will request the next area tow truck in the tow truck rotation list and note the vehicle disposition in the report.
  - c. Once the tow truck arrives, officers will control traffic flow while it is maneuvering in the roadway and ensure the wrecker operator removes any collision debris from the roadway.

#### **E. Safekeeping of Property at Accident Scenes**

Officers will ensure that property belonging to accident victims is protected from theft or damage and is removed to a place of safekeeping if the owner is unable to care for the property (61.2.3f).

1. Injury Accidents
  - a. If the injured is conscious the officer may return small items (i.e. purses, wallets, money, jewelry, etc.) at the scene.
  - b. The officer should attempt to consult with the injured concerning the disposition of their property.
  - c. Items that cannot be returned to the injured or a third party specified by the injured will be entered into evidence for safekeeping.
2. Non-Injury Accidents – Involved parties are responsible for their own property.
3. Fatality Accidents
  - a. Property may accompany the deceased to the mortuary.
  - b. The officer may deliver the property to the mortuary.
  - c. Non-deliverable property will be entered into evidence by the officer and annotated in the accident report narrative.

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**F. Traffic Collision Follow-up Investigations (61.2.4)**

1. Shift supervisors will review all accidents and determine what, if any, follow-up investigation is necessary.
2. In general, follow-up investigations are warranted for hit and run accidents and should comply, at a minimum, with the guidelines in General Order M1108 – Victim/Witness Assistance. Other circumstances may dictate a need for collecting information away from the accident scene.
  - a. Reasons for follow-up may include collecting witness statements, locate hit and run drivers, issue traffic citations, test skids and gathering information relevant to the investigation (e.g. blood for lab examination, paint for comparison, etc.).
  - b. The Operations Commander or shift supervisor may seek professional expertise while reconstructing the events of an accident. The areas may consist of mechanical examinations by qualified mechanics, metallurgist, traffic engineer, officers trained in advanced accident investigation (83.1.1), and/or the Kansas Highway Patrol accident scene reconstruction team (83.1.10).