



**California State University, Los Angeles**  
**Department of Public Safety**

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NUMBER: IV-17 APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Wall, Chief of Police

EFFECTIVE: November 1, 2015

SUPERSEDES: May 1, 2007 Reviewed/Revised: September 30, 2015

SUBJECT: **Traffic Collision Investigation**

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I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for the investigation of traffic collisions occurring within the jurisdictional boundaries of California State University, Los Angeles.

II. POLICY:

Traffic collisions are investigated by officers to determine the cause and to review any violation(s) of the California Vehicle Code and California State University regulations. Collision information is also used to educate the public, allow the police agency to provide a safer environment where vehicles travel, and to protect the rights of the citizens involved.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Traffic Collision Investigation. Collection of factual information identifying and describing people, roads, and vehicles involved in a collision; description of the results of the accident in terms of damage to vehicles and roadside objects, injuries to people, marks and residue on the road, and final positions of vehicles and bodies; interpretation of these facts in terms of behavior of road users involved; and, sometimes, an attempt to specify the peculiar combination of factors required to produce that particular accident.
- B. Traffic Collision Reporting. Basic data collection to identify and classify a traffic collision and the persons, vehicles, time/location, planned movements involved, and possible contributing factors, such as traffic law violations.
- C. Traffic Control Device. All signs, signals, markings, and devices placed on, over, or adjacent to a street or highway by authority of a public body or official having jurisdiction to regulate, warn, or guide traffic.
- D. Traffic Engineering Authorities. Persons responsible for traffic engineering in various local, regional, and state agencies.
- E. Traffic Law Enforcement. Law enforcement as it applies to statutes, ordinances, and legally authorized regulations relating to the use of streets and highways and ownership/operation of motor vehicles and other road vehicles.

- F. Traffic Law Enforcement Action. The part of traffic law enforcement involving arrests, citations, or warning of any person alleged to have violated a law, ordinance, or regulation pertaining to the use of traffic-ways, when the person has knowledge of this action and when it is to (1) prevent such violation from endangering persons or property or inconveniencing other users of the traffic-way, (2) prevent continued violation, or (3) discourage recurrences.
- G. Traffic Law Violation. Violation of any statute, ordinance, or legally authorized regulation relating to the use of streets and highways or the operation and ownership of motor vehicles and other road vehicles.
- H. Traffic Patrol. The part of law enforcement traffic supervision that consists of driving or walking within an area or a roadway for the purpose of providing protection, security, and service to the public.
- I. Traffic Survey. An examination of traffic characteristics, such as volume, speed, delay, accidents, origin, destination, etc.
- J. Traffic-way. The entire width between property lines or other boundary lines of every way or place of which any part is open to the public for purposes of vehicular travel as a matter of right or custom.

#### IV. PROCEDURES:

- A. Collisions, which are considered priority in nature, shall include those which are reported or believed to involve:
  - 1. Death or injury;
  - 2. Hit and run accidents;
  - 3. Impairment of a driver due to intoxication of some form;
  - 4. Damage to public vehicles or property;
  - 5. Hazardous materials;
  - 6. Disturbances between principal parties;
  - 7. Collisions which cause severe traffic congestion; and
  - 8. Collisions which require towing services.
- B. Section 16000(a) of the California Vehicle Code requires an accident be reported within 10 days when it involves:
  - 1. Death;
  - 2. Injury; or
  - 3. Damage to any party that exceeds \$750.00
- C. Officers of this department shall additionally complete a traffic collision report or investigation when:
  - 1. The accident involves a state vehicle;
  - 2. An officer is making an arrest or issuing a citation at the scene of a violation and the violation was a primary collision factor in the collision.
- D. Officer Response.
  - 1. The first officer arriving at the scene of a traffic collision will be considered the "primary" officer and will be in charge until directed otherwise by a supervisor.
  - 2. As the "primary" officer he/she should do the following:

- a. Advise Communications (Dispatch) of:
  - 1) The location of traffic collision;
  - 2) Number of vehicles involved;
  - 3) Injury or non-injury/numbered injured;
  - 4) If there is a need for emergency services (Fire/Paramedics); and
  - 5) If additional police units are needed to assist in caring for injured parties.
  
- b. Attempt to secure scene, preserving evidence, and prevent other vehicles from becoming involved in the collision scene.
  
- c. Identify injured parties:
  - 1) provide extent of injuries to communications (this information is often supplied to responding emergency units);
  - 2) administering emergency medical care (basic life support) until paramedic or other rescue staff(s) arrive;
  - 3) on non-injury accidents, officers will be dispatched to the scene, both on property and on the perimeter, to determine if paramedics will be needed and will advise Communications (Dispatch) of the situation;
  
- d. Identify any fire hazards and/or hazardous materials.
  - 1) On accidents involving any fire hazard or actual fire, any officer arriving prior to the fire department will be responsible for initial fire suppression efforts.
  - 2) The initial efforts will be limited to that fire suppression equipment that is readily available (i.e. fire extinguisher, blankets, garden hoses, etc).
  - 3) The officer will be responsible for advising Communications that Fire Department services are needed and will direct other responding police units to appropriate locations for evacuation or traffic control.
  
- e. Collect information:
  - 1) Mark position of vehicles and move vehicles out of the roadway as soon as practical;
  - 2) Identify drivers and passengers of all vehicles involved, as well as witnesses to the accident;
  - 3) Attempt to prevent drivers, passengers, or other witnesses, from collaborating stories before statements can be taken;
  - 4) Investigate the traffic collision and attempt to determine the contributing factors;
  - 5) Collect and preserve evidence;
  - 6) Interviewing principals and witnesses and securing the necessary identity/address information, including telephone numbers;
  - 7) Examining and recording vehicle damage - officers may utilize field notes for recording information at the accident scene. However,

officers are encouraged to record damage whenever practical via photography (digital) and book photos as evidence;

- 8) Examining and recording effects of the accident on the roadway, or off of the roadway on other property, structures, etc;
  - 9) Taking measurements as appropriate — measurements should be taken from fixed locations that can offer revisiting if necessary. These locations can include curb lines, fire hydrants, utility poles and buildings (avoid using fences, trees, other vehicles or any object that is more likely or able to be moved or altered);
  - 10) Assisting in the exchange of information among principal parties;
  - 11) Taking photographs as appropriate — photographs should note damage and any other evidence at the scene and should depict the landmark indicated in the diagram;
- f. Protect the collision scene:
- 1) Secure the scene with fixed barricades, cones, and additional personnel as needed;
  - 2) Ensure evidence is not destroyed or removed; and
  - 3) Document the scene within the written accident report when appropriate.
- g. Expediting removal of persons, vehicles and debris from roadway that pose a hazard.
- h. Control property belonging to accident victims:
- 1) Any property belonging to accident victims will be protected from theft or damage and if victims are not present, should be brought to the police department, where it is to be inventoried, logged and secured for safekeeping until the owner or his/her designee can arrive to claim it.
  - 2) The victim's vehicle will be impounded for safekeeping by a tow service of the victim's choice or by contract with the police department. Any vehicle that is impounded will be inventoried, and particularly valuable items will be removed and kept for safekeeping at the police department until the owner or his/her designee can arrive to claim them.
- i. Provide traffic control that includes safe and effective diversion around the accident scene.
- j. Request towing services for vehicles with damage to the extent that towing is required, or if a driver request services.
3. When the department receives notification of collisions with injuries, officers will be dispatched to respond if the collision is within the jurisdictional boundaries or around the perimeter of the university.

E. General Collision Response, Reporting and Investigating.

1. Death and injury accidents:
  - a. These accidents collisions are the highest priority.
  - b. An investigation report shall be completed and the collision thoroughly investigated.
  - c. Investigation assistance can be provided, with supervisory approval, from the California Highway Patrol Major Accident Investigation Team (MAIT), or other resources that are deemed appropriate.
  - d. Notification of the Chief of Police, on-duty Command Officer and Investigations is required, if the collision involves serious bodily injury or death.
  - e. A complaint of pain, with no visible injuries, requires a complete investigation.
  - f. Collisions resulting in death (Notification procedures):
    - 1) The Chief of Police or designee will conduct death notification(s) on all persons who are California State University students, faculty, and staff.
    - 2) Notification for parties not affiliated with California State University, will be conducted by the investigating agency (California State University Police, California Highway Patrol, or the Los Angeles Police Department).
2. Property damage only collisions (PDO collisions):
  - a. All parties in property damage only collisions should be provided with Form #DO IV-5b and assisted in the exchange of information by the first officer on the scene.
  - b. Officers responsibilities at the scene of a property damage only collision include:
    - 1) Traffic control;
    - 2) Clear the roadway;
    - 3) Assist involved parties in the exchange of correct information; and
    - 4) Advise Communications of parties involved, which will be entered into the Automated Records Management System (A.R.M.S.)
3. Hit and run accidents:
  - a. These accidents shall require a written report regardless of the damage and whenever a victim requests one. Furthermore, an officer shall complete:
    - 1) An INVESTIGATION when there is evidence likely to lead to the identification and prosecution of the responsible party; and

- 2) A REPORT, even when little or no evidence exists, that will aid in the identification and prosecution of the responsible party.
  - b. A hit and run vehicle must be impounded as evidence in the following situations:
    - 1) Felony hit and run;
    - 2) Misdemeanor hit and run, when the vehicle is abandon; and
    - 3) Hit and run when evidence collection at the scene is hampered due to an unruly crowd or other circumstances requiring removal of the vehicle for officer safety.
  - c. Pursuant to California Vehicle Code Section 22655(a), an officer may remove a vehicle from the highway or from public or private property for the purpose of inspection if the operator has failed to stop and comply with the provisions of California Vehicle Code sections 20002 to 20006.
  - d. Pursuant to California Vehicle Code section 22655(b), the vehicle shall be released upon the expiration of 48 hours after such removal from the highway or private property, upon the demand of the owner. When determining the 48-hour period, weekends and holidays shall not be included.
4. Driving while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
  - a. A written accident report shall be completed on any accident in which it is determined that an operator was under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs – no matter to what degree.
  - b. Accidents reports involving drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, drugs or some form of self-administered intoxicant shall include all related information and CHP required forms.
  - c. It is important to note that this will be applicable to ANY driver suspected of being impaired, and not only those drivers who are considered to be “at fault” for the collision.
  - d. Refer to General Order IV-5, Section IV-C, *Operation of a Vehicle by a Driver Under the Influence of Alcohol/Drugs* for further guidelines.
5. Hazardous Materials.
  - a. Reports will be written on all hazardous materials accidents and the report will include the response, any medical attention required and any clean up that was facilitated.
  - b. Traffic Accidents involving hazardous materials may require special units or special expertise. The department will respond to assist and

advise, if the Hazardous Materials unit of the Los Angeles City/County Fire Department will need to respond.

- c. If a hazard does exist, responding officers should approach from an upwind direction, if possible, and will assess the situation and take the following action:
    - 1) Advise Communications (Dispatch) to contact Environmental Health and Safety Department;
    - 2) Attempt to isolate the hazardous area and evacuate non-essential personnel;
    - 3) Provide first aid assistance if needed;
    - 4) Coordinate traffic control/re-routing and crowd control;
    - 5) Request additional personnel and public services as needed;
    - 6) Isolate as large of an area as possible until the hazard danger is fully known; and
    - 7) The investigating officer should attempt to identify hazardous material by questioning the driver, checking the bill of lading, placard identification on the vehicle, or placard identification on the material. **DO NOT ENTER THE EVACUATED AREA TO OBTAIN THIS INFORMATION**, wait for properly trained and equipped personnel to respond.
  - d. Personnel at the scene will relay all known information to Communications. Communications will disseminate all known information to other responding police units/agencies (Los Angeles Fire Department, Los Angeles County Health Department, California Highway Patrol and any other designated special services) as needed.
6. Private property collisions.
- a. As a general rule, the University Police do not take traffic ~~accident~~ collision reports that occur on private property.
  - b. Officers will respond when requested to collisions on private property, and investigate those cases if requested by a surrounding jurisdiction, or any other law enforcement agency that would normally have jurisdiction over that private property.
  - c. In these cases, mutual aid protocol would provide for the response and completion of the requested assistance.
7. Collisions involving disturbances between principals
- a. Officers will be dispatched and will respond to the scene of any collision where there is any sort of disturbance or disagreement between parties involved in the collision.

- b. When possible two officers will be dispatched to this type of call. The responding officers will separate the involved parties and conduct a preliminary investigation.
    - c. These incidents will be handled as any other call where individuals are in conflict with each other. A report will be written on these cases if directed or approved by the Watch Commander it, or if any of the other criteria for reporting accidents is met.
- F. Traffic direction/control and the handling of major traffic congestion.
  1. The investigating officer will determine traffic direction and the diversion of traffic.
  2. Uniformed police officers always have the primary responsibility for the direction and control of traffic at motor vehicle accident scenes.
  3. Officers should set up perimeter traffic control points to:
    - a. Allow for the ingress-egress of police, fire and rescue equipment;
    - b. Halt or divert approaching traffic away from or around the accident scene; and
    - c. Provide for a system of alternate routes to move traffic around the accident.
  4. Officers should notify dispatch of the action being taken so that they may in turn notify other jurisdictions that may be affected.
  5. When it becomes necessary to close or restrict the flow of traffic, the following means of control may be used:
    - a. Flares may be used only when hazardous materials are not present;
    - b. Barricades and portable signs are appropriate when an entire roadway or intersection must be closed; and
    - c. Traffic cones are excellent for diverting traffic from one lane to the next and are often more appropriate than flares.
  6. Additional personnel will be requested as needed. Parking Services will be notified for additional cones or barricades for accident scene and traffic control, if required.
  7. Should traffic control be needed for an extended period of time, the on-duty Watch Commander will arrange for sufficient relief every hour to two hours for officers assigned at a traffic control point. Food and beverages will be provided as needed.
  8. In incidents in which traffic control is needed as a result of work being done to a roadway that requires a long period of traffic control, the Watch Commander or on-duty Command Officer will determine what is needed and coordinate the incident.

G. Damage to vehicles to the extent towing is required.

1. Tow services should be notified as soon as possible for vehicles with damage to the extent that towing is required, or if a driver request services.
2. Removal of debris from the roadway:
  - a. California Vehicle Code Section 27700 et al requires that any tow service engaged to remove a vehicle from a roadway shall clear the roadway of any debris and glass which is a product of a traffic collision that vehicle is involved in.
  - b. When the debris is so substantial that the tow service cannot safely remove it from the roadway, on campus Facilities Department personnel will be contacted and requested to assist.
  - c. The fire department will assist in the washing down of combustible materials.

H. Stabilization of the scene - after the ~~accident~~ collision scene has been stabilized and all urgent information has been obtained, the officer should:

1. Determine whether there is sufficient proof to recommend prosecution or make an arrest;
2. Supervise clean up of the collision scene; and if a hazard exists, have proper agency notified to remove or repair hazard; and
3. Complete the appropriate collision report forms.

I. Enforcement action at the scene of a traffic accident

1. Investigations at an accident scene will normally result in detection of evidence necessary to support the arrest, issuance of a citation, or requesting a complaint be issued for violation of law. Upon determination of a violation of traffic law(s) or local ordinance, the officer will take appropriate enforcement action.
2. If the violation is sustained and is an arrestable California Vehicle/Penal Code violation, officers may make a physical arrest of subject to appropriate California Vehicle/Penal Code procedures.
3. If the violation occurs and the officer has completed the training program as outlined in California Vehicle Code section 40600, a citation may be issued at the traffic collision location as outlined in the procedures for issuing of a notice to violation. Procedures for arrest and issuance of citations are all outlined in California Vehicle Code Division 17, Chapter 2.
4. If an officer recommends that a complaint be issued alleging a violation of a vehicle code section, he/she may make a request for further investigation,

which will be forwarded to the Los Angeles City Attorney's office for possible action.

5. Juveniles involved in a traffic collision and who have committed a traffic violation, will note that recommendation for issuance of a citation in the recommendation section of the traffic collision form, and with supervisory approval, may issue a citation to the juvenile offender. The citation shall be attached to the collision report form. After review by Investigations, the violator will be notified of his/her court date by mail.
6. If an investigating officer witnesses an accident or violation, the officer may issue a citation at the scene. The violator receives the yellow copy of the citation and the remaining copies are attached to the collision report that is submitted to the Record Section. The officer will record the issuance of the citation and citation number in the recommendations area on the collision form.

J. School bus accidents

1. The California Highway Patrol handles school bus collisions, only when the bus is transporting school pupils. This includes instances of the pupil leaving or approaching the bus or crossing the road while the bus has its flashing red lights activated.
2. Other collisions involving school buses, which occur within the California State University property, where there are no students aboard, and/or the students are beyond the control of the school bus, are handled by the University Police.

K. Collision investigation follow up activities include:

1. Collecting off-scene data such as responding to the hospital to do follow up on any injured parties who were transported.
2. In serious injury collisions, obtaining and recording formal statements from witnesses if they are unavailable and if the facts of causation are in dispute or unknown.
3. Reconstructing collisions involving serious injury. This would be a requested process in which CHP would be summoned to coordinate such a process.
4. In a serious collision involving severe injuries, fatalities, multiple vehicles, etc., it may be necessary to summon expert or technical assistance from photographers, surveyors, mechanics, physicians, accident crash team specialists or other specialists. Such expert assistance shall be made through the watch commander, and shall be initially requested through the CHP.

5. Preparing accident and offense reports to support criminal prosecution.

V. APPENDICES:

Appendix "A" - Form #DO IV-5b TRAFFIC COLLISION INFORMATION

	<b>CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES</b> <b>UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT</b> <b>TRAFFIC COLLISION INFORMATION</b>		<i>Form #DO IV-5b</i>
	<b>TO REQUEST A COPY OF A COLLISION REPORT</b>		
<p>Only parties involved in the traffic collision, their insurance company and/or attorney (ies) may request copies of filed Traffic Collision reports. THERE IS A FEE TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE TRAFFIC COLLISION REPORT. If criminal charges are pending, a court order may be required under a discovery motion to obtain the collision and associated reports (Defendants only).</p>			
University Police Department 5151 State University Drive Los Angeles, CA 90032 (323) 343-3706—Records Division	<b>TRAFFIC COLLISION INFORMATION</b>		
	DATE	TIME	
	OFFICER	DR#	
LOCATION			
Vehicle was removed from the scene and is located at:			
Tow Company Phone Number:			
Non-Injury Traffic Collision	<input type="checkbox"/> NO report desired	EVENT NUMBER #	

<b>INSTRUCTIONS</b>					
Each involved party will complete their own information and exchange with the other party.					
<b>PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY</b>					
NAME					
ADDRESS				PHONE NUMBER	
INSURANCE CO. NAME AND POLICY #				DRIVERS LICENSE #	STATE
VEH. YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	TYPE	VEHICLE LICENSE # <u>OR</u> VIN#	
<b>NOTICE</b>					
California Financial Responsibility Law requires that you report to the Department of Motor Vehicles within 10 days from the date of the occurrence, an accident which results in damages to the property of any one person in excess of \$750.00, or bodily injury or death to any person.					
Forms (SR-1) may be obtained at the California Highway Patrol or Department of Motor Vehicles. SR-1 forms are also located at: <a href="http://www.dmv.ca.gov">www.dmv.ca.gov</a> .					