

East Haven Police Department 	Type of Directive:		No. 432.2
	Policies & Procedures		
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Traffic Accident Investigations		July 29, 2014	
		Effective Date:	
Issuing Authority:		September 1, 2014	
		Review Date:	
Honorable Board of Police Commissioners		Annually	
		Rescinds:	
References/Attachments:		432.1	
		Amends:	
Policies & Procedures #: 702 SCCTU Mutual Police Assistance Compact (August 2012), SCCTU Policy and Procedure Manual		N/A	

I. PURPOSE

- A. The purpose of this directive is to set forth the policies and procedures of the East Haven Police Department regarding the investigation of traffic accidents.

II. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the East Haven Police Department to respond to and treat all reported motor vehicle accidents with professional skill, with primary concern for the health and safety of persons involved in the accidents.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Major Accident - Any accident involving a fatality, severe personal injury, or life threatening injuries.
- B. Accident - Any accident involving injury other than life threatening injury, and/or property damage including vehicles. This class of accident includes DUI accidents, hit and run (evading responsibility) accidents, private property accidents reported promptly upon discovery, disturbances between drivers, major traffic congestion, school bus accidents, substantial damage to a structure, or any incident involving hazardous materials.
- C. After the Fact Accident - A late accident report which is defined as a person reporting an accident at a time or place not contiguous to the occurrence of the accident.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Investigation

1. Major Accident - The investigation shall include, to the extent possible, measurements, photographs, statements, and diagrams necessary to complete the State accident forms and to meet applicable requirements stipulated by state law.
2. Accident - The investigation shall include obtaining all the information necessary to complete the State accident form. The taking of measurements, statements, or photographs is not mandatory for this class of accident.
3. After the Fact Accident - A Voluntary Accident Report Form can be completed by any operator involved. No formal police investigation will occur.

B. Reporting by An Operator of an After the Fact Accident

1. In minor cases a person may file a late accident report by appearing at police headquarters and personally filling out the East Haven Police Voluntary Accident Report form.
 - a. The Voluntary Accident Report form is available online at the East Haven Police Department website.
2. The desk officer will record the accident in the LEAS CAD system and provide a case number to the reporting operator.

C. Accident Investigation Policies

1. Officers dispatched to investigate a traffic accident are to report and/or investigate the accident in a thorough and professional manner.
2. A more thorough investigation is required in the following types of accidents.
 - a. Death or serious injury.
 - b. Serious property damage.
 - c. Hit and Run (evading).
 - d. Impairment due to alcohol and/or drugs.
 - e. Hazardous materials.
3. Under most circumstances late reported accidents will not be investigated. The person may file a Voluntary Accident Report at the East Haven Police Department.
4. All investigated accidents will be reported on the State accident report form (PR-1). Accidents that occur on private property may be reported on the Private Property Accident Report form (see section F below), unless an involved individual is charged

with criminal and/or motor vehicle charges. In this instance, the PR-1 form must be utilized for reporting. It is important that accident reports be submitted promptly.

D. Accident Scene Responsibilities

1. The responding officer will park his or her patrol vehicle in such a manner as to protect the scene, preserve evidence and protect the public, but not in such a manner that would create an additional hazard. Emergency lights will be activated while the police vehicle is on the roadway.
2. The first officer at the scene will check for injuries, fire hazards, hazardous materials and/or wires down, and will summon appropriate fire/medical/utility assistance.
3. All officers at the scene of an accident should wear high visibility gear.
4. The officer(s) should provide emergency medical aid and fire suppression services until fire/medical personnel arrive.
 - a. Injured persons will not be transported in department vehicles unless authorized by a supervisor.
5. In the case of hazardous material incidents, the officer will isolate the hazard area, evacuate non-essential personnel, identify the vehicle and container placards, and notify his or her supervisor.
6. Based upon the call in matrix, the supervisor will determine whether to call for the assistance of the South Central Connecticut Traffic Unit (SCCTU).
 - a. Refer to the SCCTU Policy and Procedure Manual for further direction of activation and investigative procedures.
 - b. Generally the SCCTU will be called in for the investigation of the following types of accidents.
 - 1) Fatalities.
 - 2) Very serious personal injuries which could likely become fatal.
7. If damage to the vehicles will require them to be towed, a tow truck should be summoned as quickly as possible so normal traffic flow can be resumed.
8. Photographs are required for any major accident, and for any accident involving Town of East Haven vehicles and/or property. Photographs of other accidents are at the supervisor's and/or officer's discretion.
9. Accident Scene Information Collection
 - a. The responding officer shall complete a State accident report form (PR-1). This requires the following steps.
 - 1) Interviewing operators and witnesses.

- 2) Examining and recording damage to vehicles, roadways, or other public or private property.
- 3) Examining/recording effects of accidents on the roadway.
- 4) Taking measurements, as appropriate.
- 5) Taking photographs, as appropriate.
- 6) Collecting/preserving evidence.

E. Accident Investigation Follow-Up

1. The follow-up remains the responsibility of the responding patrol officer unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.
2. If an accident needs further investigation by the patrol officer, the following will be arranged on an as needed basis.
 - a. Collection of off-scene data.
 - b. Vehicle safety inspections.
 - c. Obtaining formal witness statements.
 - d. Reconstruction of accidents.

F. Accidents on Private Property

1. Private property accidents shall be investigated as a service to the community and the public is advised by the investigating officer that enforcement action is limited by Connecticut statute.
2. Private property accidents will be submitted on the Private Property Accident Report form.
 - a. If in the investigating officer's or supervisor's judgment, a private property accident investigation is better suited being documented on the State accident report form (PR-1), then said form may be filled out instead.

G. Accidents Involving Other Police Department Vehicles

1. The East Haven Police Department shall have the investigative responsibility for all motor vehicle accidents occurring in the Town of East Haven, with the exception of I-95 and its exit and entrance ramps.
2. Any other law enforcement agency's vehicle(s) involved in a motor vehicle accident(s) in East Haven shall be investigated by an East Haven Police officer in accordance with the above. The outside agency may conduct an independent internal investigation.

3. The East Haven Police Department shall have primary responsibility for any and all evidence relative to the investigation.
4. The shift supervisor shall notify the Head of the Patrol Division of any accident involving another police agency's vehicle at their first opportunity.

H. At Scene Stabilization Activities

1. At accident scenes, officers will use the patrol vehicle's emergency lights, flares (where safe to do so) and other appropriate warning devices as necessary to protect the scene and alert approaching traffic.
2. Once the scene has been cleared of vehicles and debris, the officer will arrange for the prompt removal of flares and other warning devices that may have been used to protect the scene.
3. If damage exists which will require a longer closing of the roadway, then the Public Works Department or the State Department of Transportation may be contacted to provide barricades, stop signs or other appropriate devices for traffic control.

I. Accident Scene Special Procedures

1. An important responsibility of officers responding to any accident scene is to keep the situation from becoming worse. This responsibility may become more important and complex when injuries, actual or potential fire hazards exist, or where hazardous materials are present at the scene. Officers may be called upon to perform certain special activities and to coordinate their activities with those of other agencies. Priorities for action are likely to be affected by the extent and nature of the hazards present.
2. Personnel will be aware of the responsibilities, practices and procedures of other agencies that respond to and/or provide technical assistance relating to injuries, fire hazards and hazardous material incidents. Officers should communicate with these counterparts to ensure the best possible coordination and service delivery at traffic accident scenes involving such hazards.

J. Injury accidents

1. Officers sent to the scene of accidents involving injury will immediately call for medical and fire assistance through dispatch.
2. Immediate first aid should be given to any victim. Victims complaining of back or neck injury should be moved only by medical personnel, unless conditions at the scene (such as a fire) becomes life threatening to the victim.
3. Once rescue personnel have arrived, officers will provide assistance the medical personnel requests while controlling traffic and conducting the investigation.

K. Fire Hazards

1. Any injured victim who cannot leave the immediate hazardous area should be assisted. All other persons in the immediate area should be evacuated. Officers will then isolate the area to prevent unauthorized subjects from entering.

L. Hazardous Material

1. Officers should be aware that any traffic accident involving a cargo vehicle is a potential hazardous material incident and should be observant for any evidence of hazardous material before approaching cargo vehicles involved in accidents.
2. When there is a question whether spilled material at an accident scene may be hazardous, officers will avoid contact with the material and will keep others from contact with the material.
3. Upon arrival at the scene of a traffic accident involving a cargo vehicle, officers will immediately request the response of the Fire Department and attempt to make a preliminary identification of hazardous materials and take appropriate emergency action until the situation is remedied.

M. Accident Victim Property Handling

1. The investigating officer at the scene of an accident will ensure that property belonging to an accident victim is protected from theft and is removed to a place of safekeeping if the owner is unable to care for it.
2. When an injured operator is removed from an accident scene, and/or it is necessary to tow the vehicle, dispatch shall contact the next towing company on the Department's towing rotation list.
3. Items in the vehicle shall be inventoried by the officer and removed if the owner is unable to care for them. All property removed will be kept for safekeeping in accordance with Policy and Procedure # 702 – Motor Vehicle Inventories.

N. Accidents Reports and Records

1. All state accident reports and related investigative material will be reviewed and approved by the officer's assigned supervisor. All State accident reports (PR-1) will be submitted to records within seven (7) days.

O. Records Responsibilities

1. The East Haven Police Department Records Division will submit all PR-1 forms to the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation.