



ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT
PROCEDURAL ORDERS

SOP 2-46

Effective: 05/09/19 Review: 05/19/20 Replaces: 03/27/17

2-46 RESPONSE TO TRAFFIC CRASHES

Related SOP(s):

[1-78 Police Service Aide Program](#)

[2-48 Towing and Wrecker Services](#)

[2-64 Identification, Interviewing, and Detention of Witnesses to Crime](#)

2-46-1 Purpose

This policy provides the procedures to be followed when Department personnel investigate traffic crashes.

2-46-2 Policy

It is the policy of the Department to respond to and investigate traffic crashes occurring on a roadway, while limiting the impact to the flow of traffic. These endeavors are accomplished through rapid assessment of personal injury and damage to vehicles and the immediate re-opening of lanes of traffic.

2-46-3 Definition

A. Traffic Crash

1. An unintended event resulting in injury or damage, involving one or more motor vehicles (National Highway Traffic Safety Administrations definition of a CRASH).

2-46-4 Procedures

A. Reported or Observed Traffic Crash

1. It is the first responding Officer's responsibility to ensure the safety of the vehicle operator and passengers and, if feasible, given the traffic and weather conditions, the protection of their vehicle from further damage.
2. First responding Officer and/or Police Service Aide (PSA) will take these actions:
 - a. Immediately determine the existence of injuries.
 - b. Protect the scene of the crash as much as possible. If there is a serious injury or fatality, ensure witnesses are identified and separated, and involved vehicles and debris shall not be moved. (See SOP – Identification, Interviewing, and Detention of Witnesses to Crime)
 - c. Ensure that emergency medical services are provided, if necessary.
 - d. Request additional assistance as needed.
 - e. Determine whether or not the crash vehicles are operational.
 - f. Request a wrecker to remove vehicles that cannot be removed by the owner.



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- g. Note the positioning of the vehicles(s).
- h. A diagram of the crash shall be completed when an injury has been reported. When a non-injury crash occurs the Officer has the option of completing a diagram.
- i. Ensure removal of vehicles and debris from the roadway, as described in section B below (once the crash investigation is complete, debris can and should be removed from the roadway by either the on-scene Officer(s), PSA(s), or by the responding wrecker company to limit further damage to the motoring publics vehicles).
- j. After investigating the crash, take the necessary enforcement action.

3. Investigation Responsibility

- a. The responsibility for conducting the investigation and submitting reports shall rest with the first patrol Officer, traffic Officer, or PSA dispatched to handle the crash unless otherwise specified in this section. PSA's will be allowed to complete reports on injury crashes with the approval of a supervisor.
- b. Crash reports will be made on a State of New Mexico Uniform Crash Report form in TraCS.

B. Proper Removal of Vehicles

1. If the vehicles are operational, and there are no serious injuries or fatalities, the vehicles should be removed from the roadway as quickly and safely as possible.
2. If the vehicles cannot be removed safely, the responding Officer/PSA will, if feasible, make every effort to maintain the safe and constant flow of traffic around the scene.

C. Freeway Crashes

1. A Field Services Bureau unit equipped with emergency lights will be dispatched to the scene of all crashes on the freeway if a traffic Officer on a motorcycle was initially dispatched to investigate the crash.
2. Personnel may request the DOT Courtesy Patrol when available.

D. Private Property Crashes

1. For crashes occurring on private property, Officers will complete crash reports ONLY in cases which involve the following:
 - a. Great bodily harm or death.
 - b. A vehicle belonging to the City of Albuquerque or upon request of other governmental agency.



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- c. Suspected of impaired drivers or reckless driving.
- d. Hit and run crash investigations with offender information
- e. Extensive damage to private property.

2. If any of the above conditions are not present, (Emergency Communications Center) ECC shall advise the parties involved to obtain crash report forms from any police station.

3. Officers or PSAs who are flagged down or who come upon private property crashes will take these actions:

- a. Ensure that the parties involved exchange the necessary information.
- b. Advise the parties involved to fill out the crash forms at any police station within five working days
- c. If a report is requested by parties in the crash, they will be referred to the appropriate substation.

E. Hit and Run Crashes

1. Hit and run follow-up investigations will be the responsibility of the investigating Officer under the following conditions:

- a. The hit and run vehicle is registered within the city limits of Albuquerque.
- b. The investigation will continue until all leads developed have been exhausted.

2. Hit and run follow-up investigations will be coordinated by the Hit and Run Unit. This coordination will include review and reassignment of cases back to field Officers. The Hit and Run Officer will coordinate follow-up investigations for vehicles outside of the Officer's jurisdiction.

F. Crashes Involving City Vehicles

1. All injury crashes involving city-owned vehicles will be investigated by on duty Traffic Division personnel if available.
2. Non-injury crashes involving city-owned vehicles may be investigated by a traffic Officer, if available, during their normal working hours. If a traffic unit is not available, a field supervisor will respond to the scene and ensure a proper investigation.

G. Crashes Involving Vehicles from Other Government Agencies

1. Investigations of crashes involving vehicles from other government agencies will be treated the same way as investigations of any other motor vehicle crash.

H. Crashes at School Crossings



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1. The investigating Officer will assure that the school safety coordinator has been notified in the following cases:
 - a. Crashes at school crossings involving school children or school vehicles during normal school hours.
 - b. Crashes when a school crossing guard is present at a school crossing and/or is working at an intersection.
 2. Working hours of guards at the intersections and/or crosswalks can be obtained from Communications or the school safety coordinator.
- I. Fatal and Potentially Fatal Crash Investigations
1. Fatal and potentially fatal crash investigations are the responsibility of traffic personnel. During their normal working hours, traffic personnel will be dispatched to all fatal and potentially fatal crashes. During non-duty hours, members of the Fatal Crash Team will be on call for all fatal and potentially fatal crashes. It will be the responsibility of the on-duty field supervisor to have Communications contact the traffic supervisor and the on-call crash investigators.
 2. Upon their arrival at the scene, the traffic personnel will assume responsibility for the scene and for the investigation.
 3. Supplemental reports from all Officers at the scene, describing their actions while at the scene, will be completed and given to the investigating Officer before the end of each Officer's shift.
- J. Crashes During Inclement Weather
1. During inclement weather conditions, supervisors are authorized to suspend normal crash investigation procedures for those crashes involving minor damage, when both vehicles are drivable.
- K. Crash victims will be advised by communications or a supervisor when conditions necessitate the suspension of crash investigations. Involved parties will be informed where crash forms may be obtained.