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**CSU FULLERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDER NUMBER 4-5**

TRAFFIC COLLISION INVESTIGATION

- SUBJECT:** Procedures for the Investigation of Traffic Collisions.
- PURPOSE:** To establish guidelines for the proper response to and handling of traffic collisions and for the identification, preservation and collection of evidence and data that will reduce the probability of a citizen being involved in an automobile collision that will result in property damage, injury or death.
- POLICY:** It is the policy of the CSU Police Department to respond to and investigate traffic collisions promptly and with concern for the involved parties. The Department recognizes its responsibility as a first-responder to provide first aid in cases where injury is a factor and to investigate reported and observed traffic collisions thoroughly and objectively, so that a proper and accurate determination of the causative factors can be made.
- The procedures outlined in this General Order shall remain consistent with the suggested guidelines of the State Wide Integrated Traffic Reporting System (SWITRS), the reporting format as provided by the California Highway Patrol, and the laws of the State of California. This will remain the Department standard so that appropriate assessment of trends and factors of traffic collisions can serve to develop effective traffic education and enforcement programming designed to reduce traffic collisions, injuries and deaths.

PROCEDURE:

- I. Collisions
- A. Collisions, which are considered priority in nature, shall include those which are reported or believed to involve:
1. Death or injury [CALEA 61.2.2a]
 2. Hit and run collisions [CALEA 61.2.2b]
 3. Impairment of a driver due to intoxication of some form [CALEA 61.2.2c]
 4. Damage to public vehicles or property [CALEA 61.2.2d]
 5. Hazardous materials [CALEA 61.2.2e]
 6. Disturbances between principal parties [CALEA 61.2.2f]
 7. Collisions which cause severe traffic congestion [CALEA 61.2.2g]
 8. Collisions which require towing services [CALEA 61.2.2h]

- B. Traffic collisions shall be investigated using one of the two authorized CHP/SWITRS formats, they are:
1. CHP Form 555: A traffic collision INVESTIGATION. Also known as the “Long Form”, this format should be used in accordance with the criteria listed in the SWITRS Manual, Section 1.7.1. The INVESTIGATION format shall be used when circumstances, as described in SWITRS Manual Section 1.7.1 a, b, d, e, and f and/or g exist.
 2. CHP Form 555: A traffic collision REPORT. Also known as the “Short Form”, this format should be used in accordance with the criteria listed in the SWITRS Manual, Section 1.8.1.
 3. “Counter Report” is a recording of an accident made by a principal party, and which the officer does not respond to the scene of the accident. Excluding criminal offenses, the officer cannot provide a determination as to the primary collision factor of the accident, as per CVC Section 200 15(a), and shall only include that information which is provided by the reporting party. This will be recorded using the CHP 555-03 form. See General Order 4-6.
 4. The use of the Collision Information Exchange form by the CSU Fullerton Police Department to establish a simplified procedure for handling reports of collisions not involving injuries, hit and run, or any other traffic or criminal offense. Procedures and criterion for the use of this form is addressed in General Order 4-6.
- C. Section 16000(a) of the California Vehicle Code requires a collision be reported by the involved parties within 10 days when it involves:
1. Death [CALEA 61.2.2a]
 2. Injury [CALEA 61.2.2a]
 3. Damage to any party that exceeds \$750.00
- D. Officers of this Department shall complete a traffic collision report or investigation when:
1. The collision involves a state vehicle [CALEA 61.2.2d]
 - a. If the accident involves a police vehicle, an uninvolved law enforcement agency shall be summoned to the scene to complete the investigation.
 - b. If the collision involves a state vehicle, and this Department will complete the investigation, the officer will also assist the driver of the state vehicle in completing the state-vehicle accident form(s) CHP 555-03 or CHP 555

2. If any party involved in a traffic collision requests a report be completed, Officers should, however, advise parties of the 16000(a) CVC criteria
 3. An officer is making an arrest or issuing a citation at the scene of a collision and the violation was a primary factor in the collision.
- E. The dispatcher will normally receive the initial report of the collision, and then assign an officer to respond to the scene. [CALEA 61.2.3a]
1. This officer shall have the responsibility and authority to request assistance from any other officer as needed.
 2. The dispatched officer is also the primary investigating officer, and in charge at the scene, unless a shift supervisor deems it more appropriate to assign another officer these responsibilities.
 3. In case of a serious collision involving multiple vehicles with personal injury, the dispatcher may assign several units to respond.
 4. In these cases, a primary investigating officer will be assigned when all units are dispatched unless otherwise directed by the shift supervisor.
 5. On-Duty Watch Commanders can determine a Traffic Officer need be called in to handle serious traffic collisions.
- F. Collision Reporting and Investigating
1. Death and injury collisions--These collisions are the highest priority. An investigation shall be completed and the collision thoroughly investigated. Investigation assistance can be provided, with supervisory approval, from the California Highway Patrol Major Accident Investigation Team (MAIT), the City of Fullerton Traffic Bureau, or other resources that are deemed appropriate. [CALEA 61.2.1a, 61.2.2a, 83.1.1]
 2. Property damage collisions--All property damage collisions should be investigated by the first officer on the scene. A report may be completed when there is damage to the property. Should major damage exist, the investigating officer should request assistance in completing the on-scene investigation. [CALEA 61.2.1b]
 3. Hit and run collisions--These collisions shall be reported whenever the victim requests a report, regardless of the damage. Furthermore, an officer shall complete [CALEA 61.2.1c, 61.2.2b]:
 - a. An INVESTIGATION when there is evidence likely to lead to the identification and prosecution of the responsible party.

- b. A REPORT when little or no evidence exists that will aid in the identification and prosecution of the responsible party.
 4. Driving while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs [CALEA 61.2.1d, 61.2.2c]
 - a. Collisions involving drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, drugs or some form of self-administered intoxicant shall include an INVESTIGATION (CHP 555). This shall be completed in addition to any other arrest or criminal reports the officer will complete associated with the case.
 - b. 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.
 5. Hazardous Materials--Officers responding to collision scenes where there is suspected hazardous materials involved will immediately notify the fire department and the hazmat team. Reports will be written on all hazardous materials collisions and the report will include the response, any medical attention required and any clean up that was facilitated.
[CALEA 61.2.1e, 61.2.2e]
 6. Private property collisions--Officers will respond when requested to collisions on private property, and investigate those cases if requested by the City of Fullerton, or, any other law enforcement agency that would normally have jurisdiction over that private property. [CALEA 61.2.1f]
 - a. In these cases, mutual aid protocol would provide for the response and completion of the requested assistance.
 - b. Those cases would be investigated as outlined and required within the SWITRS Manual, i.e., cases involving death, injury, government-operated vehicles or hit and run.
 7. Collisions involving disturbances between principals [CALEA 61.2.2f]
 - 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. 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.
 - b. 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 it is requested by the parties or if any of the other criteria for reporting collisions is met.

G. Collision scene responsibilities of the first officer on scene include:

1. Identifying injured persons and administering emergency medical care (basic life support) until paramedic or other rescue staff(s) arrive.
[CALEA 61.2.3b]

2. Summoning additional help as required (officers, tow services, paramedics).
3. Identifying and dealing with fire hazards and/or hazardous materials.
[CALEA 61.2.3c]
4. Protecting the collision scene, through the use of flares, marked vehicles, barricades, etc. [CALEA 61.2.3e]
5. Preserving evidence. [CALEA 61.2.3e]
6. Traffic control that includes safe and effective diversion around the collision scene. [CALEA 61.2.2g, 61.2.3e]
7. Locating witnesses, collecting and recording collision information.
[CALEA 61.2.3d]
8. Expediting removal of persons, vehicles and debris from roadway that pose a hazard. [CALEA 61.2.2g]
9. Controlling property belonging to collision victims. [CALEA 61.2.3f]

II. Collision Scene Investigation

- A. Collision scene investigation information collection: At the scene of the collision, the investigating Police Officer must gather information concerning the collision for the subsequent use in completing necessary report forms. Any evidence collected or photographs taken will be noted on the traffic collision investigation form (CHP 555). Evidence that can be collected at the scene includes [CALEA 61.2.3d]:
 1. Interviewing principals and witnesses and securing the necessary identity/address information, including telephone numbers.
 2. Examining and recording vehicle damage officers may utilize field notes for recording information at the collision scene. However, officers are encouraged to record damage whenever practical via digital photography and enter into RIMS on the photo page of case reports as evidence.
 3. Examining and recording effects of the collision on the roadway or off of the roadway on other property, structures, etc.
 4. 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.
 5. Assisting in the exchange of information among principal parties.
 6. Taking photographs as appropriate, photographs should note damage and any other evidence at the scene and should depict the landmark indicated in the diagram.

7. Collecting and processing evidence as indicated in the Department General Orders, and as is consistent with proper evidence collection methods.

B. Collisions 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 were unavailable and if the facts of causation are in dispute or unknown.
3. Reconstructing collision involving serious injury. This is a requested process to either CHP or City of Fullerton 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, collision crash team specialists or other specialists. Such expert assistance shall be made through the watch commander, and shall be initially requested through either the CHP or the City of Fullerton.
5. Preparing collision and offense reports to support criminal prosecution.

C. Enforcement action

1. Enforcement action should be taken whenever believed appropriate by the investigating officer, when that officer has detected a violation of a traffic or relative law and when evidence exists to satisfy all the elements of that particular violation. [CALEA 61.1.5k]
 - a. At the scene of the collision, the officer may take immediate enforcement action and issue a Notice to Appear. An officer is authorized to take such action, even if the violation did not occur in his presence, if that officer has successfully completed collision investigation training, as required in CVC Section 40600(a).
 - b. If the officer observes the violation, and after responding to the collision, chooses to do so, the officer may issue a Notice to Appear based on his observation.
 - c. If circumstances warrant, an officer may make an arrest for driving under the influence at a collision scene, if evidence is in accordance with CVC Section 40300.5.
 - d. If the identity of a driver who was involved in a collision but left the scene is determined through an officer's investigation, they should obtain an arrest warrant.

2. Officers may make an arrest upon private property when they have been summoned by another law enforcement agency, and for those offenses that involve driving while intoxicated, collisions involving injury or death, reckless driving, and hit and run. [CALEA 61.1.5k]

III. Collision Scene Procedures

- A. Traffic Control--Traffic direction and control at accident collision scenes is fully addressed within General Order 4-7, "Traffic Direction and Control."
- B. Injuries--If a collision involves injuries, rescue personnel will be notified immediately by the dispatcher. Officers arriving prior to the rescue/paramedics will administer appropriate first aid and emergency medical care until relieved. A first aid kit and blanket are provided within each police vehicle for this purpose. It is the officers' responsibility to ensure that the first aid supplies mentioned here are replenished and maintained in good condition. [CALEA 61.2.2a]
- C. Fire hazards--If a collision scene represents the danger of either existing or potential fire, dispatchers will notify the Fire Department. Officers on the scene will keep the public away from the hazard and in cases of small fires may use the fire extinguisher provided in each police unit. [CALEA 61.2.3c]
- D. Hazardous materials--Any Police Officer arriving at the scene of a collision and seeing hazardous materials placards or seeing a possible spill should immediately request the response of the Fire Department. The fire chief will assume control of any scene involving hazardous materials and all Police Officers will provide support as required. Any investigation of the collision will only occur after it has been approved by the fire chief/incident commander. [CALEA 61.2.2e, 61.2.3c]
- E. Protection of victim's property--Any property belonging to collision 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. 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. [CALEA 61.2.3f]
- F. Removal of debris from the roadway
 1. 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.

2. When the debris is so substantial that the tow service cannot safely remove it from the roadway, the following will be requested:
 - a. If on campus, Facilities Operations shall be called;
 - b. If off campus, the City of Fullerton, or the appropriate jurisdiction's Public Works Department shall be called.
3. The fire department will assist in the washing down of combustible materials.

IV. Collision -Reports—State of California Vehicles

- A. If the collision occurs on campus, University Police will investigate the collision. If the state vehicle is involved with private property, or another vehicle, either a CHP 555 report shall be completed.
- B. If the collision occurs off-campus, the jurisdiction in which the collision occurred will be summoned to investigate the collision.
- C. In any case in which a traffic collision occurs, the operator of the state vehicle is responsible for completing a state-vehicle involved collision report Form 270 and Form 274. Officers of this Department shall offer no assistance in completing these forms.
- D. All reports involving state vehicles shall be completed immediately, and then delivered to the Watch Commander for review.
- E. If the collision would not be deemed a collision the Vehicle Code the state vehicle collision report form will be used in house.

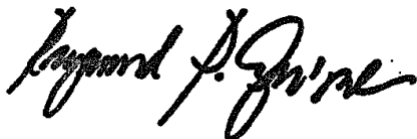
V. Misdemeanor arrests at collision scenes

If an officer makes an arrest at a collision scene and takes the driver into custody, the officer will complete a Crime/Incident Report in addition to the traffic collision report. The Crime/Incident report shall serve as the title page of the case.

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