


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Motor Vehicle Collision Reporting and Investigation		AOM: O-311
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [61.2.1.a-f], [61.2.3.d], [83.1.1], [83.2.4.a&b], [61.2.4], [61.2.1], [83.2.6], [61.2.3.f], [61.1.1.a]		Issuing Authority <hr/> John D. Cartledge Chief of Police
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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, traffic collisions will remain an unfortunate tragedy for a significant segment of the population. This directive establishes uniform guidelines in the investigation and reporting of such collisions in an effort to increase collision prevention and enforcement.

II. Collisions Requiring Investigation

- A. The *AOM O310 Motor Vehicle Collision Response* sets forth the types of collisions that require police response. However, not all of those collisions will require that an investigation be conducted. An investigation shall always be conducted for collisions involving the following: [61.2.1, a-f]

1. Death or Injury
2. Property Damage over \$1,000.00

3. Hit and Run
4. Impairment due to alcohol and/or drugs
5. Hazardous Materials
6. Occurrences of a serious nature on private property; and
7. Collision was a result of some other serious offense

III. Collision Investigation Procedures

- A. Procedures regarding police response to a collision scene shall be strictly followed as prescribed in *AOM O310 Motor Vehicle Collision Response*, prior to conducting a preliminary investigation.
 1. As soon as reasonably possible, under the circumstances, preliminary investigation shall be conducted and the following information recorded:
[61.2.3,d]
 - a. Time, date and place of collision
 - b. Name, address and the license numbers of the operators involved
 - c. Make, model and registration numbers of the vehicles involved
 - d. Name and address of the vehicle owners and insurance companies
 - e. Name and address of injured persons, description of visible injuries, notation of name of hospital/medical facility injured was transported to.
 - f. Whether or not restraint systems were used
 - g. Name and address of witnesses
 - h. Relevant statements made by any of the above; and
 - i. In cases where there is no property damage or personal injury sustained, records indicating such information should be obtained
 2. A record shall be made of any significant physical evidence including, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Type of roadway and width.
 - b. Road conditions (e.g. holes, ruts, curves, low shoulders, pavement markings, construction, wet, dry, icy, etc.).
 - c. Weather and lighting conditions.
 - d. Traffic control signs or signals, and if in good working order.
 - e. Identification of marks on the roadway.
 - f. Direction of travel of involved vehicles.
 - g. Point of impact.
 - h. Position of vehicles after impact and whether moved; and
 - i. Inoperable or defective equipment (e.g. tire, light, horn or brake damage especially important); and
 - j. Damage to the vehicle (e.g. fenders, doors, body, etc.).
 - k. If the damage to the vehicle is over or under \$1,000.
 3. If necessary, the investigating officer shall inform their OIC to request the services of Department personnel who are available on a 24-hour basis to process or reconstruct a crime scene traffic collision. The initial responding

officer shall remain responsible for the initial investigation and report.
[83.1.1] [83.2.4,a & b]

4. If it is determined that there is sufficient evidence, any necessary criminal charges may be made against those involved, and citations may be issued for any civil violations.

IV. Collision Investigation Follow-Up Activities [61.2.4]

- A. The collection and/or documentation of off-scene data shall be the responsibility of the investigating officer, as necessary on a case-by-case basis. It may be necessary to request the District Attorney's Office to summons some of the following types of off-scene data:
 1. Medical Records.
 2. Physician Reports.
 3. Blood Tests.
 4. Vehicle Mechanical Inspections.
 5. Laboratory Reports; and/or
 6. Obtaining formal statements from witnesses.
- B. Officers shall, if possible and when necessary, obtain written and signed witness statements at collision scenes. Officers shall seek to obtain written statements as soon as possible after the collision. Written witness reports shall be obtained on standard witness statement forms.
- C. The decision to employ reconstruction and skid analysis will be made by the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the collision scene. If such procedures are needed they shall request the services of Department personnel who specialize in such procedures. [83.1.1]

V. Collision Reporting Procedures [61.2.1]

- A. Officers responding to traffic collisions that do not demand an investigation (collisions other than those listed in Section II) shall complete all required forms and reports except the state collision reporting form.
- B. An officer responding to and handling an investigative traffic collision shall follow the following procedures: [83.2.6]
 1. Complete all required departmental reports and forms including the state collision reporting form as listed on pages one and two;
 2. Submit proper reports for the vehicle operators; and
 3. Follow proper evidence/property collection and reporting procedures as prescribed in *AOM O402 Evidence & Property Handling Procedures*.
- C. Reports regarding vehicular collisions shall be submitted by the proper authority to the Registry of Motor Vehicles as required by the Massachusetts General Laws.

D. Fatal Collisions

1. The Traffic Supervisor or Collision Reconstructionist shall be responsible for the investigation of all fatal/serious injury traffic collisions and to coordinate with the Detective Bureau to assist in the investigation. They shall also be responsible for the following:
 - a. Follow procedures specified in *AOM 0610 Dead Bodies*.
 - b. In all fatal collisions, per Massachusetts General Law Chapter 90 Section 29 requires police departments to promptly notify the RMV of any fatal collision or collision involving serious injury occurring within the department's jurisdiction within fifteen days, but preferably within 24 hours, through the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS). Notification shall include the particulars of the accident and every effort should be made to include the name(s) of the driver(s) involved to ensure timely action on the part of the RMV to protect the safety of the travelling public.
 - c. In the absence of the Traffic Supervisor, the on-duty supervisor or OIC shall be in charge of the investigation.

E. Property of Collision Victims [61.2.3,f]

1. If the owner/driver is unable to speak or direct the officer, all property both inside and outside the vehicle shall be inventoried. After inventory, any valuable property such as cash, credit cards, or jewelry shall be removed and handled consistent with the procedures for found and confiscated property found in *AOM 0402 Evidence and Property Handling Procedures*.
 - a. Inventory shall specifically describe such things as:
 - 1) Make
 - 2) Model
 - 3) Serial Number
 - 4) Type
 - 5) Amount (of money, or number of items)
 - 6) Any other identifying descriptions

VI. Traffic Supervisor's Responsibilities

- A. Review all collision reports and motor vehicle citations to ensure that they are properly completed. Advise officers' respective supervisors of any deficiencies and return reports that are incomplete or require correction, to their authors through their respective supervisors.
 1. Ensure collision reporting is in compliance with section 26 of Chapter 90 of the Massachusetts General Laws.
- B. Regularly review all collisions still under investigation to ensure their proper and timely completion.

- C. Utilize the files on traffic collisions to further determine which areas require special attention. Analyze traffic information data to make recommendations to improve traffic safety and efficiency. [61.1.1,a]

VII. Officer – Involved Collisions

In accordance with departmental rules and regulations, officers who are involved in any collisions with a Department vehicle shall not move the vehicle, except in an emergency or if its position would significantly hinder traffic or create a hazard. The officer shall immediately notify the OIC from the scene of the collision. The OIC, or designee, shall immediately go to the scene, conduct an investigation, and report all particulars to the Chief forthwith. The officer involved shall promptly submit a written report. Once all paperwork has been completed, the Fleet Manager shall enter the collision information into the V-DOC application in LEFTA.