



NORTH MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



TRAFFIC CRASH INVESTIGATIONS 300.12

EFFECTIVE DATE: 06-14-23

APPROVED: 
Chief of Police

SUPERSEDES: 05-26-20

CFA: 18.03, 18.04, 18.05, 18.13

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I. PURPOSE

To define guidelines for the response to traffic crashes occurring in the City of North Miami.

II. POLICY

To ensure traffic crash response and ensure compliance with procedures set forth in this policy.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to members of the Department.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Language clarification:

- Should: Indicates a general or expected action, absent a rational basis for failing to conform.
- Shall or Will: Indicates a mandatory action.

V. PROCEDURES

Officers/PSAs shall respond to the scene of all traffic crashes. If the crash meets the criteria below, they shall complete, in their entirety, DHSMV Crash Report 90010 in the Traffic and Criminal Software (TraCs). These will be checked for accuracy by the shift supervisor before being forwarded to the Records Unit:

- A. Death or injury;
- B. Hit and run crashes involving injury and/or property damage, (FSS 316.027 (2)(b);
- C. Impairment of an operator due to alcohol or drugs (FSS 316.193);
- D. Crashes involving City of North Miami owned property, other than police vehicles;
- E. Crashes with damages of \$500 or more per vehicle; and
- F. Traffic crashes involving hazardous materials.

VI. NO-REPORT POLICY

Officers/PSAs may utilize the Department's "No Report" policy, providing the situation meets the established criteria:

- A. The vehicles are gone upon arrival of police units;
- B. Police units are unable to locate the crash after diligent efforts;
- C. The crash occurred in another jurisdiction and the proper jurisdiction has been notified;

- D. The parties involved in the crash do not wish to make a report and agree that there are no injuries and the damages appear to be less than \$500 per vehicle; and
- E. No crash (no damages, no injuries) occurred.

VII. CRASH SCENE RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

- A. The first responder and subsequent units to arrive at the scene of a traffic crash shall:
 - 1. Park their vehicle(s) in a safe position that provides a safeguard for persons, vehicles, the scene, and evidence. **CFA 18.04C**
 - a. Emergency lights shall be activated immediately. If no flammable materials are present, flares, cones, or other necessary equipment will be placed in the roadway.
 - b. Equipment will be used to redirect traffic, warn of disabled vehicles or debris in roadway, and prohibit access/egress on a roadway or area. **CFA 18.04 C,D,E**
 - c. Inquire with the parties involved in the crash if they need Miami-Dade Fire Rescue. If the parties have injuries or complain of injuries, request medical attention, or if the officer feels it necessary, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue will be notified. **CFA 18.03 A, 18.04B**
 - d. If traffic direction is necessary, or the situation warrants, the officer/PSA will wear their traffic vest.
 - 2. Administer emergency first aid and provide basic life support pursuant to training and arrange for the care of injured persons by requesting Fire/Rescue as needed.
 - 3. In the case of a fatality or gravely injured person, the North Miami Traffic Homicide Unit Supervisor will be contacted by the on-duty Commander. The Traffic Homicide Supervisor will make the determination to call out the Traffic Homicide Investigator(s), who will follow the procedures outlined in the Traffic Homicide policy, 300.22.

CFA 18.03A, 18.04A

- a. If determined by the Traffic Homicide Supervisor, a Lead Investigator will respond and conduct an investigation. The Traffic Homicide Supervisor will also determine if additional Traffic Homicide Investigator(s) are needed to assist with the investigation.
- b. The officer/PSA will preserve the scene and, if possible, keep witnesses or other individuals pertinent to the case on the scene. When extenuating circumstances exist, and the witnesses cannot remain at the scene, the officer/PSA will attempt to obtain written statements from those persons. If, for some reason, the individual is unable to provide a written statement, the officer/PSA will obtain the facts and record them accurately, making sure to record the individual's name, address, and contact numbers (home, mobile, and work). The Lead Investigator will complete a report per Department procedures.

CFA 18.03A, 18.04F

- c. If the Traffic Homicide Unit is responding, all scenes will be preserved. If, due to citizen or officer safety, it is not possible to maintain the current crime scene, the officer/PSA will advise the Traffic Homicide Unit and do only what is necessary to protect persons and/or property. Upon arrival of the Traffic Homicide Unit, the initial unit will share all gathered information. **CFA 18.04C**
 - 1). In traffic crashes involving injured pedestrians, the first arriving unit(s) will provide first responder medical aid in accordance with their training and summon Fire Rescue. **CFA 18.04A, B**
4. Locate and isolate potential hazards (fire, fuel spills, hazardous material, downed electrical wires, etc.) and request emergency services to contain and/or control the hazard.

CFA 18.03E, 18.04H

- a. In the case of fire, fuel spills, and/or chemical spills, the Miami-Dade Fire Department will be notified by Communications.
- b. All hazardous materials will be treated as "high risk" until confirmed otherwise. Commonly found hazardous materials could include: Chlorine/ammonia leaks, radiological leaks,

freight train derailments, aircraft crashes, as well as petroleum product fires and spills.

- c. First responding units will assess the situation. Officers/PSAs will do a visible inspection and, if necessary, set up a perimeter. The officer/PSA will avoid driving or walking through spillage or vapors.
- d. All officers/PSAs should remain aware of his/her safety in the event of any hazardous spill situation. The officer/PSA should attempt to identify the spilled substance and its explosive, poisonous or flammable tendencies. This can be done by checking with the driver of the vehicle, checking the vehicle placard, or checking with the company, if the company name is available. For assistance with identifying and interpreting vehicle placards please refer to the Department of Transportation's "Emergency Response Guidebook," which is available on PowerDMS.
- e. Evacuate all personnel from the area or buildings, as necessary. It is mandatory that coordination with the Fire Department command post be maintained.

4. Drivers involved in a crash, who are suspected of being under the influence of drugs/alcohol, are subject to examination for the same at a designated police facility by a certified Intoxilyzer Technician. **CFA 18.03D**

- a. When the unit arrives at the scene of a crash and has reasonable suspicion the driver in the crash may be impaired by an alcoholic beverage or controlled substance, the officer will continue investigating the traffic crash.
- b. Upon completion of the traffic crash investigation, the officer may request a certified D.U.I. Investigator respond to assist. The certified officer will inform the driver that the traffic crash investigation is complete and he/she is now conducting a separate investigation for driving under the influence of an alcoholic beverage and/or a controlled substance. The driver must acknowledge that this change is taking place. The certified officer will administer Standardized Field Sobriety Tests (S.F.S.T.) to determine if the driver is impaired.
- c. Based upon the initial observations, the S.F.S.T.s and other

indicators, if the officer has probable cause to believe the driver is impaired, he/she is subject to arrest for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage and/or a controlled substance.

- d. Following arrest, the driver will then be transported to the North Miami Police Department to be administered breath alcohol analysis tests utilizing the computerized breath analysis equipment. If the breath test results are inconsistent with the roadside, and the test results are less than .08 BAC, the officer may request a Drug Recognition Expert to further process the driver for impairment by a controlled substance.
- e. In the event of a traffic crash with serious bodily injuries or a fatality, where the officer has probable cause to believe the driver is impaired, the officer may request a blood or urine specimen from the driver. If the driver refuses, the officer must obtain a warrant for two blood draws.

5. Request tow trucks as needed.
 - a. If an officer/PSA encounters a disabled motorist, they will activate their vehicle's emergency lights and place the police vehicle safely behind the motorist. They will offer assistance to the motorist, which may include notification of persons that can respond to offer assistance necessary to move the vehicle from the roadway, or request a tow truck if the vehicle is obstructing the traffic flow.
 - b. If an Officer/PSA handling a disabled motorist or a crash investigation where the vehicle(s) involved is not able to be driven and poses a traffic hazard, they will give the driver/owner a chance to have the vehicle removed. If no immediate arrangements can be made, or circumstances prevent the motorist from being able to make arrangements, (i.e., injuries requiring transport), the Officer/PSA will request a tow truck respond.
 - c. Tow requests will only be made through the Communications Unit and the tow company will be determined based on the rotation schedule.

- d. When an Officer/PSA makes the decision to tow a vehicle and a city contracted tow company is used, he/she will complete a Vehicle Storage Receipt (VSR) in its entirety. A complete inventory of the vehicle will be done by the Officer/PSA requesting the tow. If a motorist requests a city contracted tow truck, a VSR will be completed and signed by the vehicle driver/owner and the vehicle will be released to them on the scene.
- e. If suspected contraband is observed during the inventory search, it will be documented under an additional case number and impounded accordingly. PSA's will notify a sworn officer to further investigate if suspected contraband is observed.
- f. If a motorist requests a private tow truck, no VSR is necessary.
- g. When completing a VSR, officers must ensure the following is documented:
 - 1.) Time;
 - 2.) Date;
 - 3.) Location the vehicle towed from;
 - 4.) Requesting member;
 - 5.) Reason for removal or tow;
 - 6.) Towing service name;
 - 7.) Location the vehicle towed to;
 - 8.) Notification (or attempts) to the registered owner;
 - 9.) Inventory of the contents;
 - 10.) Placing and removal of holds; and
 - 11.) Communications personnel will be responsible for entering vehicles into FCIC in a timely manner.

CFA 18.13 A-K

- h. Vehicles entered into FCIC will automatically purge from the system in 90 days. An FDLE Monthly Validation List will be sent by the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) Agency Coordinator (FAC) to the Tow Company to check on the status of vehicles and a response will be faxed or e-mailed

back to the Communications FAC. **CFA 18.13K**

- i. All Hit and Run vehicles will be checked by an investigator and removed as necessary.
- j. When a tow truck is requested to tow a vehicle, the Officer/PSA needs to ensure that the tow truck driver has removed any crash debris from the roadway before they clear the scene. **CFA 18.04G**
- k. Units placing a hold on a vehicle for investigations, ownership, forfeiture, etc., are responsible for releasing the hold with the tow company.

6. Secure and protect the scene and evidence.

- a. If the crash scene situation requires immediate processing of evidence (short-lived evidence), the scene will be preserved, and the Crime Scene Unit will be requested through Communications. **CFA 18.04D**

7. Locate, secure and isolate parties and witnesses.

- a. Upon arrival at the scene of a crash, the assigned unit will, after making the scene safe, attempt to locate independent witnesses to the crash and begin recording crash information. **CFA 18.04F**
- b. Witnesses should be persons that can give an account of circumstances that led to the crash and cannot be persons involved in any vehicle involved in the crash. When possible, keep witnesses and drivers/passengers separated until all pertinent information is obtained.

8. Maintain peace and order at the scene including, but not limited to, disagreements between parties.

- a. If, while investigating a traffic crash, the affected parties become involved in a verbal altercation, the primary unit should summon additional units to assist.

9. If the crash is a hit and run, follow proper investigative procedures,

including preservation of evidence. **CFA 18.03B**

- a. If the crash being investigated is a hit and run, the first arriving Officer/PSA will render medical assistance (if needed). In addition, they will attempt to obtain pertinent information on the offending vehicle, driver, and/or direction of travel, if available.
- b. This information will be given to the dispatcher for broadcast. The information may be obtained from the victim, independent witnesses, or other pertinent parties at the scene.
- c. If any viable evidence is located at the scene, the evidence will be impounded per procedures for possible follow-up investigation.

10. Provide traffic control and establish a safe traffic pattern around the scene by using alternate routes if needed, and restore the normal flow of traffic as soon as possible. If necessary, expedite the removal of vehicles and debris from the roadway. **CFA 18.04E,G**

- a. If a disabled motorist or a traffic crash causes a major traffic flow problem, the assigned or backup officer/PSA will place flares and/or traffic cones in a manner that will let traffic flow in an alternate direction or route so as to avoid the area.

11. Assist involved parties in delivering emergency messages.

- a. If, while investigating a crash, a party needs to notify a family member or a person to assist them, and there is no other means available, the officer/PSA may make the request of a telephone contact through Communications. If no telephone contact is available, and the situation warrants notification, the Communications operator may request a unit make contact in person.
- b. Should the request involve another jurisdiction, the Communications Operator may contact the appropriate police agency and request they make contact.

12. Protect crash victims' personal property and vehicle when the victim(s) is incapable, and provide for removal and safekeeping of

property per established procedures. **CFA 18.05**

- a. It is the responsibility of the assigned Officer/PSA to impound any property if the victim of the crash is unable to care for the property due to death or injury.
- b. Personal property shall remain with the victim, being transported to a medical facility, but shall be limited to those items needed for identification and/or admittance to a medical facility.
- c. Valuables, such as cash, jewelry and negotiable securities, shall be impounded and properly noted on the property receipt prior to being impounded.

13. It is mandatory for the member handling a traffic crash, in accordance with the provision of FSS 316.066, to provide driver's exchange information to all parties (drivers/owners) on ALL accident scenes. This is mandatory even if the TraCs print function for the exchange report is not functioning. The following information must be included:

- a. The name and address of the owner and the driver of the vehicle.
- b. The license number of the vehicle.
- c. The name of the liability carrier for the vehicle.

VIII. CRASHES INVOLVING NORTH MIAMI/OTHER GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

- A. Traffic crashes involving sworn members, whether in an agency owned, rented, or leased vehicle, may be investigated by an outside agency, however, crashes with minor damage, no injuries, or involving a single vehicle, may be handled by North Miami. **CFA 18.03C**
- B. Risk Management will be notified, as well as the on-duty Uniform Patrol supervisor, for all crashes involving City-owned property. On-duty supervisors reviewing the incident will do the following:

- a. The supervisor will contact Risk Management regardless of the day of the week or time of day. If there is no answer at the designated telephone number, a message will be left indicating the date and time of the incident, as well as the case number; **and**
- b. The supervisor will send notice via City email to his or her Assistant Chief of police via the chain of command that supervisory documentation is forthcoming on the incident.
- c. The supervisory documentation will be completed by the end of the supervisor's tour of duty on the date of the incident.
- d. Supervisors will ensure that photographs taken of the damage to all vehicles involved are clear and fully capture the extent of any visible damage.
- e. In cases where the traffic violator is undetermined by the Miami-Dade Police Department officer handling the traffic crash, the North Miami supervisor will attempt to gather direction of travel information and/or other pertinent information from the drivers at the scene, and any potential witnesses, with the aim to gather crash information for Risk Management. This inquiry may be in conjunction with the County's response, but it will not interfere with the primary traffic crash investigation.
- f. Supervisors will capture any interview on their body-worn camera and will include a narrative of said interviews in the "Explain" field of the City's Supervisor's Report (under Item #10).

C. Traffic crashes in North Miami that involve other government-owned vehicles will be handled by the North Miami Police Department, unless Florida Highway Patrol or Miami-Dade P.D. requests to handle.

D. The on-call North Miami Traffic Homicide Unit Supervisor will be notified if life threatening injuries are sustained.

IX. EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

- A. Each Patrol officer/PSA shall maintain, at a minimum, the following emergency equipment in his/her assigned vehicle for ready availability:
 1. Issued reflective traffic vest;

2. Flares;
3. First Aid kit;
4. PPE kit; and
5. Fire Extinguisher.

B. If a situation necessitates additional traffic control, i.e., a traffic signal light out or traffic control device inoperable, an officer/PSA may request traffic cones be brought to the scene.

1. The officer/PSA shall place traffic cones in a manner that will allow the smooth and safe flow of traffic. Transitions from one lane to another shall provide sufficient width and length for motorists to negotiate without hazard.
2. Portable stop signs are also available, if traffic control devices are damaged and traffic maintenance cannot respond immediately.