Public Safety and Institutional Assurance
Indiana University Police Department
Chapter 10 – Traffic and Parking Services
Sub-Chapter - 10.2 – Traffic Collision Investigation

10.2.2 Response to Collision Scene

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Purpose
To provide the specific responsibilities and procedures for Indiana University Police Department (IUPD) officers at traffic collision scenes.

General Order
IUPD officers responding to the scene of a crash will secure and assess the scene for safety and to determine the need to summon assistance from emergency medical services, firefighting services, traffic control and additional investigative services. Officers will clear the scene of damaged vehicles, debris, or hazardous materials as soon as practical to reopen the roadway for continued use.

Administering emergency medical care and providing basic life support (10.2.2 a)
If there is injury at a traffic collision, officers should administer appropriate medical aid within their ability to the injured person. If there are multiple injuries, officers should identify those most seriously injured. At collision scenes where there is injury, actions to deal with the injury will take precedence over investigative or reporting activities.

Summoning required emergency services (10.2.2 b)
Officers will summon appropriate emergency medical assistance to the scene and assist in getting injured persons moved to the medical facility as soon as possible. Unless exigent circumstances exist, officers should not transport injured persons at a traffic collision in a police vehicle.

When emergency medical services personnel arrive, the care of the injured will be entrusted to them, and officers should assist as necessary.

Protecting the crash scene (10.2.2 c)
When approaching a traffic collision scene, officers should be alert for and avoid destroying evidence. During approach and upon arrival, officers will be cognizant of any specific conditions or factors that may have contributed to the collision. These may include presence of view obstructions, inoperative or missing traffic control devices, or other hazards. Officers will park their vehicles in such a manner as to provide maximum protection and visibility.

Upon arrival, officers will secure the scene to not allow any motor vehicle traffic or pedestrians through areas where evidence could be altered or destroyed.

The primary officer will take charge of the collision scene immediately upon arrival. Generally, the assigned primary officer responding to the collision scene will retain charge of the scene until completion of the investigation, unless directed by a supervisor or the arrival of a specially trained officer.
Preserving short-lived evidence (10.2.2 d)
Officers assigned to the collision investigation are responsible for the preservation and collection of any evidence. Officers will make every attempt to preserve evidence in place until it can be properly recorded and recovered.

Officers will mark or photograph any evidence that may be time sensitive. For example, tire marks in the snow that could be destroyed.

Establishing a safe traffic pattern around the scene (10.2.2 e)
As soon as practical, a safe traffic pattern should be established around the collision scene. This may require additional officers to block or direct traffic. Emergency lights, flares, barricades, traffic cones and other appropriate warning devices should be utilized, when safe and appropriate, to alert and direct approaching traffic away from and around the scene.

Locating witnesses and recording crash information (10.2.2 f)
The officer assigned to complete the report will be responsible for interviewing or coordinating the interview of any involved parties or witnesses. Officers will interview involved parties and witnesses separately and should discourage the involved parties and witnesses from discussing the collision with each other prior to any interview. Interviews will take place as soon as possible after a traffic collision. Officers will assist in facilitating the exchange of information between the parties as appropriate. Individuals who were not directly involved in or a witness to the collision should be directed to leave the scene.

It may be appropriate to obtain the following types of information or evidence. All pertinent information will be collected in a manner that ensures accuracy and admissibility.

- Photographs. An evidence technician may be requested depending on the complexity of the collision scene.
- Damage sustained by each vehicle involved in the collision. The extent of the vehicle condition reporting depends on the seriousness of the collision and other extenuating factors. Items to be checked may include, but are not limited to:
  - Proper inflation of or damage to tires
  - Outward visibility through all windows
  - Interior for loose material that may have interfered with the driver, the mirrors, and lights
  - Which lights are on, which lights are broken, and the position of light switches at the time of the examination. The officer will never change the position of light switches or press the brake pedal as this can destroy valuable evidence.
- Accurate descriptions of all vehicle damage, marks on the roadway, final resting positions of vehicles and debris.
- Examining and recording roadway and weather conditions.
- Preparing not to scale diagrams.
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- Any other information related to the collision that may be necessary to ensure a thorough investigation.

**Expediting the removal of vehicles and debris from the roadway (10.2.2 g)**

If the roadway is blocked by debris and/or vehicles and the need to preserve evidence no longer exists, the officer will oversee the clearing of the roadway as soon as possible.

**Identifying and dealing with hazardous materials and/or fire hazards (10.2.2 h)**

For collisions that involve hazardous materials, more than one officer will be assigned to respond. Mutual aid should be requested as necessary. The fire department will also be contacted to respond to the scene.

Officers must be cognizant of the possibility that at any traffic collision involving a cargo vehicle, potentially hazardous material may be present. Officers must remain cautious and observant for any evidence or indications of hazardous materials before approaching cargo involved in collisions. When approaching the scene of a collision where there is a possibility of a hazardous material spill, officers should approach the area from an up-wind direction if possible.

Upon arrival at the collision scene, the officer will attempt to make a preliminary identification of the hazardous material based on placards, vehicle type, containers, or information supplied by the operator of the vehicle. This preliminary identification should be made from a safe distance. When there is a question whether spilled material at a collision scene is hazardous, the officer will avoid contacting the material and keep others away from it. Officers should avoid inhaling fumes, smoke, or vapors. Both odorless and gas or vapors with odors may be harmful. The Emergency Response Guidebook published by the U.S. Department of Transportation should be referenced for the rapid identification of the shipping name of the hazardous material and concerning the nature of the hazard.

If there is the potential for a fire at a traffic collision, officers will take appropriate action to stabilize the conditions by providing adequate protection to the scene, isolating the immediate area, removing persons from the vicinity of the hazard if possible, suppressing the hazard if possible and safe to do so, and summoning the fire department for assistance.

To the extent possible, officers should attempt to eliminate the possibility of sparks or other ignition from smoking, flares, electricity, or any other source at a traffic collision.

If a fire exists, officers will request the local fire department be contacted to respond. Officers should, if possible, attempt to rescue persons or extinguish the fire if it is safe to do so. Depending on the extent of the fire, officers will evaluate the surrounding area and maintain isolation of the area until the fire is suppressed. Officers will carefully control the movement of vehicles in the vicinity of the fire or potential fire hazards, detouring traffic if necessary.
Dealing with disturbances between involved parties (10.2.2 i)
Officers should be aware of the potential for disturbances between the involved parties of a collision. If there is a known disturbance, more than one officer will be assigned to respond. Mutual aid should be requested as necessary.

Officers will separate involved parties as soon as possible and will take appropriate action for the situation.

Securing property of involved parties (10.2.2 j)
If reasonable and practicable, the officer assigned to investigate the collision should ensure that property belonging to a party involved in the collision is protected and move items of significant value to a place of safekeeping if the owner is unable to care for it. Officers will thoroughly document the personal property that is removed for safekeeping or for evidentiary purposes.

Related Information
Indiana University Police Department
- G10.2.1 Collision Reporting and Investigation

Indiana Code
- IC 9-26-2 Duties of Law Enforcement Officers and Accident Reports

Emergency Response Guidebook