

GENERAL ORDER 61.5.1

Major Accident Investigation Team

GENERAL ORDER CROSS-REFERENCE: 61.4.1

SUMMARY

Describes the Department's Major Accident Investigation Team.

DISCUSSION

The intent of this order is to develop a comprehensive guideline for investigating a fatal or potentially fatal motor vehicle accident.

POLICY

I

FIRST OFFICER(S) ON THE SCENE

The critical part of an accident investigation rests with the first officer on the scene. The first officer at the scene of a fatal or potentially fatal accident shall:

1. Secure and protect the scene.
 - A. Control traffic to protect the area.
 - B. Request additional units as necessary.
 - C. Request necessary support services (Fire/EMS).
 - D. Care for injured.
2. Request watch commander and Major Accident Investigation Team.
3. Identify and secure drivers.
4. Locate involved persons (passengers, witnesses) and obtain:
 - A. Names, addresses, phone numbers (home/work).
 - B. Brief statements including spontaneous statements.

Note: It is better to immediately identify as many people as possible than to try and get detailed statements from only one or two.

5. Preserve evidence. Mark or photograph temporary evidence which can or will disappear (i.e., skid marks in the snow, skin scrape marks, etc).
6. Note weather and road conditions at time of arrival.
7. Note location of people involved.
 - A. Who was in which vehicle and where.
 - B. Who was out of vehicles and where.
 - C. Ask emergency medical personnel who they took out of which vehicle(s), if seat belt was removed, and any indicator of intoxication or medication observed.
8. Identify assisting personnel, aide crews, other police officers, especially if they arrived first. Try to identify the very first person to arrive at the scene.
9. Stay at the scene to control the scene and protect evidence.

II

EVIDENCE COLLECTING

1. The on-call police legal advisor should be called as soon as possible for legal assistance in the taking of biological samples including blood or urine samples, obtaining a search warrant, or any other appropriate legal advice.
2. When an officer receives concurrence from the District Attorney's office regarding the necessity of a biological sample, they will contact qualified personnel, a physician or someone acting under the control of a duly licensed physician to obtain a biological sample from the suspect.
 - A. Accompany driver or drivers from the scene to the hospital or other location where the biological sample(s) are to be taken.
 - B. Upon arrival, stay with the drivers until sample(s) are taken if possible.
 - C. Confer with Major Accident Investigation Team members when they arrive.
 - D. If Major Accident Investigation Team personnel are available, they will coordinate and monitor the removal of the sample(s) and follow-up interview with

involved parties, including principals, witnesses, officers and EMS personnel.

3. Whenever an officer causes a biological sample to be taken, he shall seize immediate custody of the evidence and request the appropriate analysis made at the crime laboratory. Protective equipment, including latex gloves, shall be worn when handling body fluids or containers containing body fluids.

Biological evidence which may require storage time prior to analysis shall be placed in the property control room refrigerator unit.

When blood is taken, the officer shall obtain 2 blood samples, the second sample being taken approximately 1 hour after the first sample taken. Document exact times for each sample.

4. Evidence handling is critical. Types of evidence which should be given particular care are: Biological samples including but not limited to blood and urine), clothing with detectable alcoholic beverage odor, clothing from victim (microscopic glass/lens fragments, paint samples, etc.), photographs of specific marks on bodies (primarily involving pedestrian fatal).

5. Each officer assisting with the investigation shall write a detailed report of observations, involvement, and any statements taken by that officer.

III

WATCH COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The watch commander shall coordinate all activities involving the accident investigation until relieved by the Major Accident Investigation Team supervisor.

The watch commander is responsible for notification to command staff..

IV

MAJOR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TEAM SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

In the case of all fatal traffic accidents or cases where death is probable, the Major Accident Investigation Team supervisor or their designee shall be notified. He shall immediately respond to the scene and assume responsibility for coordination of the investigation.

The possibility of a vehicular homicide case requires that Major Accident Investigation Team personnel be notified and assume the responsibility for the investigation.

The team supervisor will then assign Major Accident Investigation Team personnel to specific follow-up functions and ensure that a primary case officer is selected to be responsible for concluding the investigation.

The team supervisor shall ensure the following notifications are made.

1. District Attorney
2. Medical Examiner
3. Media
4. Family members/next of kin
5. Department of Motor Vehicles

The team supervisor will approve the removal, impounding and examination of vehicles.

The team supervisor shall ensure that all reasonable efforts be made to conceal the body from public view and coordinate the removal as allowed by the investigation.

The team supervisor will monitor the status of the case book and ensure report and investigation is completed as soon as possible.

V

MAJOR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TEAM MEMBER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Respond to the scene with appropriate equipment.
2. Confer with officers and/or team leader at the scene.
3. Identify and secure involved drivers.
4. Get details of accident and assist in coordinating the priorities of the investigation with watch commander.
5. Determine if a crime has occurred.
6. Take responsibility for on-scene investigation, to include the responsibility to conduct or arrange to have conducted:
 - A. Examining and recording vehicle damage prior to the removal of the involved vehicles.
 - B. Taking measurements of accident scene to include the relationships of the involved vehicles, any evidence and any injured or dead persons not in vehicles to fixed scene locations such as intersections, traffic signals and highway markers.

- C. Interviewing witnesses or arranging for such interviews.
- D. Taking photographs of the overall scene and specific aspects.
- E. Collecting and preserving evidence.
- F. Examining and recording the effects of the accident on the roadway. Damage to the roadway that could affect the safety of other drivers will be reported to the appropriate roadway authority for repair as soon as possible.
- G. Collecting off-scene evidence.
- H. The completion of the necessary accident report and any citations or information necessary for prosecution.

7. Accident Reconstruction. If the District Attorney believes a reconstruction of the accident is necessary for prosecution, the Major Accident Investigation Team supervisor shall assist any necessary coordination with the reconstruction expert chosen by the District Attorney.

8. The primary case officer will be responsible for completion of the investigation, developing the case book, and maintaining close coordination with the District Attorney's office. The case book will be maintained in the watch commander's office until final completion. The primary case officer will ensure that a basic Oregon Traffic Crash Report with involved driver(s) information be completed and submitted to Records in a timely manner for entry in the computer, preferably by the end of the month. The complete case, including narratives and supplemental reports, can be submitted at a later time.

Richard L. Lewis
Chief of Police