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Sheriff

HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONAL POLICY

Crash Investigation

Distribution:	All Employees			Policy Number:	OPS 1101
Responsible Unit:	Traffic Unit			Rescinds:	MAN 4800 dated 7/2/12
Original Issued Date:	02/16/22	Revision #:	1	Latest Revision Date:	03/03/25
Latest Required Review was Completed:		03/03/25	Next Review Due:	03/31/28	

1. Purpose

The Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) will establish guidelines for the investigation of motor vehicle crashes on Harford County roadways.

2. Policy

The HCSO will ensure that employees are properly trained and equipped to conduct thorough motor vehicle crash investigations, render aid to injured persons and to enforce applicable traffic laws.

3. Definition

ADVANCED CRASH INVESTIGATOR: a deputy who has received between 80 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 a minimum of 240 hours of Advanced Crash Investigation.

DEPARTMENTAL CRASH: any crash that involves an Agency vehicle (this includes vehicles leased/rented by the Agency).

FATAL: any crash that involves the death of a driver, passenger, or pedestrian.

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.

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.*

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.

PERSONAL INJURY: any crash that involves an injury of a driver, passenger, or pedestrian.

PERSONAL INJURY LIFE THREATENING: any crash that involves an injury of a driver, passenger, or pedestrian that is deemed to be life threatening.

PROPERTY DAMAGE: any crash that involves damage to public or private property.

4. Procedures

A. Investigating Deputies will:

1. Use due care and caution when responding to a motor vehicle crash;
2. Check for any injured persons, render first aid, and, if needed, request EMS;
3. Evaluate the scene and request additional units as required to assist with traffic control;
4. Attempt to identify all drivers, passengers, pedestrians, witnesses, and vehicles; and
5. Determine the cause the crash and record any investigative information related to the crash.

B. Property Damage (No report required)

1. No report required if:
 - a. There are no injuries;
 - b. The Involved vehicles are functional; and
 - c. All parties agree to settle the matter between themselves.
2. The deputy will advise each motorist that a crash investigation will not be conducted.
3. The deputy will notify the Harford County Department of Emergency Services (DES) dispatcher of the tag numbers for the vehicle(s) involved and provide the disposition code 89 for the incident.
4. The deputy will complete their ETIX data entry and provide each driver and property owner, if applicable, with the crash exchange information.

C. Property Damage (Report Required)

1. Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS) report required if:
 - a. Involved vehicle(s) have been rendered non-functional;
 - b. One of the drivers is unlicensed;
 - c. One of the vehicles is uninsured;
 - d. One of the vehicles is unregistered;

- e. One of the vehicles is a Harford County school bus;
 - f. One of the vehicles is Harford County owned/leased (regardless of damage severity);
 - g. The crash involves hazardous materials;
 - h. The crash involves a suspected DUI operator;
 - i. The crash is a hit and run (if there is only minor damage with no suspect may be handled with code 89);
 - j. Injuries require an Emergency Medical Services response;
 - k. A citation is issued;
 - l. The crash involves an Agency vehicle (refer to policy ADM 0602 – Agency Vehicle Crashes);
 - m. 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 reasonable investigation can be conducted; or
 - n. The Traffic Unit or a member of the Crash Team will handle all departmental crashes wherein it is deemed by the patrol supervisor to be too complex for the patrol deputy to handle (multiple vehicle accidents, extenuating circumstances, etc).
2. The deputy will notify the DES dispatcher of the tag numbers for the vehicle(s) involved and provide the disposition code 90 for the incident.

D. Personal Injury (ACRS Report Required)

- 1. If there are no obvious injuries to a party involved in the crash, but they complain of an injury, the incident will be handled as a personal injury crash.
- 2. The Traffic Unit or a member of the Crash Team will handle all departmental crashes wherein anyone involved in the crash is injured, purported to be injured, or suspected of injury and is transported to the hospital.
- 3. If the injuries are life threatening, the Traffic Unit Supervisor will be notified to decide if the response of an Advanced Crash Investigator or Crash Reconstructionist is necessary.

E. Fatal Crash (ACRS Report Required)

- 1. The Crash Team will be notified to assume the investigation for all fatal crashes.
- 2. If possible, the body of the victim should be left undisturbed until the arrival of the medical examiner.
- 3. Prompt notification of next of kin should be made, if possible, by two deputies, one being a supervisor.

4. Victim Services or an Agency chaplain should be considered to assist with notification.
5. The Duty Officer will ensure that the Agency Office of Media and Public Relations (OMPR) is notified, as soon as practical, that a fatal crash has occurred.
6. The Crash Team will provide the OMPR with updates when available.
7. The Crash Team will provide a synopsis to Command via a Command Bureau text.

F. Reports

1. ACRS Reports will be submitted prior to the end of the investigating deputy's tour of duty.
2. When an ACRS report is written, the investigating deputy, when possible, will provide the motorist(s) and property owners if applicable with the following information:
 - a. Investigating deputy's name and phone number;
 - b. Report number; and
 - c. Insurance information for the other vehicle.

G. Charges

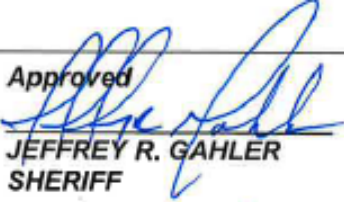
1. The investigating deputy should make every effort to identify the at fault driver and issue the appropriate citation(s).
2. Witnesses will also be summoned when citations are issued.
3. If the crash is life threatening or fatal, the investigating deputy will not issue any citation(s) until after consulting with the State's Attorney.
4. If a citation is issued, an ACRS report will be completed.

H. Response

1. The Watch Commander/Duty Officer may suspend response to less serious crashes due to:
 - a. Natural disasters (i.e., snow emergencies, flood, etc.); or
 - b. A large-scale emergency.
2. DES dispatch may be requested 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.

5. Summary of Changes

- A. 11/01/23 – Added language that the Traffic Unit or a member of the Crash Team will handle all agency vehicle crashes wherein it is deemed by the patrol supervisor to be too complex for the patrol deputy to handle and when personal injury is involved or suspected.
- B. 03/03/25 – The 3-year agency policy review was conducted, and no edits or changes were made.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF
DATE 11.14.23