



SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT
Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

Policy 4-01

Policy Title: Vehicle Crash Investigations

Date of Issue: December 1, 2022

Rescinds: None

By Authority of:

Chief of Police

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the investigation of crashes reported to the Springfield Township Police Department.

II. Policy

The primary objective in investigating vehicle crashes is to obtain information which will identify ways to reduce the frequency of crashes, thereby reducing deaths, injuries, and property loss. Section 3746(c) of Title 75, Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, requires this police department to investigate, upon notification, all vehicle crashes occurring within the jurisdiction of the Springfield Township Police Department which results in death, injury, and / or damage to any vehicle to such an extent that it cannot be driven from the scene without further damage and therefore requires towing.

III. Definitions

- A. Reportable Vehicle Crash – Involves injury or death to any person, and / or damage to any vehicle to the extent that it cannot be driven under its own power from the scene in its customary manner without further damage or hazard to the vehicle, other traffic elements, or the roadway, and therefore requires towing. This must occur on a highway or trafficway.
- B. Non-Reportable Vehicle Crash – Involves only damage to a vehicle or property and the vehicle can be driven from the scene. There is no death or injury to any person involved in the crash. This also includes all private property crashes that do not occur on a trafficway.

IV. Procedures

- A. The Springfield Township Police Department will document the following types of crashes in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy:
 - 1. Death or injury
 - 2. Property damage
 - 3. Hit and Run
 - 4. Impairment due to alcohol or drugs
 - 5. Hazardous materials
 - 6. Occurrences on private property

- B. Officers will respond to the scene of any collision, to include, but not limited to, the following situations:
 - 1. Death or injury
 - 2. Hit and Run
 - 3. Impairment of an operator due to alcohol or drugs
 - 4. Damage to public vehicles or property
 - 5. Hazardous materials
 - 6. Disturbance between principals
 - 7. Major traffic congestion as a result of the crash
 - 8. Damage to vehicles to the extent that towing is required

- C. Crash reports are sometimes initiated by drivers who call or come to the police station, in which case the officer may not have the luxury of seeing the vehicles involved and / or the crash location itself. Officers shall make an effort to view the vehicles and should also visit the crash scene, as appropriate. In every case, the crash shall be handled in accordance with reportable and non-reportable guidelines.

- D. During unusual circumstances, such as snow emergencies or other major events, the Chief of Police, or his designee, may permit the temporary suspension of investigations for non-reportable crashes. On these occasions, which should be rare, drivers may be directed to the police station to initiate the report.

V. Crash Reporting & Investigating

- A. All reportable vehicle crashes occurring within the jurisdiction of the Springfield Township Police Department shall be investigated as required by law with crash information recorded on Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Police Crash Report Form AA-500. This crash form is completed using an electronic reporting system. This will be done in addition to the incident / CFS reportable report.
- B. In the event of a non-reportable crash, officers shall ensure that the crash is non-reportable in nature and that no injuries have been sustained by involved parties. All involved vehicles must be capable of being driven from the scene without further damage. Officers shall complete the non-reportable crash form in RMS.

VI. Crash Duties

- A. Officers shall render aid and assistance to the injured until EMS personnel arrive on the scene.
- B. If a fire hazard is present and / or there are hazardous materials at the scene, officers should attempt to stabilize the situation by providing adequate scene protection, isolating the area, removing persons from the immediate area, if possible, suppressing the hazard, if possible, and summoning aid, as appropriate. Officers shall be continually alert for developing hazards.
- C. Officers shall make every effort to protect the scene with available resources, such as:
 - 1. Police vehicle/s.
 - 2. Emergency lights.
 - 3. Flares (used only in a non-combustible environment when the flares would not compound or accelerate a hazard).
 - 4. Traffic cones or barricades.
- D. Traffic control and direction shall be conducted as long as necessary to protect the crash scene. Emergency vehicles should be directed to a safe location so as to prevent becoming a part of the hazard.
- E. Officers shall obtain all pertinent information from the driver/s and vehicle/s, including statements on how the crash occurred.
- F. Officers shall attempt to locate witness/es and document their statements.
- G. Where necessary to aid in the crash investigation or a prosecution, photographs may be taken of the vehicles, property, or crash scene.

- H. The investigating officer shall be responsible for contacting the involved driver/s for any additional information needed to complete the investigation. Officers at the scene shall determine among themselves who is in charge of investigating the crash, unless a supervisor chooses to assign an investigating officer. In the event it is felt that the crash requires a reconstructionist to respond and assist with the investigation, the shift supervisor shall notify the traffic safety supervisor for further guidance.
- I. A "Driver Exchange Report" obtained using the electronic crash reporting system shall be provided to the drivers involved in a reportable crash. Drivers shall also be provided with information on how to obtain a copy of the crash report, once completed. A copy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Crash Report Form AA-500 shall be provided to drivers involved in a non-reportable, unless further investigative follow-up is required. The manner of dissemination shall be determined by the Chief of Police.
- J. Officers, upon completion of the investigation, should cite for violations of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, Title 75, which have been established by the investigation. Written warnings, if appropriate, shall be documented. If no citation or warning is warranted, an explanation shall be included in the crash report.
- K. Officers shall complete the appropriate forms accurately and in compliance with department and / or Pennsylvania Department of Transportation guidelines.
 - 1. In the case of a reportable crash, the information shall be recorded via the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Crash Report Form AA-500. This crash form is completed using an electronic reporting system.
 - 2. In the case of a non-reportable crash which is being reported after the fact, officers shall refer the persons involved to the PennDOT website. Officers shall instruct the persons involved to complete the AA-600 form and report the incident privately themselves. Springfield Township Police personnel shall not investigate these incidents and shall only log the incident as a Traffic Complaint in RMS.
- L. Officers shall not be required to complete a crash scene diagram on non-reportable vehicle crashes unless needed to clarify the crash investigation.
- M. Officers shall submit the appropriate report for review to their supervisor as soon as possible. In no event shall a report be submitted later than five (5) calendar days from the date the crash was reported.
- N. A completed Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Crash Report Form AA-500, completed for reportable crashes, must be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation within fifteen (15) days of the crash as per Section 3751 (A) of Title 75, the Vehicle Code.
- O. Crash reports shall normally be disseminated via an online service used by the driver / vehicle owner / insurance company, at a cost of \$15. However, the Office of the Chief of Police shall furnish, at a cost of \$15, copies of the police investigation of any vehicle crash report to persons who do not have online access. The release of these reports shall be in

accordance with the department's Right to Know policy and Section 3751 (b) of Title 75, the Vehicle Code.

- P. Vehicles required to be towed from the crash scene shall be removed by a tow company in accordance with department policy, or by a tow company specifically requested by the driver.
- Q. Officers should be alert for the theft of property at the scene as persons involved and bystanders tend to gather. If the owner of any property of value is unable to take possession of that property, and arrangements cannot be made, or a method found for security of the property, officers should take possession in accordance with all department procedures and policies.

VII. Private Property Vehicle Crashes

- A. Private property vehicle crashes shall be identified as reportable or non-reportable, and investigated in accordance with the procedures set forth in this policy.
- B. The Pennsylvania Vehicle Code permits enforcement of certain violations on private property. Private property enforcement shall be limited to violations of these sections.

VIII. Fatality and Serious Injury Crashes

- A. In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the following additional procedures shall be followed when a vehicle crash results in the loss of life, or serious injury with a high probability for the loss of life.
 - 1. Officers at the scene shall notify the shift supervisor and request they respond to the crash scene.
 - 2. The shift supervisor shall notify the Traffic Safety Supervisor and the Lieutenant, of Police, of the crash.
 - 3. A crash reconstructionist from the Springfield Township Police Department shall be notified to respond to the scene and shall assist the officers assigned to perform the crash investigation. Once an crash reconstructionist has been assigned to the investigation, they shall take over the investigation from the patrol officer/s who initially responded to the incident. The filing of vehicle code violations or criminal charges as a result of the crash investigation shall be done by the crash reconstructionist in conformance with the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office instructions.
 - 4. For serious crashes where a fatality did not immediately occur, and when no crash reconstructionist was used, investigating officers should not immediately file any vehicle code violations or criminal charges. Rather, they should wait to closer to the 30-day filing requirement within 75§5553, to determine if a fatality does occur. Doing so avoids

a double jeopardy issue, should a fatality warrant additional charges. Similarly, citations and / or charges shall only be filed after the investigating officer first consults with the Sergeant.

IX. Crashes Involving Vehicles Assigned to the Police Department

- A. In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the following additional procedures shall be followed when investigating a crash involving vehicles assigned to the Springfield Township Police Department:
1. All crashes involving a vehicle assigned to the department shall be investigated.
 2. Vehicle crashes occurring outside the jurisdiction of the Springfield Township Police Department should be investigated by the police agency responsible for that jurisdiction.
 3. Handling Procedures
 - i. Non-Reportable Crashes – A Sergeant shall respond to the crash, fully investigate the incident, and complete all appropriate paperwork. If unavailable, a Corporal shall perform the task.
 - ii. Reportable Crashes – The Traffic Safety Supervisor shall be contacted to assign a Traffic Safety Unit crash investigator to respond to the crash, fully investigate the incident, and complete all appropriate paperwork.
 - iii. Supervisor Crashes – If the crash involves a supervisor, the Lieutenant shall be notified, who will determine the appropriate course of action.
 4. Employees involved in a vehicle crash shall immediately notify MCEDS of the crash, injuries, and location of the crash.
 - i. If the crash occurs outside of Montgomery County, the appropriate law enforcement center shall be notified.
 5. If the employee is not injured, they shall render first aid to any persons injured until the arrival of EMS personnel.
 6. The shift supervisor shall respond to the scene. Notification to the Lieutenant shall be made by the shift supervisor, advising of the crash.
 - i. If the crash occurs outside of Montgomery County, or of such a distance away that a shift supervisor response is unreasonable, the Lieutenant shall be consulted to determine whether a response is required.

7. A command officer may elect to have an crash reconstructionist investigate the crash.
8. Photographs shall be taken of involved vehicles, property, and the crash scene.

X. Follow-Up Investigations

- A. Follow-up investigations, as they relate to a crash, shall be conducted by the investigating officer in accordance with department policy. Follow-up investigations are not necessary in all crash situations, but when needed may include:
 1. Collecting off-scene data.
 2. Obtaining and recording statements.
 3. Preparation of reports to support the traffic and / or criminal charges.
 4. Gathering of data relating to the driver, vehicle, pedestrian, or roadway.
- B. The appropriate supplement form shall be utilized when detailing the additional information obtained.

