



MEDFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY NO. 5.04

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

MASSACHUSETTS POLICE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

REFERENCED: **61.1.5, 61.2.1, 61.2.2, 61.2.3, 61.2.4,
61.3.2, 83.1.1, 83.2.6**

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BACKGROUND:

The police function in relation to traffic crashes is varied. Aid to the injured, traffic control, investigation, enforcement and crash prevention are some of the areas upon which the police will have an impact. An adequate response, knowledgeable performance and preventive efforts can go a long way in minimizing increased damage to property and bodily injury. Police responsibility will continue until the injured have been cared for, the crash vehicles have been removed, the roadway is clear of debris, and the traffic flow returns to normal.

POLICY:

The Medfield Police Department responds to traffic crashes as a regular function of patrol. Officers are expected to take control at the scene of a traffic crash and shall use procedures that provide for the safety of the parties involved in the crash, the police officers on scene, and any other first responders present. The responding officer's primary goals at the scene of a traffic crash are to prevent further harm, to investigate the crash, to assist citizens in the exchange of information, and to file a crash report when necessary.

PROCEDURES:

The following procedures for handling crashes are intended as an outline of how the Department may provide services to the community; and to provide maximum safety for the police officer and first responders, the parties involved in the crash, and the motoring public. Because every crash scene is different, the officers on scene may need to adjust or alter these procedures to produce the safest and best outcome.

Arriving at the Scene of an Crash [61.2.2]

Patrol units sent by the dispatcher and units assigned to the area where the crash occurred shall respond to all crashes that require a report and even some that may not if police assistance is needed. [61.2.2(a)] The first arriving officer shall be in charge of the scene until relieved by another officer or directed by a supervisor. [61.2.3(a)] He has important responsibilities to include, but are not limited to, providing medical aid until the arrival of fire/rescue personnel, identifying potential or actual fire hazards or other dangerous conditions so that appropriate action can be taken, keeping the peace, protecting the scene, establishing a safe traffic flow around the scene, identifying and interviewing witnesses and collecting other pertinent information, controlling the property belonging to the parties involved in the collision, and expediting the removal of debris and the vehicles involved from the roadway. [61.2.2 (b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)] [61.2.3 (b)(c)(d)(e)(f)]

The first responding officer shall briefly report the circumstances of the crash to the dispatcher and request assistance if any is required

A. To prevent further crashes or damage, the police cruiser should be parked to the rear of the vehicles involved in the crash if possible. Items to consider when positioning the police cruiser are:

1. The cruiser's roof lights will be activated;
2. The cruiser should be parked with its front tires turned so that if struck it will not be pushed into the crash vehicles; and
3. The cruiser shall be positioned so that on-coming traffic will be routed in such a way as to avoid the crash vehicles.

B. If additional officers are needed to direct traffic the primary responding officer shall notify dispatch.

1. NOTE: If an officer at a crash scene must direct traffic for a prolonged period of time, he/she must wear approved high visibility clothing (i.e. safety straps, vest, raincoat) (see uniform policy)

2. If necessary, officers will be stationed to detour traffic safely to alternate routes.

C. Reflectors or flares, when used, shall be placed to the front and/or rear of the vehicles to give adequate warning to all motorists approaching the scene.

D. If measurements will be required for the investigation of the crash, the positions of the vehicles should be marked as soon as possible. If photographs of the scene will

be needed, these should be taken as soon as possible. Once the photographs and markings are completed, all vehicles should be immediately removed from the roadway.

E. If the services of a tow truck are needed, a request for such assistance shall be made to the dispatcher and the officer making the request shall notify Dispatch of the vehicle registration.

F. By-standers are not to remain near the crash vehicles or in the roadway, if possible they should be removed to the sidewalk or remain in their vehicle.

G. Personal articles of the injured persons will be gathered for safekeeping. If the property cannot be turned over to the owner or other suitable person then it shall be stored/recorder in the same manner "found property" would be.

Medical Assistance

A. After taking immediate precautionary measures to ensure that the crash will not involve other vehicles, the officer's primary duty is to give prompt attention to the needs of any injured persons.

1. Injuries shall be treated by the administration of first-aid by the officer or other qualified person.

2. If there are any injuries, the dispatcher shall be notified immediately who in turn will notify the Fire Department to request an ambulance. Injured persons shall not be moved unless it is necessary to do so in order to prevent further injury.

B. Injured persons shall be transported by ambulance.

C. If there are persons trapped in a crash vehicle, or if hazardous materials, oil or gas have been spilled, the information must be relayed to the Fire Department immediately.

Preliminary Investigation

A. As soon as possible under the circumstances, a preliminary investigation shall be conducted, and the following information recorded where a report is required by this policy [61.2.1]:

1. Time, date and place of the crash;
2. Name, address and the license numbers of the operators involved;
3. Make, model and registration numbers of the vehicles involved;
4. Name and address of the vehicle owners and insurance companies;
5. Name and address of injured persons, description of visible injuries and whether transported to the hospital;

6. Name and address of witnesses with a notation of whether the witness was an occupant of one of the vehicles or a by-stander; and

7. Relevant statements made by any of the above.

B. A record (if an investigation is required) shall be made of any significant physical evidence, including, but not necessarily limited to [83.2.6]:

1. Type of roadway;

2. Road conditions (e.g., holes, ruts, curves, low shoulders, pavement markings, whether wet, dry, icy), construction, etc.;

3. Weather and lighting conditions;

4. Traffic control signs or signals;

5. Identification of marks on the roadway;

6. Direction of travel of involved vehicles;

7. Point of impact;

8. Position of vehicles after impact and whether moved;

9. Damage to the vehicles (e.g., tire, light, horn or brake damage are especially important); and

10. Diagram of the scene

Follow-up Investigations

When necessary, the Department shall perform followup traffic crash investigation services. [61.2.4]

1. Examples of follow-up investigation include:

a. Collecting offscene data;

b. Obtaining/recording formal statements from witnesses and suspects;

c. Reconstructing crashes; and

d. Preparing formal reports to support criminal charges arising from the crash.

2. Expert and Technical Assistance [83.1.1]:

a. From time to time, followup crash investigations may require special skills and technical assistance beyond that available from Department personnel. For specialized followup crash investigation techniques the Shift Commander will contact the State

Police and request the Collision Analysis and Reconstruction Section (CARS). CARS may assist officers with the following tasks:

- (1) Computing speed from skid marks and vehicle crush damage;
- (2) Establish positions of vehicles and pedestrians;
- (3) Determine which occupant was driving;
- (4) Determine how road, driver, and vehicle conditions contributed to the crash;
- (5) Compute energy losses and momentum exchanges in stopping vehicles; and
- (6) Analyze movements of vehicles and bodies in collisions.

Reports

Motor vehicle crash reports should be filed for the following types of crashes [61.2.1, 61.2.2]:

1. Over \$1000 damage to any one vehicle or property;
2. Hit and Run crash (minor hit and run crashes that occur in parking lots, or that are minor property damage on private property, should be filed as an offense report not a crash report at the officers discretion);
3. Town-owned vehicles and/or property;
4. School buses;
5. Personal injury or death;
6. Police department vehicles (investigated by a supervisor);
7. Pedestrian or bicycle involved with injury;
8. Hazardous Materials;
9. Impairment due to alcohol or drugs;
10. Occurrences on private property if one of the categories above is also indicated;

B. An officer responding to and investigating a traffic crash that requires a report (see above criteria) shall complete a Motor Vehicle Crash report using the Departments IMC program. The report shall be completed before the conclusion of his tour of duty when possible. In circumstances where a report cannot be completed prior to the end of the officer's shift, he will notify his supervisor that additional time is needed.

C. The officer's report shall be assigned a case number.

D. If criminal charges are warranted, then a full account shall be recorded on a departmental Offense/Incident Report (in addition to the above crash forms).

E. In all fatal crashes or crashes causing serious personal injury, in all hit and run crashes involving personal injury, and in all crashes involving damage to municipal property, written statements should be obtained from operators and witnesses.

F. The Records Division will maintain a copy of all crash reports and retain them per the state's public records laws.

School Bus Crashes

All crashes involving school buses (as defined in MGL C90 s1) the following procedure must be followed:

1. Record the names, address, date of birth and school of each student passenger;
2. Complete the state's "Crash Report" Truck and Bus section (section 35-42); and
3. Notify the school's principal or the school nurse.

Fatal Crashes

A. When a crash involves injuries that appear to be life threatening, notice shall be given to:

1. The District Attorney's Office, who will notify CARS;
2. Detectives, for photographs and evidence collection; and
3. The Chief of Police.

B. If the injuries are fatal, then additional (from the above) notification must be made to:

1. The Medical Examiner;
2. The Registry of Motor Vehicles (via CJIS);

Whenever possible, vehicles shall not be removed from the scene of a fatal crash prior inspection by the State Police.

NOTE: the officer assigned to handle the initial investigation will remain at the scene and assist the reconstruction unit(s) if needed.

Hazardous Materials

A. In the event of hazardous material incidents, responding officers shall:

1. Secure the scene, isolate the hazard area and evacuate nonessential personnel;

2. Advise the dispatcher to notify the Fire Department, contain the scene until their arrival;
3. Officers should attempt to identify any hazardous material by reading any placards or other identifying labels and/or interview people at scene;
4. Assess the situation for fire, spill, or active leakage of the hazardous material; and
5. Do not enter the contaminated zone.

Self-Reported Crashes

Persons calling by telephone that they have become involved in a (past) property damage crash should be instructed that they may pick-up crash report forms at any police department in Massachusetts, the Registry of Motor Vehicles, or the Medfield Police Department website.

In addition to the procedures above officers shall adhere to the following additional procedures at the scene of a traffic accident while directing traffic:

1. They shall use their blue lights and park their cruiser in a manner to help direct the flow of traffic around the scene and to protect the EMS and fire personnel working in the area;
2. Officers shall make the safety of the public their main priority when deciding how the flow of traffic shall be handled at an accident scene;
3. They should prioritize the flow of traffic in a manner that has the least impact on the motoring public when possible so as to prevent other accidents or major traffic disruptions;
4. Officers should remove vehicles from the roadway as soon as possible, and if practical should have vehicles pull off the road while waiting for a tow truck or during an accident investigation.

