


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Motor Vehicle Collision Response		AOM: O-310
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: A. [61.2.2.a], [61.2.2.b], [61.2.2.c], [61.2.2.d], [61.2.2.e], [61.2.2.f], [61.2.2.g], [61.2.2.h], [61.2.3.a], [61.2.3.e], [61.3.2.d], [61.3.2.e], [61.2.3.b], [61.2.3.c], [61.2.3.d], [61.2.5]		Issuing Authority <hr/> Jody Kasper Chief of Police
Dissemination Date: 12/22/1998 Effective Date: 1/05/1999	Amended: 2/06, 10/09, 4/19, 7/23, 8/23 Reviewed: 12/02, 2/05, 2/06, 9/08, 1/09, 10/09, 4/11, 8/11, 8/13, 8/15, 8/17, 8/19*, 8/23	

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I. Introductory Discussion

Due to an ever-increasing number of vehicles and licensed drivers, and the accompanying development of the highway system, motor vehicle collisions will remain an unfortunate tragedy for a significant segment of the population. The police function is varied. Aid to the injured, hazard assessment, traffic control and security of scene, investigation, enforcement, and collision 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. The purpose of this directive is to establish uniform procedures for motor vehicle collision response.

II. Dispatch Procedures

- A. Police Patrol units shall be assigned to respond to all collision scenes involving any of the following:
 1. Death or Injury [61.2.2,a]
 2. Hit and Run [61.2.2,b]

3. Impairment of an operator due to alcohol, drugs, illness, or other ailments [61.2.2,c]
 4. Damage to public vehicles or property [61.2.2,d]
 5. Hazardous Materials [61.2.2,e]
 6. Disturbances between involved parties [61.2.2,f]
 7. Major traffic congestion as a result of the collision [61.2.2,g]
 8. Damage to vehicles to the extent that towing is required [61.2.2,h]
 9. Where the statutory value of property damage is met so as to require investigation
- B. In certain situations it is necessary to immediately dispatch other agencies to assist at the scene of collisions.
1. For all reported personal injury collisions, Emergency Medical Services and the Fire/Rescue Unit should be dispatched
 2. For all potential personal injury collisions, Emergency Medical Services and the Fire/Rescue Unit should be dispatched, but can be cancelled en route if not needed
 3. For any collision involving power lines, utility poles, hazardous materials, or other structure(s), the Fire/Rescue Unit should be dispatched; and
 4. Emergency Medical Services and/or the Fire/Rescue Unit should be dispatched in any other situation in which they might be needed (i.e. person uninjured, but trapped in vehicle)
- C. Only Police Patrol Units will be dispatched when collisions involve property damage only, unless other assistance is needed.

III. General Motor Vehicle Collision Response Procedures

- A. Patrol units assigned to the area where the collision occurs and units sent by the police dispatcher shall be the only units authorized to proceed to the scene of a collision unless the Patrol Supervisor or OIC otherwise orders. The first police officer arriving at the scene shall make a brief radio report of the circumstances to headquarters and request assistance if any is required. They shall then take all necessary steps to provide aid to injured, protect the scene, and protect evidence.
1. The first officer arriving to the scene shall take command of the scene, but shall yield such command upon the arrival of: [61.2.3,a]
 - a. The primary assigned officer
 - b. A higher ranking officer; or
 - c. Another officer, who has been assigned, by the Patrol Supervisor or Officer-in-Charge (OIC), to take command of the scene
- B. To prevent further collisions or damage, the police cruiser shall be parked in such a manner as to be highly visible and so that on-coming traffic will be routed in such a way as to avoid the collision vehicles and/or injured parties. [61.2.3,e]

1. The emergency lights and emergency flashers will be activated
 2. Block off street or roadway if necessary until collision scene is cleared
 3. First officers at scene should communicate with other officers to determine where they are needed.
 4. Additional officers shall direct traffic as required
- C. Officers should take precautions when dealing with adverse weather or road conditions. [61.3.2,d]
- D. Officers shall use manual operation of traffic control devices when necessary. [61.3.2,e]
- E. Reflectors or flares, when used, should be placed to the front and rear of the vehicles for a distance sufficient to give adequate warning to all motorists approaching the scene.
- F. As soon as possible, the officer shall utilize any available uniform equipment (iridescent/reflective garments, gloves, etc.) that allows maximum visibility while controlling traffic, and shall direct motor vehicles in a clear and recognizable fashion.
- G. After taking immediate precautionary measures to protect the scene and ensure that the collision will not involve other vehicles, the officer's primary duty is to give prompt attention to the needs of any injured persons. [61.2.3,b]
1. Injuries shall be treated by the administration of first aid by the officer
 2. If there is previously unreported bodily injury, notify the dispatcher immediately for the services of an ambulance. Avoid moving injured persons unless necessary in order to prevent further injury
 3. Any injured person shall be transported only by ambulance, except in emergency situations and/or when approved by the Patrol Supervisor or OIC Refer to ***AOM O105 Handling Injuries/Illnesses***.
 4. Call for any other agency assistance that is required
- H. Serious Bodily Injuries and Fatal Collisions
1. If the collision involves a serious bodily injury or could possibly involve fatalities, the procedures set forth in ***AOM O610 Dead Bodies*** shall be followed and the Traffic Supervisor, if available, shall assume overall control of the investigation.
 2. The Traffic Supervisor, in consultation with a Detective Bureau Supervisor, will determine if the services of a Reconstructionist are needed. However, the initial responding officer shall remain responsible for the initial investigation and report. If one of NPD's Reconstructionist is unavailable, then the OIC will contact the Massachusetts State Police (CARS Unit) via Northampton Control who can be reached at 413-586-1508. [83.1.1]

- I. If there are individuals trapped in a collision vehicle, or if oil and gas has been spilled, the services of the Fire Department shall be requested. [61.2.3,c]
1. **Injury:** The responding officer shall administer first aid to injured persons until the arrival of Emergency Medical/ Ambulance Service.
 2. **Fire Scene:** Any officer arriving at a fire scene prior to the Fire Department will be responsible for initial fire suppression efforts. The initial efforts will be limited to fire suppression that can be readily available to the officer (i.e. fire extinguisher, blankets, garden hoses, etc.). The first officer on the scene will request the Fire Department and will coordinate other responding units to appropriate locations for evacuation or traffic control. The primary concern of police officers will be the protection of life and the removal of injured or other persons from the area of danger.
 3. **Hazardous Material:** If known, the Dispatcher will advise the responding officer that the collision involves hazardous material. The Dispatcher will also notify the OIC along with the Northampton Fire Department. Upon arriving at the scene, the situation shall be assessed and the following action taken:
 - a. Isolate the hazard area and evacuate non-essential personnel.
 - b. Provide first aid until relieved by medical personnel.
 - c. Coordinate traffic control and traffic re-routing, crowd control, and request additional officers as needed. As large an area as possible should be isolated until the hazard danger is known.
 - d. The investigating officer should attempt to safely identify the hazardous material by checking the placard on the vehicle, questioning the driver or, if safe, checking the bill of lading. If the area has to be entered, officers shall wait for properly trained and equipped personnel to respond.
- J. If an airbag system in a vehicle has been deployed, special care should be taken to avoid inhalation of fumes or dust. Gloves and eye protection should be worn before attempting passenger rescue. Use a blanket to cover the deployed airbag to limit exposure if the vehicle must be entered. If possible, avoid entering the passenger compartment of the vehicle until rescue personnel arrive with appropriate breathing apparatus.

If, during extrication, an airbag system is present but not yet deployed, the Fire/Rescue Unit or other trained personnel should immediately disconnect and isolate the battery ground cable from the vehicle battery. This will prevent a subsequent deployment of the airbag system after impact.

- K. Road measurements and/or photographs should be taken prior to the removal of collision vehicles from the roadway. This should be done as soon as possible and normal traffic flow restored without unnecessary delay. [61.2.3,d]

If the services of a tow truck are needed, request for such assistance should be made to the dispatcher.

- L. Do not permit bystanders to remain near the collision vehicles or in the roadway.
- M. Should the owner/driver of the vehicle be unable to care for their property, the investigating officer will take the following actions:
 - 1. Ask the owner what disposition they would prefer, such as locking it in the trunk, or turning it over to another person.
 - 2. If the person is unable to speak or direct the officer, the officer shall gather personal articles of the injured for safekeeping and record according to proper departmental procedures as set forth in *AOM 0312 Motor Vehicle Inventory*. [61.2.5]
- N. As soon as reasonably possible, under the circumstances, preliminary investigation shall be conducted as prescribed in *AOM 0311 Motor Vehicle Collision & Investigation*. [61.2.3,d]
- O. Police responsibility will continue until the injured have been cared for, the collision vehicles have been removed, the roadway is clear of debris, and traffic flow is normalized.
- P. Officers shall complete all required reports as prescribed in *AOM 0311 Motor Vehicle Collision & Investigation*.