

Traffic Accidents

501.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Best Practice NY_CALEA6.13 - 61.2.1 NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.7

This policy provides guidelines for responding to and investigating traffic accidents.

501.2 POLICY

Best Practice MODIFIED

It is the policy of the Syracuse Police Department to respond to traffic accidents as needed and render or summon aid to injured victims. The Department will investigate and prepare reports according to the established minimum reporting requirements with the goal of reducing the occurrence of accidents by attempting to identify the cause of the accident and through enforcing applicable laws. Unless restricted by law, traffic accident reports will be made available to the public upon request.

501.3 RESPONSE

Best Practice MODIFIED NY_CALEA6.13 - 61.2.2 (a) NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.7 (A), 47.7 (F), 40.2

Upon arriving at the scene, the responding member should assess the need for additional resources and summon assistance as appropriate. Generally, the primary unit dispatched to the scene will be responsible for the investigation and report, if required, unless responsibility is reassigned by a supervisor.

A supervisor should be called to the scene when the incident:

- (a) Is within the jurisdiction of this department and there is:
 - 1. A life-threatening injury.
 - 2. A fatality.
 - 3. A City vehicle involved.
 - 4. A City official or employee involved.
 - 5. Involvement of an on- or off-duty member of this department.
- (b) Is within another jurisdiction and there is:
 - 1. Involvement of an on-duty member of this department to determine if the member is fit for duty.
 - 2. Involvement of an off-duty member operating a department assigned vehicle to determine if the member is fit for duty.

501.3.1 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice MODIFIED NY_CALEA6.13 - 61.2.2 (b), 61.2.2 (c), 61.2.2 (e), 61.2.2 (g), 61.3.2 (a), 61.3.2 (b), 61.3.2 (c), 61.3.2 (d) NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.7 (B), 47.7 (E), 47.8

Upon arriving at the scene, the responding member should consider and appropriately address:

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- (a) Traffic direction and control.
- (b) Proper placement of emergency vehicles, cones, roadway flares or other devices if available to provide protection for members, the public and the scene.
- (c) First aid for any injured parties if it can be done safely.
- (d) Identifying fire hazards and the potential for involvement of hazardous materials.
- (e) The need for additional support as necessary (e.g., traffic control, emergency medical services, fire department, hazardous materials response, tow vehicles).
- (f) Clearance and cleanup of the roadway.

501.4 NOTIFICATION

Best Practice MODIFIED

If a traffic accident involves a life-threatening injury or fatality, the responding officer shall notify a supervisor or, if unavailable, the Watch Commander. The Watch Commander or any supervisor may assign a traffic unit or other appropriate personnel to investigate the incident. The Watch Commander will ensure notification is made to the Commanding Officer of the Traffic Section, department command staff and, where applicable, the Duty Chief in accordance with the Major Incident Notification Policy.

[See procedure for NOTIFICATIONS](#)

501.4.1 NOTIFICATION OF FAMILY

Best Practice MODIFIED NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 43.7

In the event of a life-threatening injury or fatality, the Commanding Officer of the Traffic Section responsible for the incident should ensure notification of the victim's immediate family or coordinate such notification with the Medical Examiner, department chaplain or another suitable person. Notification should be made as soon as practicable following positive identification of the victim.

The identity of any person seriously injured or deceased in a traffic accident should not be released until notification is made to the victim's immediate family.

[See procedure for NEXT OF KIN NOTIFICATIONS](#)

[See procedure for REQUESTS TO OTHER AGENCIES](#)

[See procedure for REQUESTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES](#)

[See procedure for RELEASE OF VICTIM'S IDENTITY TO NEWS MEDIA](#)

501.5 MINIMUM REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

State MODIFIED NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.7 (A), 47.7 (C), 47.7 (F)

An accident report shall be taken when:

- (a) A fatality, any injury (including complaint of pain), property damage in excess of \$1000 to any vehicle or hit-and-run is involved.

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- (b) An accident involves a commercial vehicle that has been towed (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 603).
- (c) An on-duty member of the City of Syracuse is involved.
- (d) The accident results in any damage to any City-owned or leased vehicle.
- (e) The accident involves any other public agency vehicle.
- (f) There is damage to public property.
- (g) There is damage to any vehicle to the extent that towing is required.
- (h) Prosecution or follow-up investigation is contemplated.
- (i) Directed by a supervisor.

501.5.1 PRIVATE PROPERTY

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

Generally, reports should not be taken when a traffic accident occurs on private property unless it involves an injury or fatality, a hit-and-run violation or other traffic law violation. Members may provide assistance to motorists as a public service, such as exchanging information and arranging for the removal of the vehicles.

Officers investigating motor vehicle crashes that occur on private property shall observe the following guidelines:

- (a) With regard to the provisions of sections 600 - 605 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law (Accidents and Accident Reports), no written police report will be required for a motor vehicle crash that occurs solely on private property that is not normally open to the general public, provided no injury has occurred and no person involved in the crash requests that a report be taken (i.e. private residence).
- (b) Motor vehicle crashes that occur on private property, which is not normally open to the general public, such as a private residence, that involve injury, shall require an investigation and a police report.
- (c) Crashes occurring on private property normally open to the general public, such as shopping areas, will be processed as if they had occurred on a public highway.

501.5.2 CITY VEHICLE INVOLVED

Best Practice **MODIFIED** NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.7 (F)

A traffic accident report shall be taken when a City vehicle is involved in a traffic accident that results in property damage or injury.

An incident report may be taken in lieu of a traffic accident report at the direction of a supervisor when the incident occurs entirely on private property or does not involve another vehicle.

Whenever there is damage to a city police vehicle, the vehicle's damage log shall be updated accordingly. The traffic unit or supervisor at the scene should determine what photographs should be taken of the scene and the vehicle damage.

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Members will not investigate an accident in which he/she is involved.

501.5.3 INJURED AND KILLED ANIMALS

State **MODIFIED**

Department members should refer to the Animal Control Policy when a traffic accident involves the disposition of a deceased or injured animal. The driver of the striking vehicle is required to notify the owner of the animal if it is a horse, dog, cat or animal classified as cattle. If the driver cannot find the owner than he/she is required to notify an officer and provide license, insurance and the vehicle license number (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 601).

In the event a deer, moose or bear is unintentionally killed in a traffic accident, a member may issue a permit to the driver permitting him/her to possess the carcass and transfer it to a designated person. If the driver declines possession, the member may issue the permit to another requesting party (Environmental Conservation Law § 11-0915).

[See procedure for DISPOSAL OF DEER KILLED BY COLLISION](#)

501.6 INVESTIGATION

State **MODIFIED** NY_CALEA6.13 - 61.2.2 (d) NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 40.1 (B)

When a traffic accident meets minimum reporting requirements the investigation should include, at a minimum (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 603-a):

- (a) Identification and interview of all involved parties.
- (b) Identification and interview of any witnesses.
- (c) A determination of whether a violation of law has occurred and the appropriate enforcement action.
- (d) Identification and protection of items of apparent evidentiary value.
- (e) Documentation of the incident as necessary (e.g., statements, measurements, photographs, collection of evidence, reporting) on the appropriate forms.

[See procedure for CRASH INVESTIGATIONS](#)

[See procedure for LEAVING THE SCENE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH](#)

[See procedure for PROPERTY OF CRASH VICTIMS](#)

[See procedure for INITIAL RESPONSE TO TRANSPORTATION CARRIER ACCIDENTS](#)

[See procedure for TRUCKING ACCIDENTS](#)

[See procedure for BUS ACCIDENTS](#)

501.6.1 ACCIDENTS INVOLVING SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH

State **MODIFIED** NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.7 (D)

An officer investigating an accident involving a serious injury or death should request a preliminary breath test from any driver involved in the accident if there are reasonable grounds to believe that

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the driver committed a serious traffic violation as provided in Vehicle and Traffic Law § 603-a. The result of such test or the driver's refusal of such test shall be included in the accident investigation report (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 603-a).

In the event of a positive result from such test, officers shall proceed as provided in the Impaired Driving Policy.

[See procedure for FATAL AND SERIOUS INJURY MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES](#)

501.6.2 OFFICER-INVOLVED FATAL CRASHES

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

Department members shall promptly notify a supervisor when any department vehicle is involved in a traffic accident. The supervisor shall inform the Duty Chief of any crash where the death of a person is caused by an act or omission of such police officer. The Duty Chief shall notify the NYS Attorney General - Office of Special Investigation at 855-674-6924.

501.7 ENFORCEMENT ACTION

State **NY_CALEA6.13 - 61.1.5 (h) NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 47.5 (D), 47.7, 47.7 (A), 47.7 (C)**

After a thorough investigation in which physical evidence or independent witness statements indicate that a violation of a traffic law contributed to the accident, authorized members should issue a traffic summons or arrest the offending driver, as appropriate.

More serious violations, such as driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, vehicular manslaughter or other felonies, shall be enforced. If a driver who is subject to enforcement action is admitted to a hospital, a supervisor shall be contacted to determine the best enforcement option.

501.8 REPORTS

State **MODIFIED** **NY_CALEA6.13 - 82.3.3 (a)**

Department members shall utilize forms approved by the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as required for the reporting of traffic accidents. All such reports shall be forwarded to the appropriate supervisor for approval and filing.

Members shall advise persons involved in accidents that they must file a citizen accident report on the appropriate state form with the DMV if there has been an injury, death or property damage in excess of \$1000 to any vehicle and that the report must be filed within 10 days of occurrence (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 605).

[See procedure for CRASH REPORTING](#)

501.8.1 REPORT MODIFICATION

Best Practice

A change or modification of a written report that alters a material fact in the report may be made only by the member who prepared the report, and only prior to its approval and distribution. Once

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a report has been approved and distributed, corrections shall only be made by way of a written supplemental report. A written supplemental report may be made by any authorized member.

501.8.2 COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE TRAFFIC SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice MODIFIED NY_CALEA6.13 - 61.3.1 (b)

The responsibilities of the Commanding Officer of the Traffic Section include, but are not limited to, ensuring the monthly and quarterly reports on traffic accident information and statistics are forwarded to the Uniform Bureau Deputy Chief or other persons as required.

Investigation reports should be forwarded to the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles within five business days of completion (Vehicle and Traffic Law § 603-a).