



POLICY & PROCEDURES

PORTAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: TRAFFIC CRASH PROCEDURES

SCOPE: All Sworn Personnel

DISTRIBUTION: Policy & Procedure Manual

REFERENCE: WI State Statutes: 165.785, 175.51,
346.67, 346.70(1)

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INDEX AS: Crash Scene Procedures
Hazardous Materials at Traffic Crashes
Investigating Traffic Crashes
Traffic Crash Procedures

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Policy & Procedure is to establish procedures for the investigation and reporting of traffic crashes by the Portage Police Department.

This Policy & Procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. TRAFFIC CRASH PROCEDURES
- II. TRAFFIC CRASHES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY
- III. HIT AND RUN TRAFFIC CRASHES
- IV. TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING CITY-OWNED VEHICLES
- V. TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

I. TRAFFIC CRASH PROCEDURES

- A. Officers will respond to all traffic crashes reported to the Police Department, including but not limited to Death, Injury, Hit and Run, Property Damage only, Damage to Public Vehicles or Property, Hazardous Materials, and Occurrences on Private Property.

- B. Officers will respond to crash scenes in a safe manner (exercising due regard), arriving at the scene, protecting the scene, aiding any injured persons, and requesting needed support services, officer assistance, ambulance, wrecker(s), etc.
- C. Crash scenes should be cleared as quickly as possible to expedite traffic flow and remove the hazards present from the crash.
- D. Generally the initial responding officer will be in charge of the crash scene and be responsible for the processing of the crash. The initial responding officer will assess the circumstances of the crash and make a determination whether additional assistance is required to conduct the on-scene or follow-up investigation. Officers' actions may include:
 - 1. Notifying dispatch of the exact location of the crash, probable severity, and any other pertinent circumstances.
 - 2. Protecting Life
 - 3. Requesting EMS, Fire and/or additional assistance as needed.
 - 4. Protecting the crash scene.
 - 5. Preserving short-lived evidence.
 - 6. Establishing a safe traffic flow around the scene.
 - 7. Locating witnesses and recording crash information.
 - 8. Photographing the crash.
 - 9. Expediting the removal of vehicles and debris from the roadway.
 - 10. Ensuring the road and area is safe to travel upon once the scene is cleared.
- E. In the event injuries are present at the scene:
 - 1. Officers shall immediately summon EMS for all injuries encountered. In all crashes, police actions to determine and deal with possible injuries take precedence over any investigative or reporting activities. If victims refuse medical treatment, EMS policy and procedure will be followed by EMS staff.
 - 2. Officers should identify those most seriously injured or deceased.
 - a) Officers should not give information regarding the seriously injured or deceased over the radio. Officers should consider other methods such as the telephone, MDC or coded channel.
 - 3. While emergency aid should be administered to injured persons, officers should not attempt medical aid beyond their training and abilities.

4. Under normal circumstances, EMS will be responsible for the transportation of injured persons.

F. Identifying and dealing with fire hazards and/or hazardous materials involvement:

1. Officers arriving at the scene of a traffic crash involving a reported or apparent hazardous materials spill shall respond promptly but approach the scene cautiously, upwind, uphill, etc. Officers shall attempt to determine if the container or vehicle is displaying hazardous materials placards or labels, and relay the displayed information to dispatch. Officers can refer to the Emergency Response guidebook located in each squad car or the online app for possible identification and additional information regarding the hazard.
2. Officers shall observe persons already at the scene for any symptoms of a reaction to contact with the material or vapors. If nothing unusual is noted, the officers may move closer and speak to persons at the scene regarding their physical condition and observations, and take appropriate protective measures to protect themselves.
3. Officers shall locate the operator to determine the vehicle contents and/or additional information such as shipping manifest that may be helpful. The vehicle operator may also provide information as to the relative danger of any spilled materials.
4. Officers responding to any traffic crash at a business which uses chemicals or other hazardous materials should be observant for possible involvement of the materials.
5. Officers confirming hazardous material involvement in a crash should immediately notify dispatch and request the Portage Fire Department & EMS be dispatched. Once on the scene, the ranking Fire Department officer and or Emergency Government personnel shall be in charge of the scene.

G. Officers' initial actions at the suspected hazardous materials crash scene:

1. The first officer(s) to arrive at the scene shall primarily control the scene and prevent the incident from worsening. These measures may include but are not limited to:
 - a) Requesting additional officers and supervisors report to the scene.
 - b) Requesting the Fire Department & EMS respond to the scene.
 - c) Controlling access to the scene and/or evacuating if necessary.
 - d) Establishing a point of entry to the scene.
 - e) Assisting in identifying the hazardous material.
 - f) Contacting DPW for barricades

2. If a hazardous materials spill is suspected, officers should approach and park their vehicles updrift and upwind from the scene of the spill at a sufficient distance to protect the officers from the effects of the spill.
3. If people closer to or at the scene appear to have been overcome or contaminated by the spilled materials, officers should use caution before entering the scene. Fire personnel with self-contained breathing devices should make entry.
4. After consultation between Police and Fire commanders and depending on severity, it may be necessary to:
 - a) Request mutual aid in the form of a hazardous materials team.
 - b) Call in additional Police and Fire personnel.
 - c) Secure services of the Department of Public Works, Water & Light Utility, & transportation. (Bus Services, area taxis, etc.)
 - d) Summon the Department of Natural Resources.
 - e) Contact gas and electric utilities if appropriate.
 - g) Contact the County Division of Emergency Management through the Columbia County Communications Center.

H. Officers will investigate all traffic crashes reported to the Police Department and which meet the definition of "crash" as defined in TRANS 100.02. The DT4000 Uniform Crash Report Form utilizing Badger TRaCS will be completed for all "Reportable" crashes and may be completed for "Non-reportable" crashes.

1. Traffic enforcement should be taken when warranted.

I. A "Drivers Report of Traffic Crash" Form will be available online for those persons who did not initially report a crash to police, but later wish to report it to the state. This form may also be used by drivers who wish to modify an officer's report of a crash, such as reporting an injury that was not apparent during the initial investigation.

II. TRAFFIC CRASHES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

A. Motor vehicle crashes occurring on private property will be investigated and reported in accordance with the all applicable procedures and Wisconsin State Statutes governing traffic enforcement on such property.

B. On private property, the Uniform Traffic Citation generally will be issued only for the following three violations:

1. Driving Under the Influence.

2. Reckless Driving.
3. Hit and Run.
4. An officer can consider other possible citations such as failure to report an accident or failure to notify property owner depending on the circumstances.

III. HIT AND RUN TRAFFIC CRASHES

- A. All hit and run traffic crashes will be investigated.
- B. A police report will be completed for all hit and run crashes and a DT4000 will be completed.
- C. The responding officer will do follow up unless authorized differently by a supervisor.
- D. If a hit and run crash involves a fatality, the department may consider attempting to identify the suspect or offending vehicle through the Crime Alert Network according to §165.785 and §175.51.

IV. TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING CITY-OWNED VEHICLES

- A. Officers will, upon being dispatched to a traffic crash involving city-owned vehicles, investigate the crash and complete a DT4000. On-duty crashes involving Police Department employees are covered in Section V.
- B. In general, operators of municipal vehicles who violate the traffic laws will be treated like any other citizen. If an officer concludes that a traffic citation is warranted, based upon the evidence, the officer shall issue it.
 1. The only exception will be for an emergency vehicle (fire) in the actual conduct of an emergency response and for maintenance vehicles engaged in the actual conduct of maintenance operations, including snow removal. For police emergency vehicle crashes see Section V.
 2. For these exceptions, the investigation and the circumstances will be reviewed by a supervisor prior to the issuance of a citation. The supervisor shall also discuss the matter with the Chief of Police or designee.
- C. A copy of the crash report will be forwarded by the chief or designee to the appropriate department head and to the City Clerk's Office.

V. TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

- A. In general, traffic crashes involving on-duty Police Department employees will be investigated by an outside agency. Portage Police Department units will respond to assist with injuries, secure the scene, etc.
- B. The first request for assistance with the investigation will be made to the Columbia County Sheriff's Department.
- C. If the Columbia County Sheriff's Department is unable to assist, the Wisconsin State Patrol will be asked to assist. Beyond the State Patrol other local agencies can be considered.
- D. In the event no department is available to conduct the investigation, within a reasonable amount of time, a Portage Police Department supervisor will oversee the crash investigation and reporting.
- E. The crash report and related documents will be the property of the investigating agency. Copies of the report will be requested by a supervisor.
- F. Operators of police vehicles involved in a crash may be required to submit to a blood and or urine test due to the circumstances of the crash.
- G. A copy of the crash report and related documents will be forwarded to the Chief of Police.

Keith J. Klafke
Chief of Police

This Policy & Procedure cancels and supersedes any and all previous written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

Initial 01/15/2024