


PINE BLUFF POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL

	SUBJECT:	POLICY NUMBER 410
	INVESTIGATION – MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	ISSUE DATE 02/19/2008
	CHAPTER: TRAFFIC	EFFECTIVE DATE 02/19/2008
	ISSUED By: Chief of Police John E. Howell	TOTAL PAGES 4

I. POLICY

This agency has as one of its goals and objectives the reduction of motor vehicle accidents. To accomplish this, the agency performs a variety of traffic accident investigation functions including providing emergency service to the injured, protecting the accident scene, conducting accident investigations and follow-ups, preparing reports and taking proper enforcement action relative to incidents. The purpose of accident 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 accidents. Accident reports taken are utilized by the Arkansas State Police and Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department at the state level and by this agency 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 agency to develop selective enforcement programs and to promote street and highway safety.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Accident Report and Investigation General

The following rules shall apply to all probationary and sworn employees, while on and off duty.

1. Arkansas Code requirements concerning the reporting of traffic accidents include:
 - a. ACA27-53-202: The driver of a vehicle involved in accident resulting in injury to or death of any person or total property damage to an apparent extent of five hundred (\$500.00) or more shall forward a written report of the accident to the Arkansas State Police within forty-eight (48) hours after the accident.

- b. ACA27-53-303:** The responsible investigating officer shall make the investigation with all possible promptness, and the investigating officer shall file the report with the Arkansas State Police within five (5) days subsequent to the actual investigation.
- 2.** The terminology used in the above laws requires “reports of accidents”. For our purposes, a report is made by a law enforcement officer who has investigated an accident at the scene or elsewhere, the length, duration and depth of investigative effort being proportioned to the seriousness or harm done as a result of the accident.
- 3.** A law enforcement officer will be assigned and respond to, and prepare a report of accidents involving any of the following:
 - a.** Death or injury.
 - b.** Property damage in excess of the reportable amount established by the Legislature.
 - c.** Hit and run.
 - d.** Impairment due to alcohol and drugs.
 - e.** Hazardous materials.
 - f.** Any accident involving property, vehicles, equipment, or facilities of this agency
 - g.** Accident scene responsibilities of the first officer at the scene include:
 - h.** Administering emergency medical care (basic life support measures) pending arrival of rescue squad
 - i.** Summoning additional help as required (officers, rescue, tow truck, etc.)
 - j.** Protecting accident scene
 - k.** Preserving short-lived evidence (broken parts, skid marks, etc.)
 - l.** Establishing a safe traffic pattern around scene
 - m.** Locating witnesses and recording accident information
 - n.** Expediting removal from roadway of vehicles, persons, and debris (In property damage only) accidents, where possible get vehicles off roadway immediately to get traffic moving.
 - o.** The officer initially dispatched to an accident shall normally be responsible for the investigation of the accident. He shall have the responsibility and authority to request assistance from any other officers as needed. He is then also the primary investigating officer and in charge at the scene. In the case of a serious accident involving multiple vehicles with personal injury, the dispatcher may assign several law enforcement units to respond. Under such circumstances, the senior officer on duty will designate one of the officers as the primary investigator.

III. Accident Scene Information Collection

At the scene of the accident, the investigating police officer must gather information concerning the accident for subsequent use in completing necessary report forms. Information to be collected at the scene may include, but is not limited to:

- a. Interviewing principals and witnesses and securing necessary identity/address information
- b. Examining/recording vehicle damage.
- c. Examining/recording effects of the accident on the roadway or off the roadway on other property/structures, etc.
- d. Taking measurements as appropriate
- e. Taking photographs as appropriate
- f. Collection/processing evidence
- g. Exchanging information among principals

IV. Accident Investigation Follow-up Activities

Follow-up activities which may be necessary include:

- a. Collecting of scene data.
- b. Obtaining/recording formal statements from witnesses.
- c. Reconstructing accidents.
- d. Submitting evidentiary materials for laboratory examination.
- e. Preparing accident and/or offense reports to support criminal charges arising from the accident.
- f. In a particularly serious accident involving severe injuries, fatalities, multiple vehicles, etc., it may be necessary to summon assistance from Crime Scene Technicians and Detectives.
- g. Enforcement action should be taken whenever investigating officer has detected a violation of a traffic law or ordinance and when evidence exists to satisfy all the elements of that particular violation.
- h. At the scene of the accident, the officer may take immediate enforcement action and issue a Uniform Traffic Ticket.
- i. If officer at the scene concludes DWI and defendant is still there, DWI arrest should be made prior to transport.
- j. If driver transported to hospital prior to arrival of officer, and officer later at hospital concluded DWI, Uniform Traffic Ticket may be issued and hold placed on driver.
- k. On other traffic related investigations, when the officer leaves the scene of the offense and follows up and later identifies an offender of offense, arrest warrant should be obtained.

D. Accident Scene Procedures

1. Upon the receipt of a report of a motor vehicle accident that requires the services of a law enforcement officer, the officer assigned shall proceed as expeditiously as possible to the scene. The police vehicle should not be parked at the scene in a manner that will endanger other pedestrians, motorists, or citizens. The officer should consider using the police vehicle as a shield to protect the scene as well as himself.
2. In case of injuries, persons trapped in vehicles, etc., the appropriate rescue unit should be called out.
3. In case of danger of fire from leaking ruptured gas tanks or where there is any major crash entanglement of two or more vehicles, or where there is any sign of hazardous materials having been transported, the Fire Department should be called out.
4. Any property belonging to accident victims will be protected from theft or pilferage and if victims are not present, should be brought to the Department, properly tagged and held for the victims.