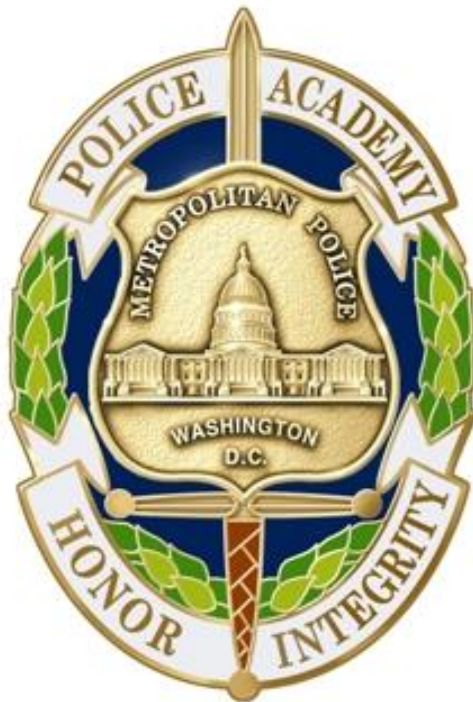


Metropolitan Police Academy



13.1 Traffic Crashes

[Approved 4/26/2023](#)

13.1.1 Explain department policies for handling traffic crashes on public space

MPD Officers are required to investigate and prepare reports on traffic crashes that occur on highways and public space in Washington, DC when:

- A fatality or any reported injury (regardless of how severe) occurs.
- A motor vehicle sustains body or mechanical damage that renders it inoperable and the damage requires the vehicle to be towed from the scene.

There are instances where MPD officers must complete a traffic crash report regardless of the amount of damage sustained in the collision. Such instances include:

1. Damage to a motor vehicle or other property has occurred and the operator or owner of the damaged vehicle or property is not at the scene of the crash.
2. DC government or federal government-owned motor vehicles or property is involved, including governmental corporation motor vehicles (e.g., US Postal Service).
3. A public transportation motor vehicle is involved (e.g., bus, taxicab, limousine).
4. The motor vehicle has been involved in a crime or serious traffic violation.
5. The investigating member issues a Notice of Infraction (NOI) or summarily arrests a motor vehicle operator.
6. The investigating member determines that a report is required to assist in ensuring that no involved party evades responsibility.
7. The traffic crash involves an operator who is a diplomat.

MPD is required to take reports on collisions involving vehicles connected to the federal government. This requirement does not extend to other locales (Alexandria, Prince George's County, and Arlington)

Serious traffic offenses include:

- Leaving the scene of a crash.
- Operating a motor vehicle while DUI or DWI.
- Reckless driving.
- Operating a motor vehicle without a permit.
- Operating a motor vehicle after suspension or revocation of a permit.

- Operating a motor vehicle at a speed in excess of thirty (30) miles per hour above the authorized speed limit.

For crashes involving all DC government-owned or leased vehicles and property (including MPD vehicles and property), MPD officers must notify the **Mayor's Command Center at (202) 727-6161**. The Mayor's Command Center can also be contacted via 311. Any damages to PEPCO street poles require notification to **PEPCO at (877)-737-2662**.

Public transportation vehicles includes shuttle buses, Greyhound buses, DC Circulators, WMATA transit vehicles, Ubers, Lyfts, etc.

When a traffic crash report is taken an NOI *must* be issued whenever one of the parties is found to be at fault. Warning NOIs *cannot* be issued when taking a traffic crash report.

If none of the above conditions apply and the damage to the motor vehicle is minor, no Traffic Crash Report is required. Examples of minor damage include broken or cracked windshields, flat tires, broken vehicle lights, and body damage that can be temporarily realigned to permit the safe operation of the vehicle.

For crashes involving minor damage where no Traffic Crash Report is required, MPD officers must provide the involved parties with a **Government of the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Crash Report for Property Damage Only** form from DDOT.

For property damage to motor vehicles that was not caused by a crash or when a crash cannot be established, an Incident Report must be prepared.

Bent rims or wheel damage due to a pothole requires the MPD officer to complete an Incident Report and not a Traffic Crash Report. The report classification in these instances is Damage to Property.

13.1.2 Outline department policies for handling traffic crashes on private space

Traffic Crash Reports are often required for incidents that occur on private property. Per MPD policy, such a report is required when:

- A fatality or injury occurs (regardless of the injury's seriousness).
- The traffic crash involves an operator who is a diplomat.
- An MPD vehicle is involved and an official directs that a Traffic Crash Report be prepared. Note that officials must immediately be notified for collisions involving MPD vehicles.
- Any of the following charges will be placed against the vehicle operator as a result of the traffic crash:
 - Unlicensed operator

- DUI/DWI operator
- Leaving the scene of a crash

NOTE: You cannot give a Notice of Infraction (NOI) for moving violations that occurred on private property. Investigating members shall not place charges against nor issue an NOI to any person for a violation other than those listed above that occur as a result of a crash on private property

All other crashes that occur on private property require an Incident Report with the classification Damage to Property.

13.1.3 Differentiate between when a Traffic Crash Report, Event Report, or DDOT Information Form should be used to document a traffic crash

There are common traffic-related scenarios which an MPD officer will face that will require the decision of how to handle. Most traffic collisions in the District of Columbia do not require officers to take a Traffic Crash Report. This allows MPD to focus on the more serious crashes as well as other aspects of police work. Officers also have the option to take an Incident Report or hand the parties a Government of the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Crash Report for Property Damage Only form (DDOT).

The following scenarios explore the options:

Scenario 1: You are called to the scene where a car is parked with damage to its rear quarter-panel facing the sidewalk. There are no witnesses and the vehicle owner/operator states that he was not involved in a collision. The damage was discovered after the vehicle was parked on the street overnight. The damage is a small dent and you see a broken tree limb in the vicinity. What report is appropriate?

A Damage to Property Report is appropriate since you cannot establish that a vehicular crash occurred, nor can you establish that a crime occurred. The tree limb suggests that its fall on the vehicle caused the damage. You cannot know for sure, though, since there were no witnesses to the damage.

Scenario 2: You are called to the scene of a two-car collision on a public road in DC. Both vehicles are private and neither party claims any injury. Both vehicles are drivable and there are no criminal violations. However, one of the vehicles has a plastic rear bumper cover hanging from it. The passenger of this vehicle snaps the bumper cover back in place although it still appears damaged. The operator of this vehicle is distraught at the damage and asks for a report. What report is appropriate?

A Government of the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Crash Report for Property Damage Only form (DDOT) is appropriate since the damage to the vehicle does not preclude it from being driven from the scene in a safe manner.

Scenario 3: You are called to the scene of a collision in a supermarket parking lot in Washington, DC. There are no injuries and both vehicles are privately owned; however,

one of the vehicles is a taxi. There is only minor damage to the vehicles and no criminal violations were committed. What report is appropriate?

Since you have a traffic crash on private property, a Damage to Property Report must be prepared. Note that since there were no injuries and no laws were broken, no NOI needs to be issued.

Scenario 4: You are called to the scene of a traffic crash involving two private vehicles on private property with minor damage. Both vehicles are safe to drive and there are no injuries. However, while talking to one of the drivers, you realize that he does not have a valid driver's permit. You confirm this via WALES. What report is required?

In this case, you must complete a Traffic Crash Report since a crime was committed. Note that you would not make an arrest since NO PERMIT is not a probable cause misdemeanor.

Scenario 5: You respond to the scene of a traffic crash involving two private motor vehicles on New York Ave. NE. The vehicles are safe to drive and there are no visible injuries. However, one of the drivers complains of shoulder pain from the crash. He refuses medical treatment. What report is required?

A Traffic Crash Report must be completed since one of the drivers has a minor injury. Remember that any injury, no matter how minor, must result in a Traffic Crash Report being completed.

Scenario 6: You respond to the scene of a minor collision involving a Montgomery County government police vehicle and a private vehicle on Western Ave. NW. The vehicles can be driven away safely and there are no injuries. No crime has been committed. What report is taken?

Here, a Government of the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Crash Report for Property Damage Only form (DDOT) is given to the community members involved in the crash. Note that the only government vehicles that result in Traffic Crash Reports are DC government, federal government, and government corporation vehicles.

13.1.4 Analyze a basic traffic crash scene to determine responsibility

When arriving on the scene of a traffic crash, the most important tasks an MPD officer is responsible for are making the scene safe and summoning emergency medical assistance. This is sometimes no small feat because traffic crash scenes can become chaotic. In order to safely handle a traffic crash scene, you must properly assess what resources are needed. You may need additional MPD units to assist you with street and/or lane closures.

The first thing you must do is properly position your vehicle so that you do not create an additional hazard to yourself or others. It is usually a good idea to use your emergency equipment and/or flares. You must then assess if there are any injuries. If you there are, you must assess their severity. This information must be transmitted to the dispatcher, and a board should be requested, if needed. If there are any safety

issues such as a car fire, you must also be sure to notify DCFEMS. If there are any collision-related injuries that may result in a fatality, you must notify Major Crash to respond to your scene.

If the collision is relatively minor, it is best to ask vehicle operators to move their cars to a safer location to lessen traffic congestion.

If the crash resulted in serious injuries, you must treat it in a similar manner to a crime scene. Have photographs of any skid marks, vehicle damage, and visible injuries taken. Skid marks are a great indicator of what occurred just prior to a collision. Significant skid marks suggest that speed was a factor in a collision. Most of the time, the party who committed the moving violation (e.g., stop sign violation, speeding, failure to yield) just prior to the collision is at fault for the crash. Debris fields are another excellent source of information about what may have happened during a traffic crash.

Good note taking techniques are particularly useful on traffic crash scenes. All the driver, passenger and vehicle information for the parties involved must be recorded in a notebook. This information will be needed for the Traffic Crash Report and any future court proceedings that may arise.

Once the scene is under control, you can begin your investigation. Locate all the parties and interview them separately. Canvas for non-involved witnesses as they are frequently the most valuable resources of information in your investigation. They must be identified and interviewed whenever possible. Witness and driver accounts are usually your best source of insight into what caused the traffic crash. Utilizing a PD Form 119 (Complainant/Witness Statement) is a good practice in traffic collision investigations.

If a witness has already left the scene, you must still try to contact the witness via telephone, email, or a visit to his or her address. Although all Traffic Crash Reports must be submitted and approved by the end of your tour of duty, formal supplements can be made to the reports at any time afterwards.

Most collisions will be relatively straightforward:

- Witness describes how one party ran a stop sign or red light.
- Rear end collision where there was no improper backing or stopping.
- Right angle collision where a vehicle making a left turn failed to yield to oncoming traffic
- DUI/DWI operator lost control of his or her vehicle.
- Vehicle was driven so fast that the driver lost control.
- Driver commits an improper lane change causing vehicular damage on the side of the vehicle.
- Wet road conditions cause a vehicle operator to lose control of the vehicle.

Once you have investigated and determined responsibility for the collision, you must issue a Notice of Infraction (NOI) to the person at fault. Common violations for crashes are:

- Failure to Control Speed to Avoid Colliding

- Failure to Yield
- Failure to Obey Signal Device
- Passing Stop Sign
- Passing Red Light
- Failure to Maintain Lane
- Following too Closely

Be sure that all driver permits, registration cards, and insurance information are verified on the scene. Your report narrative should include all the evidence or witness statements that allowed you to arrive at your conclusion.

13.1.5 Explain additional responsibilities when conducting a patrol investigation into more complex traffic crashes

Hit & Run Investigations

A Hit & Run takes place when one or more of the vehicle operators on the scene of the collision leaves the scene without making their identity known. Always run the tag of the vehicle associated with the fleeing driver(s) since the vehicle may have been stolen or is connected to other crimes. If this is the case, you must notify an official or detective to ascertain if the vehicle will need to be processed for evidence or towed from the scene in a manner different from that of a typical hit and run crash.

The charge is Leaving after Colliding and you do not need to have witnessed the crime in order to arrest for it because it is a probable cause misdemeanor.

Leaving after Colliding (§ 50–2201.05c)

The law requires that:

“(a) Any person who operates or who is in physical control of a vehicle within the District who knows or has reason to believe that his or her vehicle has been in a collision shall immediately stop and:

(1) Where another person is injured, call or cause another to call 911 or call or cause another to call for an ambulance or other emergency assistance if necessary, remain on the scene until law enforcement arrives, and provide identifying information to law enforcement and to the injured person;

(2) Where real or personal property belonging to another is damaged or a domestic animal is injured, provide identifying information to the owner or operator of the property or the owner of the domestic animal or, where the owner or operator of the property or the owner of the domestic animal is not present, provide or cause another to provide identifying information and the location of the collision, to law enforcement or 911; or

(3) Where real or personal property or a wild or domestic animal, as a result of the collision, poses a risk to others, call or cause another to call 911 and provide identifying information, the location of the collision, and a description of the nature of the risk posed to others.

(b) It is an affirmative defense to a violation of subsection (a) of this section, which the defendant must show by a preponderance of the evidence, that the defendant's failure to stop or his or her failure to remain on the scene was based on a reasonable belief that his or her personal safety, or the safety of another, was at risk and that he or she called 911, or otherwise notified law enforcement, as soon as it was safe to do so, provided identifying information, provided a description of the collision, including the location of the collision or event, and followed the instructions of the 911 operator or a law enforcement officer.

(c) It is not a defense to a violation of this section that the defendant:

(1) Was intoxicated, impaired in any way, or distracted; or

(2) Was not at fault for the collision.”

According to DC Code, if a driver believes that he or she was involved in a collision where the other party is not present (such as a parked car, telephone pole, or domestic animal), the driver must immediately stop and report the collision via 911 unless:

- No other property but the driver’s own is damaged, or
- A wild animal is involved that does not pose a risk to the public because of the collision.

If the owner of the other property (vehicle, pet, or otherwise) is present, it is not necessary to call 911; however, providing driver identifying information to the other party is required under the law.

Suppose a party involved in a collision reasonably fears for his or her own safety. In that case, the person can leave the scene provided that he or she makes a call to 911 and provides his or her identifying information and a request for law enforcement as soon afterward as it is safe to do so.

NOTE: Collisions with domestic animals such as cats and dogs must be reported via 911. Failure to do so subjects the vehicle operator involved in the collision to arrest for the charge of Leaving after Colliding. What about traffic collisions that results in objects falling or flying from a vehicle?

Object Falling or Flying from Vehicle (§ 50–2201.05d)

The law requires that:

“(a) Any person who operates or who is in physical control of a vehicle within the District who knows or has reason to believe that an object likely to cause damage has detached from, fallen, or flown from his or her vehicle shall immediately stop and:

(1) Where another person is injured, call or cause another to call 911 or call or cause another to call for an ambulance or other emergency assistance if necessary, remain on the scene until law enforcement arrives, and provide identifying information to law enforcement and to the injured person;

(2) Where real or personal property belonging to another is damaged or a domestic animal is injured, provide identifying information to the owner or operator of the property or the owner of the domestic animal or, where the owner or operator of the property or the owner of the domestic animal is not present, provide or cause another to provide identifying information and the location of the event, to law enforcement or 911; or

(3) Where real or personal property or a wild or domestic animal, because of the event, poses a risk to others, call or cause another to call 911 and provide identifying information, the location of the collision, and a description of the nature of the risk posed to others.

(b) It is an affirmative defense to a violation of subsection (a) of this section, which the defendant must show by a preponderance of the evidence, that the defendant's failure to stop or their failure to remain on the scene was based on a reasonable belief that his or her personal safety, or the safety of another, was at risk and that he or she called 911, or otherwise notified law enforcement, as soon as it was safe to do so, provided identifying information, provided a description of the event, including the location of the event, and followed the instructions of the 911 operator or a law enforcement officer.

(c) It is not a defense to a violation of this section that the defendant:

(1) Was intoxicated, impaired in any way, or distracted; or

(2) Was not at fault for the object falling from or flying from the vehicle.”

This means that if a truck in front of a driver fails to secure its load properly and a piece of construction material flies off and hits the driver's car, the operator of that vehicle could be arrested for Leaving after Colliding. There is not much difference between whether the collision occurs between two vehicles or between a vehicle and a flying object from another vehicle. If an object falls from a vehicle and damages another vehicle or another's property, then the vehicle from which the object came must stop and the operator must make his identity known or call 911 to report the crash.

MPD officers should use caution when arresting persons for Leaving after Colliding for an object falling from another vehicle. If the object is small, the operator could reasonably have not known that the object fell off his vehicle. However, if the incident involves a truck that is overladen with objects, then it is reasonable to presume that the operator of the truck should have known that an object was likely to have fallen off the vehicle.

The penalty for Leaving after Colliding is up to 180 days in jail.

Documentation and Handling

Traffic Crash Reports are always required for all hit and run traffic crashes. The incidents should be handled like any other traffic crashes in terms of scene safety, lane closures, etc. On these scenes however, you must broadcast a lookout for the vehicle or driver that fled the crash scene, if such a description is available. In addition, evidence becomes very important since the investigation is for more than just the determination of who is at fault for the collision. The incident without an offender has become a criminal investigation and, therefore, photographs, witness statements, camera footage, etc. must be obtained.

If you have a hit and run vehicle operator who left his or her vehicle on the scene, you must tow the vehicle to an MPD lot for a follow-up investigation. You must request an MPD crane (or DPW contract crane) to tow the vehicle to your district element's impound facility. The classification utilized will be Evidence and the Watch Commander must approve the classification and tow. Since the vehicle is being taken to an MPD facility, a Property Record must be completed to account for the hit and run driver's vehicle.

If an involved vehicle is found to be stolen, the procedures for recovering a stolen vehicle must be followed.

If the driver of one of the vehicles fled the scene without making their identity known, but is found later, you must follow departmental procedures for obtaining identification of the individual as the offender (e.g., show-up, photo array).

Injuries

It is important that the responding officer obtain medical care for whomever on scene needs it. This includes drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. It is also a good practice to interview the attending physician or nurse to obtain as much information as possible regarding the injuries to the operator or passenger of a vehicle involved in the crash

Sometimes, MPD must provide first aid if DCFEMS has not yet arrived on the scene. It is important to take good notes to make sure that the ailment or injury is sufficiently articulated in the report.

It is imperative that the reporting officer denote the hospital to which any injured party is taken. The absence from the scene of an injured party due to medical care does not rob that person of the ability to give a statement about what happened during the traffic crash. MPD must interview all parties involved whenever possible. If a party is not immediately available for an interview, the reporting officer must respond to the hospital or find another means by which to interview the injured party.

If the injured party was the operator of a vehicle and is discovered to possibly have been impaired by drugs or alcohol during the crash incident, the reporting officer must ask for the assistance of a field sobriety certified officer to conduct a Standard Field Sobriety Test (SFST).

Critical Injuries / Fatalities

MPD officers who arrive on the scene of a collision involving a fatality or life-threatening injury must notify the Major Crash Unit. In major crash scenes where a motor vehicle operator is transported to a hospital, an MPD officer must accompany him or her to ensure that the operator does not leave the hospital before being identified or tested for blood alcohol content.

As soon as injuries and medical care issues are addressed, MPD officers must then attempt to preserve the collision (or crime) scene in its present condition. An official must be called to assist in this effort. Serious crash scenes must be treated as crime scenes with access limited strictly to MPD or DCFEMS personnel. Nobody is allowed to touch anything on the scene and an area that easily contains the crime scene must be roped off. Remember, there may be more than one scene to protect because crash scenes are not necessarily contiguous (touching). There could have been a prior event that occurred elsewhere before the final crash site. For example, an initial collision with another vehicle could have occurred further up the road before the final crash site.

Preservation is the first arriving unit's responsibility absent exigent circumstances. If officers arrive on the scene and rain, wind, or other natural elements are degrading the crime scene before the arrival of crime scene units or the Major Crash Unit, officers will have the scene quickly photographed and skid marks measured in order to preserve a record of how the scene appeared upon MPD arrival.

The Major Crash unit will be responsible for investigating accidents resulting in fatalities and critical injuries. This includes preparing the Traffic Crash Report.

Towing

Sometimes, the operator of the vehicle will become so incapacitated that you will have to obtain a tow crane for his or her vehicle. This should be done when the vehicle is causing a hazard in the roadway and there is nobody designated by the owner/operator to take possession of the vehicle. A private tow crane shall be used for any vehicle involved in such a collision.

When the collision occurs on and involves damage to private property, MPD shall call for a tow crane only at the request of the owner of the vehicle. Otherwise, the situation becomes a private matter between the owner of the vehicle involved in the collision and the private property owner.

If a vehicle is on scene and no owner/operator representative is present to take possession of the vehicle, MPD must make sure that the vehicle is:

- Secured from tampering or theft
- Not impeding traffic

Frequently this requires the assistance of a private tow crane. This tow crane will be at the owner's expense.

No Property Record is required for accident vehicles towed at the owner's expense. However, if the driver claims that the crash may have been caused by defective equipment (like bad brakes), you must have the vehicle towed to the DPW Inspection station. This is easy to do during normal business hours; however, if the inspection station is closed the vehicle must be held at an MPD lot until the inspection station reopens. Any mechanical issues that may have contributed to the collision must be denoted in the Traffic Crash Report.

Securing Property

MPD must secure the property of any operator of a motor vehicle who is injured and must go to the hospital. This is done via a Property Record and the property is taken to the reporting officer's element. The classification to be used is Safekeeping. If an injured party is a bicyclist and nobody is present to take custody of the bicycle, it must likewise be taken to the district for safekeeping.

For example, if one of the parties is taken to the hospital and his or her briefcase containing a laptop computer is sitting in the front seat, the reporting officer must take the property for safekeeping. If the vehicle is towed and the property goes missing, MPD will be responsible for its loss (as will the reporting officer).

Lane Closures

Many collisions require lane closures. MPD strives to keep lane closures to a minimum in order to make the least possible disruption to non-involved people's lives. However, lane closures are necessary in many instances to ensure scene safety and/or the preservation of evidence.

When a lane closure occurs, advise the dispatcher so that other MPD units can be made aware. Afterwards, switch to the City-Wide 1 Radio Zone. Provide as much detail as possible regarding the lane closure (e.g., affected streets and cross-streets, scope of closure). Guidance should also be provided for possible alternate routes. Depending on the time of day, the Traffic Desk will handle all traffic-related closure information. The Traffic Desk is operated by an MPD officer assigned to the CIC. It operates only during morning and evening rush hours. After providing guidance, advise that you are switching radio-zones back to the zone in which the traffic crash occurred.

It is imperative that the lane closure(s) last only as long as needed for the processing of a crime scene or road safety. Once the vehicles have been cleared, re-advise the Traffic Desk of the lane re-openings.

MPD-involved Collisions

MPD officers must immediately notify an official to respond to the scene of any collision involving an MPD vehicle. This is true even if there is no visible damage to the MPD vehicle. The involved MPD officer must be sure to preserve all evidence at the scene. However, the investigation as well as the Traffic Crash Report will be the responsibility of the official responding to the scene.

The involved MPD officer must advise the radio dispatcher of any injuries and/or lane closures.

The MPD officer should be careful not to appear to influence the investigation.

Other Government-involved Collisions

If a DC or federal government vehicle is involved in a collision, a Traffic Crash Report is always required. Photographs must be taken only when there is an injured party.

For all DC government vehicles, the Mayor's Command Center must be notified.

For all federal government collisions, the appropriate federal agency must be notified that a collision (traffic crash) occurred.

13.1.6 Identify the Traffic Crash Report

The Traffic Crash Report documents the details surrounding a traffic crash. It includes information about all of the people and vehicles involved as well as any non-involved witnesses. Roadway conditions and a determination about traffic violations, if any, are included as well. This is accomplished through data entry into the Cobalt system. A diagram and narrative round out the report and give the reader enough details to know what occurred before, during, and after the collision.

Before completing a Traffic Crash Report, a CCN must be obtained. You must specify the type of crash when completing this report. For example:

- **DC Government Vehicle** – A DC government vehicle was involved.

- **Injury** – An injury resulted from the crash.
- **Property Damage Only** - There was only property damage and no injury.
- **Leaving after Colliding** – There was a hit and run in the crash.
- **Pedestrian** – a pedestrian was struck in the crash.

The Traffic Crash Report must contain all the identifying information for the operators of any vehicles involved in the collision. This includes driver’s permit, date of birth (DOB), address, and phone number. Passenger information (without driver’s permit) is required as well.

It is important to note important details about the crash. The collision can only have occurred on the roadway or off the roadway. Whether there was an intersection and descriptions of lanes of travel, lighting, surface type, and weather conditions are also important. Vehicle information is essential and must include the VIN, make, model, year, license plate number, and insurance. Owner information must be provided as well.

The vehicle description must include any damage incurred by the vehicle due to the crash. How the vehicle left the scene (towed or driven) must also be included in the report. The specific damage done to the vehicle must be indicated in the MPD program. The roadway traffic conditions, grade (hilly, level, etc.), and type of signal (if any) present must be included. The speed limit must always be included if the collision occurred on public space. **NOTE:** The striking vehicle is always the first vehicle (Vehicle-1) that is listed on the Traffic Crash Report.

Any police action taken, including arrest and/or the issuance of a Notice of Infraction, must also be included in the Traffic Crash Report.

Data entry in Cobalt allows officers to enter in the specific sequence of events that occurred. The diagram should correspond to the information in the data entry portion of the report. Finally, the narrative should explain the finer points of the collision that the various descriptor fields on the report fail to provide. In most instances, a brief description of witness and/or operator statements will establish how the crash occurred.

Abbreviations in Traffic Crash Reports include:

- VEH1 – Vehicle 1 (STRIKING VEHICLE)
- Driv1 – Driver 1
- W2 – Witness 2

Traffic Crash Reports should be completed inside an MPD cruiser unless there are special circumstances. Reports must be completed and submitted prior to the completion of an officer’s shift.

13.1.7 Complete a Traffic Crash Report

(Practice filling out online forms)

13.1.8 Identify a Government of the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Crash Report for Property Damage Only form (DDOT)

On public space scenes where no report is required, the Government of the District of Columbia Motor Vehicle Crash Report for Property Damage Only form (DDOT) is utilized by MPD. The information that is exchanged between operators/owners on the sheet is facilitated by MPD. MPD also helps to ensure the accuracy of the information that is written on the form.

The date, location, and road conditions are to be included, just like in a Traffic Crash Report. **NOTE:** Time is not listed in military/international time but with an AM or PM.

The driver and vehicle information are also noted on this form. This includes whether it was a personal or rental vehicle.

The insurance information as well as address of the driver is included on this form.

The particular driver action at the time of the collision must be included. For example, was the vehicle turning?

An estimate of the damage for each vehicle is required as well.

Finally, there are diagrams that can be filled in to show vehicle damage and how the crash occurred. The private citizen completes this section though MPD helps facilitate use of the form and ensures the accurate exchange of the information required on the form.

MPD officers must always provide their name, badge number, and unit of assignment when assisting private citizens in completing the DDOT information form.

It is the responsibility of the parties involved in the collision to forward the report to DDOT.

13.1.9 Demonstrate traffic direction

Whenever MPD is on the scene of a traffic collision, officers must be able to give traffic direction to motorists. This must be performed while wearing an MPD-issued traffic safety reflective vest. A whistle is also required when providing traffic directions. Many officers like to also wear white gloves for the sake of visibility.

As a traffic control officer, remember that all motorists must obey your directions. Failure to obey your lawful traffic order can result in arrest or ticketing of the driver with an NOI.

The most important tasks that a traffic control officer can accomplish are being visible and being heard. These actions must be accomplished with safety in mind for the MPD officer, pedestrians, and vehicles.

MPD officers must clearly point out to vehicles the direction of travel in which they must proceed.

A whistle is used to gain the attention of distracted or less attentive drivers. For example, when utilizing the whistle, one long blast to stop, two short blasts to start traffic.

Positioning a scout car and/or emergency flairs can make traffic direction easier for the MPD officer.

Reflective rain gear and an NOI book are requisite items that an MPD officer must possess while directing traffic.

13.1.10 Manage a basic traffic crash scene

MPD officers must be able to manage a basic traffic crash scene, as it is one of the most common calls for service that MPD receives. First, the scene must be rendered safe. Medical treatment must be requested or administered immediately. Any possible crime scene(s) should be secured.

As noted above, traffic direction must be given in order to manage a basic traffic crash scene. Frequently, additional units must be requested in order to safely manage a traffic crash scene.

Police officers need to use effective observation skills when approaching a traffic crash scene. Situational Awareness was presented to you in Section 2.3 and should guide you when approaching the scene. While approaching the scene perform a scene size up by identifying any hazards, the number of vehicles involved in the collision, the number of possible injuries and other factors that could pose a danger to citizens. These include the location of vehicles, downed power lines, fuel or other liquids on the ground, the need for tow cranes and the need for additional officers to conduct traffic control. Scene management is a vital aspect of managing a traffic crash scene and it is not possible unless Officers on the scene are able to properly identify these hazards.

For example, you arrive on the scene of a traffic crash located on Seventh Street SW over Interstate 395. You put on your reflective high visibility vest and approach the traffic crash. One of the vehicles appears to be leaking fuel and the fuel is pouring down onto other vehicles passing underneath of you on the highway. Removing passengers from the vehicle, notifying the dispatcher for the need to reroute traffic and update responding DCFEMS units is the highest priority.

Summary

Every year, there are many traffic collisions in the District of Columbia. In this lesson, we discussed how to handle traffic crashes. Traffic crashes require officer knowledge on whether to take a report. Safely handling collision scenes is important since they are usually accompanied by unsafe road conditions. Handling traffic crash scenes are one of the most common tasks performed by MPD patrol officers. MPD

has a responsibility to process traffic crash scenes safely and efficiently. Doing so saves lives and helps prevent future collisions by reporting the contributing factors of such crashes.

REFERENCES

GO 401.03	Traffic Crash Reports	01/14/2015
SO-14-05	Command Information Center Traffic Desk	07/30/2014
TT-01-048-14	Reminder when Conducting Crash Investigations	01/17/2014