

Traffic Accident Response and Reporting

501.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The public safety responsibilities of law enforcement include responding to traffic accidents, providing aid and assistance, documentation of the incident and identification of criminal activity. The Colorado State University Police Department prepares traffic accident reports in compliance with CRS § 42-4-1606 and as a public service makes traffic accident information available to the public.

501.2 CALL RESPONSE

Officers should respond without delay when dispatched to a traffic accident. A traffic accident with injuries reported may include an emergency response if the officer reasonably believes such a response is appropriate.

501.2.1 RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

An officer responding to and upon arrival at an accident, should consider the following:

- (a) The most appropriate route to the incident
- (b) Proper placement of the emergency vehicle to provide protection for officers and the scene
- (c) Potential for involvement of hazardous materials
- (d) Additional support that may be necessary (e.g., traffic control, medical aid, Fire/HAZMAT, ambulance, tow vehicles)
- (e) Providing first aid to any injured parties if it can be done safely, and obtaining medical assistance as necessary
- (f) Traffic control and protection of the scene, including initial digital evidence documentation
- (g) Clearance of the roadway

501.3 ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Investigation of traffic collisions should include, at minimum, the following:

- (a) Identification and interview of all involved parties
- (b) Identification and interview of any witnesses
- (c) Determination if any crime has occurred and taking appropriate enforcement action
- (d) Identification and protection of items of apparent evidentiary value
- (e) Documentation of the incident as necessary (e.g., statements, measurements, photographs, collection of evidence and reporting) on appropriate report forms

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501.4 TAKING ENFORCEMENT ACTION

After a thorough investigation in which physical evidence or independent witness statements indicate that a violation of Colorado law led to the accident, officers should issue a traffic citation or a misdemeanor citation to the offending driver. Officers may arrest a person when there is probable cause to believe that an offense was committed by the person to be arrested (CRS § 16-3-102).

Incidents involving more serious violations, such as driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, vehicular manslaughter or other felonies, shall be enforced immediately. If a driver subject to enforcement is admitted to a hospital, a supervisor shall be contacted to determine the best enforcement option.

501.5 TRAFFIC ACCIDENT REPORTING

501.5.1 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Department members shall utilize forms approved by the Department of Revenue, Motor Vehicle Division (CRS § 42-4-1608) for the reporting of traffic accidents. All traffic accident reports taken by members of this department shall be submitted for approval and data entry into the records management system.

501.5.2 MODIFICATIONS TO TRAFFIC ACCIDENT REPORTS

A change or modification of a written report that alters a material fact in the report may be made only by the person who prepared the report. A written supplemental report may be made by any authorized employee.

501.5.2.3 EXCEPTIONS TO TRAFFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Traffic accidents that occur during periods when the public has been advised to report such accidents at a later time (usually during extreme weather conditions). These traffic accidents will also be recorded rather than investigated unless further investigation is warranted.

501.6 REPORTING SITUATIONS

501.6.1 TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVOLVING UNIVERSITY VEHICLES

Traffic accident investigation reports shall be taken when a University-owned vehicle is involved in a traffic accident on a roadway or highway, wherein any damage or injury results. A general information report may be taken in lieu of a traffic accident report at the direction of a supervisor when the accident occurs on private property or does not involve another vehicle. Whenever there is damage to a University vehicle, a CSU Transportation Services accident report shall be completed and forwarded to the appropriate Transportation Services representative.

Digital evidence of the accident scene and vehicle damage will be taken.

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501.6.2 INJURY OR FATALITY TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS WITH POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

When an employee of this department, either on- or off-duty, is involved in a traffic accident within the jurisdiction of the Colorado State University Police Department and it results in a serious injury or fatality, the appropriate Division Commander and the Shift Supervisor should request the activation of the Critical Incident Response Team.

The term serious bodily injury is defined as bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death, serious permanent disfigurement, protracted loss or impairment of bodily function (CRS § 18-1-901(3)(p)).

501.6.3 TRAFFIC COLLISIONS WITH OTHER UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES OR OFFICIALS

The appropriate Division Commander or Shift Supervisor may request assistance from the CSP, FCPS or other outside agency for the investigation of any traffic accident involving any University official or employee where a serious injury or fatality has occurred.

501.6.4 TRAFFIC COLLISIONS INVOLVING INJURED ANIMALS

Department members should refer to the Animal Control Policy when a traffic accident involves disposition of an injured animal.

501.7 NOTIFICATION OF OPERATIONS DIVISION COMMANDER

In the event of a serious injury or death-related traffic accident, the Shift Supervisor shall notify the Operations Division Commander to relate the circumstances of the traffic accident. In the absence of the Operations Division Commander, the Shift Supervisor or any supervisor may assign an investigator or officer to investigate the traffic accident.

501.8 NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN

If a traffic accident causes a life-threatening injury or fatality, the supervisor responsible for the incident should ensure notification of the victim's next of kin with the Coroner, or coordinate such notification with the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency if next of kin reside out of the jurisdiction or out of state. Notification should be made as soon as practical following positive identification of the victim.

The identity of any person seriously injured or deceased in a traffic accident will not be released until notification is made to the victim's next of kin by the Coroner or appropriate assisting Law Enforcement Agency.