

JACKSONVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy: 10-4

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MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISION INVESTIGATIONS

PURPOSE: To give sworn personnel guidelines on when and how to investigate motor vehicle collisions.

POLICY: This Department has as one of its goals and objectives the reduction of motor vehicle collisions. To accomplish this, the Department performs a variety of traffic collision investigation functions including providing emergency service to the injured, protecting the collision scene, conducting collision investigations and follow-ups, preparing reports and taking proper enforcement action relative to incidents. The purpose of investigation is to properly determine the causative factors involved in an automobile crash and utilize these factors to develop enforcement that will reduce the incidence of collisions. Collision reports taken are utilized by the Arkansas State Police and Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department at the state level and by this Department at the local level to study the frequency of crashes at a given location and time, the causes, the conditions that exist at the time, etc. The reports are also used by this Department to develop selective enforcement programs and to promote street and highway safety.

PROCEDURES:

I. COLLISION REPORT AND INVESTIGATION GENERAL

The following rules shall apply to all probationary and sworn employees:

- A. Arkansas Code requirements concerning the reporting of traffic collisions include:
 - 1. Drivers involved in a traffic collision that results in injury or death of a person or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1000.00) will report it to the nearest law enforcement agency immediately. (Ref. A.C.A. §27-53-202)
 - 2. An officer investigating a collision will do so with all promptness and the report shall be forwarded to the Arkansas State Police within five (5) days of the completion of the investigation. (Ref. A.C.A. §27-53-303(c))
- B. The terminology used in the above laws requires "reports of collisions". For our purposes, a report is made by a law enforcement officer who has investigated a collision at the scene or elsewhere, the length, duration and depth of investigative effort being that time necessary to thoroughly and properly investigate the collision.
- C. Generally, the Jacksonville Police Department will investigate all collisions that occur within the city limits, with the exception of collisions along US Highway 67/167, which are generally investigated by the Arkansas State Police. Officers will provide assistance to ASP when needed.
- D. Officers will respond "Code 3" to vehicle collisions reported to have injuries or fatalities or roadway is blocked. For all other vehicle collisions, officers will respond "Code 1."
- E. A law enforcement officer will be assigned and respond to, and prepare an Arkansas Motor Vehicle Crash Report involving any of the following:
 - 1. Death or injury.
 - 2. Property damage in excess of the reportable amount established by the Legislature.
 - 3. Hit and run.
 - 4. Impairment due to alcohol and drugs.
 - 5. Hazardous materials.
 - 6. Any collision involving public property or vehicles.

- F. All vehicle collisions, occurring on the public roadway of the City of Jacksonville, will be documented on the Arkansas Motor Vehicle Crash Report.
- G. A law enforcement officer will be assigned to and prepare an incident report on the following motor vehicle collisions:
 - 1. Private property collisions involving injuries or hit and run.
- H. Private property collisions that do not involve injury or are a hit and run will be completed on JPD Form PD129: Private Property Accident Report.
- I. Vehicle /Animal collisions will be completed on JPD Form PD115: Arkansas Motor Vehicle/Animal Collision Report.
- J. Law enforcement officers should also be assigned to respond to any collision involving disturbances between parties, or which create major traffic congestion as a result of the collision or where vehicles are damaged to the extent that towing is required. Law enforcement officers may be assigned to any other collision, not listed above, to assist persons involved with information exchange, etc.
- K. Collision scene responsibilities of the first officer at the scene include:
 - 1. Administering emergency medical care (basic life support measures) pending arrival of rescue squad.
 - 2. Summoning additional help as required (officers, rescue, tow truck, etc.).
 - 3. Identifying and dealing with fire hazards and/or hazardous materials (leaking fluids, gasoline, diesel fuel, power lines down, etc.).
 - 4. Protecting collision scene.
 - 5. Preserving short-lived evidence (broken parts, skid marks, etc.).
 - 6. Establishing a safe traffic pattern around scene.
 - 7. Locating witnesses and recording collision information.
 - 8. Expediting removal from roadway of vehicles, persons, and debris (in property damage only) collisions, where possible, get vehicles off roadway immediately to get traffic moving.
- L. The officer initially dispatched to a collision shall normally be responsible for the investigation and completion of an accurate and complete report of the collision, unless otherwise directed by the shift supervisor.
- M. Officers will issue a citation on all at fault accidents. If no violations can be determined by the assigned officer, a supervisor will respond to the scene for evaluation before any motorist is released from the scene.
 - a. If there is snow and ice present as a contributing factor a citation may not be issued.
- N. The investigating officer will reasonably ensure that the personal property of the collision victim(s) is properly protected from theft if the victim or member of the victim's family is unable to take custody of it due to injury. If this is the case, the officer will inventory the vehicle using a tow slip listing the contents of the vehicle. The officer shall seize items of monetary value (i.e. money, bank cards/credit cards) or any other items the officer feels should be seized for safekeeping purposes (weapons, jewelry, etc.), and placed into property. An incident report will be completed if items are placed into property for safekeeping.
- O. The nature of some collisions may necessitate a follow-up investigation to obtain information that cannot be obtained at the collision scene. Follow-up investigation activities may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Collecting off-scene data such as additional information about the drivers, pedestrians, vehicles, roadway controls, etc;
 - 2. Obtaining/recording formal statements from witnesses in collisions involving serious injury or damage;
 - 3. Reconstructing collisions based on data gathered at the scene when the cause or sequence of events cannot initially be determined; and