



# Crash Investigations

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<b>Rescinds:</b>	None		
<b>IACLEA Standards:</b>	10.2, 13.1.2, 13.1.3, 13.1.4		

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish guidelines for the investigation of traffic crashes. Guidelines establishing which crashes require an investigation and which forms are required are addressed in this General Order and by State law.

## II. General Order

It is the policy of the Indiana University Police Department (IUPD) that officers shall investigate all crashes within our jurisdiction as required by Indiana State statutes, or as directed in this General Order. Officers responding to the scene of a crash shall secure the scene, provide medical assistance, if needed, investigate the crash and clear the scene of damaged vehicles, debris, or hazardous materials as soon as practical to reopen the roadway for continued use.

## III. Reporting and Investigation

- A. Officers are required to respond to, investigate, and report the following types of motor vehicle accidents<sup>1</sup>;
  - 1. Accidents causing injury or death.
  - 2. Property damage accidents more than \$1,000.00.
  - 3. Hit and Run accidents.
    - a. A case report shall be completed, in addition to the crash report, when investigating all hit and run accidents.
  - 4. Accidents due to driver impairment from alcohol or drugs.
    - a. A case report shall be completed, in addition to the crash report, when investigating accidents due to driver impairment from alcohol/drugs.
    - b. Accidents involving fatalities or serious bodily injuries that involve alcohol/drug impairment will call for a Fatal Alcohol Crash Team (FACT) if one is available. A shift supervisor or FACT team member may call for a FACT response when alcohol/drug impairment is

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<sup>1</sup> IACLEA 10.2.1 Traffic Collision Investigation – Collision Reporting and Investigation  
 IACLEA 13.1.2 Investigative Services – Authority of On-Scene Investigators, and,  
 IACLEA 13.1.3 Investigative Services – Preliminary Investigations.



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indicated.

- 5. Accidents involving hazardous materials, and
  - 6. Accidents occurring on private property.
  - 7. Accidents involving any IU owned vehicles, regardless of the damage.
- B. All crash reports will be completed using the ARIES crash report system.

#### IV. Collision Scene Responses

When available:

- A. At least two officers will respond to any reported fatal, personal injury, or unknown injuries ("unknown") accident<sup>2</sup>.
  - 1. The primary responding officer to these types of accidents should consider them as "emergency calls" and respond accordingly. Assisting officer(s) should utilize an "urgent" response (41.2.9) and *IUPD General Orders – Chapter 11 Internal Communications*.
    - a. All other accidents should be considered urgent calls, unless extraordinary circumstances dictate an emergency response (41.2.9) and *IUPD General Orders – Chapter 11 Internal and IUPD General Orders – Chapter 11 Internal Communication*.
  - 2. The first officer on the scene will advise the nature and extent of injuries/casualties and direct or disregard any assisting officers.
  - 3. Specialized personnel may be directed to the scene in cases of serious injury or fatal accidents.
  - 4. At least one officer will respond to the scene of any hit and run accident.
  - 5. At least two officers will respond to any accident reported to involve an alcohol/drug-impaired driver.
  - 6. At least one officer will respond to any reported accident involving public vehicles or property.

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<sup>2</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2. – Traffic Collision Investigation - Response to Collision Scene  
 IACLEA 13.1.2. – Investigative Services – Authority of On-Scene Investigations (E)



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7. At least two officers will respond to any accident reported to involve hazardous materials.
8. At least two officers will respond to any accident reported to involve a disturbance between those involved.
9. At least two officers will respond to any accident reported to involve major traffic congestion because of the accident.
10. At least one officer will respond to any reported accident in which at least one vehicle is damaged to the extent that towing is required.

### V. Collision Scene Duties

Responsibilities of the first officer to arrive at the collision scene include, but are not limited to<sup>3</sup>:

- A. Administering first-aid and providing basic life support.
- B. Summoning additional assistance and equipment, as necessary.
- C. Protecting the collision scene; preserving short-lived evidence.
- D. Establishing a safe traffic pattern around the scene.
- E. Locating witnesses and recording collision information, and
- F. Expediting the removal of vehicles, persons, and debris from the roadway after all evidence has been marked or collected.

### VI. Designation of officer in charge at the scene

- A. The first officer to arrive at the collision scene shall retain charge of the scene until properly relieved by the officer assigned, a supervisor, and/or other specially trained officer.
- B. Officers shall cooperate with personnel from other law enforcement agencies who may respond to the same collision scene.

<sup>3</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2 – Traffic Collision Investigation - Response to Collision Scene



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### VII. Identifying and dealing with injured persons

- A. Officers shall identify injured persons whenever possible, through one or more of the following<sup>4</sup>:
  - 1. Observing signs and symptoms.
  - 2. Determining the mechanism of injury.
  - 3. Conducting patient assessments.
  - 4. Applying knowledge acquired through first responder or other approved medical training, and
  - 5. Interviewing principals and/or witnesses.
- B. Actions regarding injury shall take precedence over investigative or reporting activities.
- C. Officers shall prioritize the delivery of care, administer emergency medical treatment, and provide basic life support functions, as necessary.
- D. Officers shall not attempt first-aid beyond their personal ability nor permit an incompetent volunteer to treat an injured person.
- E. When emergency medical personnel arrive, the care of the injured will be entrusted to them; this will not prevent officers from assisting should circumstances dictate.

### VIII. Identifying and dealing with fire hazards and/or hazardous materials<sup>5</sup>

- A. The officer shall be alert to actual and potential dangers, carefully control the movement of vehicles within the vicinity of the fire or potential fire hazard, and detour traffic, as necessary.
- B. If a fire potential exists, the officer shall take appropriate action to stabilize the condition, to include:
  - 1. Summoning fire department resources when necessary.

<sup>4</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2a – Response to Collision Scene

<sup>5</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2h – Response to Collision Scene



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2. Providing adequate protection to the scene.
  3. Isolating the immediate area.
  4. Removing persons from the vicinity of the hazard, and
  5. Suppressing the hazard if safe to do so.
- C. The officer should attempt to eliminate the possibility of sparks or other ignition from smoking, engines, flares, electricity, or any other source to the maximum extent possible.
- D. If a fire exists, the officer should summon firefighting assistance and only attempt to rescue persons or extinguish the fire if it is safe to do so<sup>6</sup>.
1. Depending upon the extent of the fire, the officer should evacuate and isolate the surrounding area until the fire is suppressed.
- E. When encountering a hazardous material, the officer should attempt to identify the container placard, type of hazard, and transport vehicle<sup>7</sup>.
- F. The officer should isolate the hazard area and evacuate nonessential personnel if doing so avoids placing the public in greater danger.
- G. Only properly trained and equipped personnel should enter an area where a hazardous material may be encountered.
- H. A supervisor shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe perimeter, summoning additional assistance, and notifying other agencies.
- I. The department shall utilize the [United States Department of Transportation's Emergency Response Guidebook](#) as a hazardous materials reference resource.
1. This manual was developed for use by firefighters, law enforcement officers, and other emergency services personnel as a guide for initial actions to be taken to protect themselves and the public when they are called to handle incidents involving hazardous materials.
- J. When fire or hazardous materials are involved, the fire department representative shall assume control of the scene with officers assisting as required.

<sup>6</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2.h – Response to Collision Scene

<sup>7</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2.h – Response to Collision Scene



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K. Any investigation of the collision shall occur after approval by the fire department representative.

## IX. Collecting Information

A. When an investigation is warranted, it may be appropriate to obtain the following types of information or evidence:

1. Photographs.
2. Preliminary field examinations of specific vehicle components.
3. Preliminary matching of vehicle damage.
4. Skid or drag factor tests.
5. Observations of visibility and view obstructions.
6. Trip plans of each principal or pedestrian involved.
7. Events, maneuvers, and anticipated actions just prior to the collision.
8. Accurate descriptions and measurements of all vehicle damage, marks on the roadway, final resting positions of vehicles and debris.
9. Identification of, and preliminary statements from principals and witnesses, and
10. Any other information related to the collision that may be necessary to ensure a thorough investigation.

B. Major activities associated with the collection of information at the traffic collision scene may include<sup>8</sup>:

1. Interviewing principals and witnesses<sup>9</sup>.
2. Examining and recording roadway and weather conditions<sup>10</sup>.
3. Exchanging and providing information.

<sup>8</sup> IACLEA 13.1.3 – Preliminary Investigations

<sup>9</sup> IACLEA 13.1.3.c – Preliminary Investigations

<sup>10</sup> IACLEA 13.1.3.b – Preliminary Investigations



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4. Collecting and preserving evidence<sup>11</sup>.
  5. Examining and recording vehicle damage.
  6. Taking photographs and measurements.
  7. Preparing sketches, diagrams, and drawings, and
  8. Properly receipting property.
- C. All pertinent information shall be collected in a manner that ensures accuracy and admissibility.

## X. Protecting the collision scene

- A. Arriving officer(s) should park their patrol vehicle(s) in such a way as to provide maximum protection and visibility.
1. Protecting the scene and using traffic-warning devices are especially important if victims, their vehicles, or hazardous materials are in the roadway<sup>12</sup>.
- B. Overhead emergency lights, flares, barricades, traffic cones, and other appropriate warning devices should be utilized to protect the scene and to alert approaching traffic.
1. The use of warning devices may also create traffic problems, however, and their use must be carefully considered.
- C. As soon as practical, a safe traffic pattern should be established around the collision scene. This may require that additional officer(s) block or direct traffic<sup>13</sup>.
1. Overseeing the removal of vehicles, persons, and debris is an important responsibility because failure to do so may result in unnecessary congestion or other collisions<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> IACLEA 13.1.3.e – Preliminary Investigations  
<sup>12</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2.c – Response to Collision Scene  
<sup>13</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2.e – Response to Collision Scene  
<sup>14</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2.g – Response to Collision Scene



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- D. After all evidence has been marked, observed, or collected; principals in property damage collisions should be directed *to* remove their vehicles from the traveled portion of the roadway.
- E. Persons who were not witnesses *to* or *involved in* the collision should be directed to leave the scene.

### XI. Control of collision victim property

- A. The officer in charge at the collision scene should ensure that a victim's property is protected from theft or vandalism and remove it to a place of safekeeping if the owner is unable to care for it.
- B. Complete documentation shall be completed when an officer takes possession of a victim's property for safekeeping or for evidentiary purposes.
- C. When an officer handles a victim's property, it should be done in the presence of witnesses whenever possible; such persons should be identified in the subsequent report.
- D. When it becomes necessary to release a victim's property to another person or agency, the officer should properly document the transfer of the property<sup>15</sup>.

### XII. Accidents involving Serious Bodily Injury

- A. Officers responding to crashes involving serious bodily injury or death shall obtain a blood test from all involved parties as required by Indiana State Law (IC 9-30-7-4) Chapter #7 *Implied Consent in Accidents Involving Serious Injury or Death*.<sup>16</sup>

### XIII. Follow-up Investigations

Follow-up investigations may be necessary for traffic accidents as the circumstances warrant. Follow-up activities may include but are not limited to<sup>17</sup>:

- A. Establish criteria for initiating an additional investigation.
- B. Collecting off-scene data.

<sup>15</sup> IACLEA 10.2.2.j – Response to Collision Scene

<sup>16</sup> IC – IC 9-3-7-4 - Cpt. #7 *Implied Consent in Accidents Involving Serious Injury or Death*

<sup>17</sup> IACLEA 13.1.4 – Follow-Up Investigations





Indiana University Police Department

General Order G10.2

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- C. Obtaining/recording formal statements from witnesses.
- D. Reconstructing accidents.
- E. Using expert and technical assistance, and
- F. Preparing formal reports to support criminal charges.

### XIV. Related Information

Indiana University Police Department:

*G15.1 Evidence Collection, Handling, & Processing*

*G15.3 Evidence Storage and Destruction*

*G10.1.1 Traffic Enforcement*

*G10.3.1 Traffic Direction & Control*

*G1.1.3 Ancillary Services*

Indiana University Policy:

*IUPUI Parking Regulations*

Indiana Code:

[IC 9-22](#) – *Article 22: Abandoned, Salvaged, and Scrap Vehicles*

[IC 9-30-7-4](#) *Chapter #7 Implied Consent in Accidents Involving Serious Injury or Death*

[IC 21-39-5](#) – *Chapter 5. Traffic Regulation*

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