

PURPOSE: It is the purpose of this policy to provide general guidelines and instruction for the investigation of traffic accidents.

POLICY: The department investigates hundreds of accidents every year. It is the policy of the department to properly investigate vehicular accidents, recording such accidents carefully and taking action to prevent further accidents, to include traffic law enforcement and engineering recommendations.

DEFINITIONS: accident: any vehicular accident involving another vehicle, pedestrian, or object that results in impact, damage, injury, or death.

PROCEDURE:

I. Response Procedures

- A. Upon notification of an accident, an officer will be assigned as soon as practically possible.
- B. Accidents involving the following will receive emergency status and immediate response:
 - 1. reported injury, injuries, or possible fatality
 - 2. a fire
 - 3. serious accident where injuries are unknown but possible
 - 4. traffic lane blockage that will likely cause traffic congestion
 - 5. hazardous materials spills
 - 6. accidents involving a school bus
 - 7. hit & run that just occurred
 - 8. reported DUI driver
 - 9. an argument or fight between motorists
 - 10. reported rollovers
- C. Other accidents involving none of the items above will be given standard priority, including:
 - 1. minor accidents
 - 2. accidents involving a delayed reporting
 - 3. hit & run accidents not in progress
- D. For accidents involving a police vehicle, see Policy # 304.1.
- E. For accidents involving a city-owned vehicle, contact the designated city Accident Team members for their investigation when a city employee is at fault or there is any injury. (Also see City of Dekalb Administrative Policy, Accident Investigations.)

II. Responding Officer Responsibilities

- A. Upon arrival at the accident scene, the responding officer should do the following:
 - 1. Assess the scene and determine if additional manpower is needed for traffic control, medical assistance, or other assistance.
 - 2. Generally, the first responding officer will be in charge at the scene, unless the zone officer, other officer, or supervisor arrives and assumes responsibility. Additional responding officers will perform tasks deemed most necessary to the execution of the accident investigation.
 - 3. Check the occupants of vehicles and/or pedestrians involved and determine if there are any injuries.

4. Provide emergency first aid if needed and summon an ambulance for any injuries or reported injuries requiring medical attention. When notifying dispatch of the need for an ambulance, relay information about the apparent or suspected injury so the ambulance crew can be prepared.
 5. Determine if any occupant is under 18 without a parent or guardian present; minors need parental consent to waive medical attention.
 6. Identify and interview the drivers, occupants, and witnesses.
 7. If traffic lanes are blocked and the accident is minor, request that the drivers remove their vehicles from the traffic lanes.
 8. If traffic is blocked, request an officer for traffic control to establish a safe traffic flow around the scene. Traffic direction and control procedures are listed in Policy 403.5.
 9. If an intersection or roadway is going to be closed for an extended period due to an accident, traffic will be re-routed with the assistance of traffic control officers. The supervisor will request notification of road closures to the local media.
 10. Obtain all pertinent information from the drivers, occupants, and witnesses; to include necessary information required on the accident report.
 11. In all cases, ensure protection of the accident scene by keeping people out of the roadway, using the squad car to block the scene and divert traffic, utilizing assisting officers for traffic control and scene safety measure. [ILEAP OPR.06.06(c)]
 12. Be sure to fully document the circumstances of any damage to public property or vehicles. [ILEAP OPR.06.05(f)]
 13. If an argument or fight arises among accident participants, separate the parties, explain the proper way to air differences in a judicial setting, or make an arrest if necessary. [ILEAP OPR.06.05(g)]
 14. For serious accidents involving extensive damage, injury, or death, photographs of the scene should be taken.
 15. Document any physical evidence and retain if necessary.
 16. Note any contributing factors of the accident; e.g., sun in the driver's eyes, malfunctioning signal, reported faulty brakes, etc.
- B. **Child passenger safety seats** : upon investigating a traffic crash where a child safety seat was involved, the officer should inform the driver that safety and manufacturer recommendations include replacing the seat. Under state statute, insurance companies are required to provide coverage that includes the replacement of a child safety seat (215 ILCS 5/143.32). Officers should check to see if the seat was installed and used correctly (requesting the assistance of an officer who is a certified technician if necessary), and note such on the accident report, and take enforcement action against violations as appropriate.
- C. **For accidents that require the towing of a vehicle** :
1. If possible, have the owner or driver indicate any tow company preference.
 2. If the owner or driver is not present, is not able to name a tow preference or has no preference, the city's contract tow service will be summoned to tow the vehicle.
 3. Tow sheets for vehicles involved in an accident are not necessary unless being towed for evidentiary reasons.

4. Vehicles being towed as evidence should be stored indoors at Area 6.
5. Abandoned vehicles known or reasonably suspected to be involved in a hit & run accident may be towed for investigative and evidentiary reasons.
6. Tows should always be documented on the accident report.
7. Officers should ensure that property belonging to accident victims is protected from theft or pilferage and is removed to a place of safekeeping if the owner is unable to care for it.
 - a. Personal items such as purses, wallets, and phones can be sent with the victim if being transported for medical care.
 - b. Personal property can be inventoried and secured in a towed vehicle.
 - c. Personal property can be inventoried and stored at the PD if necessary.

[ILEAP OPR.06.07]

- D. **For accidents involving a DUI driver**, an arrest should be made when probable cause exists, following procedures in Policy 403.6. In cases where a DUI driver is at fault in an accident causing or potentially causing a death to another, additional investigation will be conducted by the Investigations Division as a homicide investigation. [ILEAP OPR.06.05(d)]
- E. **For accidents involving a fire or hazardous materials**, officers should exercise due caution and follow these procedures:
1. Identify any potential or actual fire hazards. [ILEAP OPR.06.06(a)]
 2. Attempt hazardous material identification, following procedures listed in Policy 407.6. [ILEAP OPR.06.06(b)]
 3. Protect the scene to avoid entry by others. [ILEAP OPR.06.06(c)]
 4. Isolate the immediate area.
 5. Evacuate nonessential personnel.
 6. Notify dispatch to advise fire personnel of the situation.
 7. Request additional assistance and technical resources.
 8. See Policy 407.6 for further information.
- F. **For serious accidents involving a fatality or possible fatality :**
1. Summon a supervisor.
 2. Take particular care to record evidence, vehicle position, and statements by drivers, occupants, and witnesses.
 3. Tow the offending vehicle to the indoor storage at Area 6 for evidentiary reasons.
 4. The supervisor will notify a detective, and other investigative officers such as certified accident investigators if necessary.
 5. The responding officer(s) will usually complete the state traffic crash report unless otherwise directed. Responding officers will also usually be responsible for any on-scene arrests and/or DUI procedures.
 6. Additional followup investigation should be conducted:
 - a. Detailed accident scene documentation;
 - b. Reconstruction data, to be recorded by qualified personnel;
 - c. Formal statements from those involved;
 - d. Collecting off-scene evidence or information;
 - e. Additional investigation to support criminal charges.

7. The supervisor will notify the Patrol Lieutenant and other command staff.

[ILEAP OPR.06.05(a)]

G. Completing the accident report :

1. Accident reports will be taken for both public and private property accidents. [ILEAP OPR.06.05(f)]
2. Reports must be taken if there is any damage that needs repair or any personal injury; very minor accidents without these do not need a report if no one involved requests a report. [ILEAP OPR.06.05(b)]
3. Reports will be taken and completed on scene whenever possible; otherwise, accident reports should be completed as soon as practically possible.
4. The driver/pedestrian should be given or mailed their carbon copy when completed.
5. All required and pertinent information should be carefully documented and verified through the appropriate level of attention and/or investigation.
6. Minor accidents occurring during times of unusual conditions such as a flood or snow emergency may be reported and investigated at a later time with the permission of the shift supervisor.
7. Persons sometimes report an accident after the fact; reports will still be taken. Officers should try to meet with drivers in person and observe the damaged vehicles or property. Phone reports are generally discouraged unless in exigent circumstances with permission from the shift supervisor.
8. For hit & run accidents, officers should pay special attention to physical evidence or the availability of witnesses or video to aid in the investigation. [ILEAP OPR.06.05(c)]
9. If an accident report is not finished due to pending information, it should be turned in and finished as soon as possible.
10. Supervisors will check each finished accident report for completeness.

III. Accident Prevention

- A. Officers are encouraged to take steps to prevent further accidents, to include:
 1. Traffic law enforcement on drivers committing driving errors contributing to or causing accidents.
 2. Directed traffic patrol in areas identified as having higher accident potential.
 3. Recommendations to supervisors for engineering improvements for traffic safety.
- B. The department reviews accident statistics on an annual basis and may make recommendations for enforcement efforts and engineering improvements as needed.
- C. The department may conduct investigations to gather additional data about driver, pedestrian, vehicle, roadway controls, or related collision information for special research or safety studies.

Policy originally issued 8-21-03; this revision becomes effective on 1-1-19 by authority of the Chief of Police.

DEKALB POLICE DEPARTMENT

Subject: **Traffic Accident Investigation**

Policy #: **403.4**

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FTO Training Task: # 27

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ILEAP Standards Covered: OPR.06.05-06.07

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NOTE: This policy and procedure summarizes the department's position on this specific matter. This policy is for general direction and guidance primarily designed for use by the department's members. This policy is for internal use only and does not create or enlarge an officer's liability in any way. This policy shall not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of an internal departmental complaint and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.