I. PURPOSE

The Harford County Sheriff’s Office is tasked with the investigation of motor vehicle crashes on Harford County roadways. This policy is intended to establish guidelines for the investigation of these incidents.

II. POLICY

With distinction and pride, we protect the rights of all citizens equally. It shall be the policy of the Harford County Sheriff’s Office to ensure that its members are properly trained and equipped to conduct thorough motor vehicle crash investigations, render aid to injured persons and to enforce applicable traffic laws.

III. DEFINITIONS

Motor Vehicle Crash: Any unintentional act (crash) that involves a moving motor vehicle striking another vehicle, pedestrian, public or private property. One or more vehicle(s) must have been in motion with the collision occurring on a roadway or any property, public or private, used by the public in general.

*Note: If the crash is determined to be an intentional act such as an assault using a motor vehicle, suicide, or other intentional act it should be investigated as a crime.

Fatal: Any crash that involves the death of a driver, passenger, or pedestrian.

Personal Injury Life Threatening: Any crash that involves injury of a driver, passenger, or pedestrian that is deemed to be life threatening.

Personal Injury: Any crash that involves an injury of a driver, passenger, or pedestrian.
**Property Damage:** Any crash that involves damage to public or private property.

**Hit and Run Crash:** Any crash in which one or more vehicle(s) involved in a crash leave the scene without rendering aid or leaving required information.

**Departmental Crash:** Any crash that involves an Agency vehicle (this includes vehicles leased/rented by the Agency).

**Non-Traffic:** Any crash that does not occur on a roadway or property used by the general public. This may include residential driveways, fields, etc. in which the crash did not originate from a roadway.

**Investigators:**

**Patrol Deputy:** A patrol deputy tasked with the investigation of property damage and most personal injury crash investigations that occur within their patrol sectors.

**Advanced Crash Investigator:** A deputy who has received between 40 and 160 hours of additional specialized training. Advanced Crash Investigators assist patrol deputies in the investigation of departmental crashes, crashes with serious injuries, and on some less complex fatal crashes.

**Crash Reconstructionist:** A deputy specially trained to handle complex and serious motor vehicle crashes that involve life threatening or fatal injuries. These investigators have received training beyond Advanced Crash Investigation.
Harford County Sheriff's Office
Policy # MAN4800: Crash Investigations

4800.1 Investigation Procedures
   4800.1.1 Deputies should use due care and caution when responding to a motor vehicle crash.
   4800.1.2 Upon arrival, deputies should evaluate the scene and request additional units as required to assist with traffic control.
   4800.1.3 Deputies should check for any injured persons, render first aid, and, if needed, request EMS.
   4800.1.4 Deputies shall attempt to identify all drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and witnesses.
   4800.1.5 Deputies should determine what happened to cause the crash and record any investigative information related to the crash.

4800.2 Property Damage
   4800.2.1 No Report Required:
      4800.2.1.1 No injuries.
      4800.2.1.2 Involved vehicles are functional.
      4800.2.1.3 All parties agree to settle the matter between themselves.
      4800.2.1.2 Deputy will advise each motorist that an accident investigation will not be conducted.
   4800.2.2 The deputy shall complete their ETIX data entry or form SO-018 (Memo to Motorists Involved in a Traffic Accident) and provide a copy to each driver and property owner.
   4800.2.3 The deputy shall notify the Department of Emergency Operations dispatcher of the tag numbers for the vehicle(s) involved and provide the disposition code 89 for the incident.

4800.3 MAARS Report Required (Property Damage)
   4800.3.1 Involved vehicle(s) have been rendered non-functional.
   4800.3.2 If one of the drivers is unlicensed.
   4800.3.3 If one of the vehicles is uninsured.
   4800.3.4 If one of the vehicles is unregistered.
   4800.3.5 Involved vehicles are Harford County owned/leased (regardless of damage severity).
   4800.3.5.1 Harford County school bus.
   4800.3.6 Crash involves hazardous materials.
   4800.3.7 Crash involves a suspected DUI operator.
   4800.3.8 Hit and run:
   4800.3.8.1 Exception – minor property damage with no suspect may be handled with a code 89.
   4800.3.9 Upon specific request by any motor vehicle owner/operator, or property owner, if the crash is reported in a timely manner and if the crash circumstances are such that a reasonable investigation can be conducted.
4800.3.10 Departmental Crash:
4800.3.10.1 Supervisor incident report shall be completed,
4800.3.10.2 Photographs shall be taken, regardless of damage severity,
4800.3.10.3 Drivers and witness statements shall be taken.
4800.3.11 The deputy shall notify the Department of Emergency Operations
dispatcher of the tag numbers for the vehicle(s) involved and provide the
disposition code 90 for the incident.

4800.4 MAARS Report Required (Personal Injury)
4800.4.1 If there are no obvious injuries to a party involved in the crash, but they
complain of an injury, the incident shall be handled as a personal injury crash.
4800.4.2 If the injuries are life threatening, a member of the Traffic Unit shall be
notified to decide if the response of an Advanced Crash Investigator or Crash
Reconstructionist is necessary.

4800.5 Fatal (MAARS Report Required)
4800.5.1 A member of the Traffic Unit shall be notified to determine if the
response of a Crash Reconstructionist is needed.
4800.5.2 If possible, the body of the victim should be left undisturbed until the
arrival of the medical examiner.
4800.5.3 Prompt notification of next of kin should be made.
4800.5.3.1 If possible, two deputies, one being a supervisor, should make
notification.
4800.5.4 Victim Services or an agency chaplain should be considered to assist
with notification.
4800.5.5 A teletype advising of the fatal crash shall be sent by the Traffic Unit to
the Maryland State Police within 24 hours of the incident.
4800.5.6 The duty officer will ensure that the Agency Public Information Officer
(PIO) is notified, as soon as practical, that a fatal crash has occurred.

4800.6 Reports
4800.6.1 MAARS Reports shall be submitted prior to the end of the investigating
deputy’s tour of duty.
4800.6.2 When a MAARS report is written, the investigating deputy,
when possible, shall provide the motorist(s) with the following information:
4800.6.2.1 Investigating deputy’s name and phone number.
4800.6.2.2 Report number.
4800.6.2.3 Insurance information for the other vehicle.

4800.7 Charging
4800.7.1 The investigating deputy should make every effort to
identify the at fault driver and issue the appropriate citation(s).
4800.7.1.1 Witnesses shall also be summoned when citations are issued.
4800.7.2 If the crash is life threatening or fatal, the investigating deputy shall not
issue any citation(s) until after consulting with the State’s Attorney.
4800.7.3 If a citation is issued, a MAARS report shall be completed.
4800.8 Response

4800.8.1 The Watch Commander/Duty Officer may suspend response to less serious crashes due to:

4800.8.1.1 Natural disasters (i.e., snow emergencies, flood, etc.)

4800.8.1.2 Large-scale emergency

4800.8.2 Police Dispatch may be directed by the Watch Commander/Duty Officer to inform motorists involved in minor crashes of the delay in response until the county-wide emergency has passed.