

Department Motor Vehicle Collisions

Supersedes:

Effective: 11-21-05

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction regarding the proper action to be taken in the event of a collision involving a Department vehicle. For the purposes of this policy, a “collision” is when any part of a department vehicle comes in contact with another vehicle, pedestrian, animal, or property and results in property damage and / or injury. Incidental “bumper to bumper” contact while parallel parking is not considered a “collision” unless it results in property damage or injury.

VEHICLE COLLISIONS IN GENERAL

Whenever a Department vehicle is involved in a collision, the operator should bring the vehicle to a stop and position the vehicle in the safest possible place near the point of contact. Department members should assess any hazards created by the collision and create and maintain a safety zone to protect personnel and property from further injury or damage by activating warning lights or road flares as appropriate.

If the vehicles are in a hazardous location or blocking traffic, it may be appropriate to move to the side of the road or a side street for safety. Department members will then assess for the presence of any injuries and treat to the extent possible. At the same time, Dispatch Operations will be notified of the situation. The initial report should include the location and brief description of the incident, extent of any injuries, and what other resources are needed. Lastly, if all other needs are being met, department members should identify potential witnesses and preserve evidence at the collision site. Based on this report, Dispatch Operations will notify the appropriate ancillary agencies, dispatch a Field Supervisor to the scene, and notify the Shift Commander of the incident. The Dispatch Operations Center will make additional notifications as required by other policies and procedures, including requesting the Boston Police Identification / Photography Unit and / or Accident Investigation Unit for collisions involving personal injury.

COLLISION WHILE ON AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

EMS Vehicle Inoperable

If the EMS vehicle was enroute to the scene of an emergency and has been rendered inoperable, another available ambulance will be sent to the original incident. Similarly, if a patient was being transported and the ambulance has been rendered inoperable, another available ambulance will be sent to the incident location to assume and / or assist in patient care and complete the transport.

EMS Vehicle Operable

If the ambulance is transporting an unstable patient when involved in a collision but the ambulance is not rendered inoperable, Dispatch Operations shall be immediately notified of the incident. If the vehicle is in a hazardous location and cannot be moved, there are unstable patients on scene, or staying on scene to await the arrival of another EMS unit is unlikely to compromise the original patient's condition, the EMS unit should remain on scene. If, however, the vehicle and its occupants are not in a hazardous location, there are no other unstable patients on scene, and waiting for another EMS unit to arrive and assume patient care will likely be harmful to the unstable patient already in the ambulance, the operator of the EMS vehicle should note the registration number of the other vehicle involved, give the other operator a department contact form and advise him/her to remain on scene until the arrival of the police and an EMS Supervisor. If the collision involved an unoccupied vehicle, the contact form will be affixed to the vehicle's windshield. The EMS personnel may then continue to the hospital or ALS intercept point while updating Dispatch Operations.

If the ambulance is transporting a stable patient at the time of the collision, assure that care is being provided to the original patient while administering patient care to any other injured persons and awaiting additional resources.

If the ambulance was enroute to a high priority incident when involved in a collision, but the ambulance is not rendered inoperable, and there are no patients on the scene, Dispatch Operations shall be notified of the situation. If there are no other EMS units available to respond to the high priority incident in a timely manner, the Dispatch Operations Supervisor may authorize the EMS unit to continue on its original response. In that case, the operator of the EMS vehicle should note the registration number of the other vehicle involved, give the operator a department contact form and advise him/her to remain on scene until the arrival of the police and an EMS Supervisor. If the collision involved an unoccupied vehicle, the contact form will be affixed to the vehicle's windshield. If the EMS unit is cancelled or cleared from the response in a timely fashion, they must return to the scene and meet the Field Supervisor or the Boston Police unless directed to do otherwise.

EXCHANGING OPERATOR / CONTACT INFORMATION

Department operators should cooperate fully with all involved parties and exchange any required information, including all motor vehicle operator's license information and department vehicle registration information. Department members should not engage or question civilians as to the validity of their operator's license, motor vehicle registration, or the legal operation of their motor vehicle. Any suspected discrepancies in these areas should be brought to the attention of the first arriving police officer.

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Field Supervisors shall manage the collision scene ensuring that department protocols are being followed, assist in the caring of any injured Department members or civilians, and preserve and photograph pertinent evidence.

The Field Supervisor shall attempt to obtain statements and contact information (name, address, phone number) from all known witnesses the incident. The statement shall describe in as much detail as possible the recollections of the witnesses as to direction

of travel, estimated speed, use or warning lights and/or siren, and other observations about the vehicles either before or after the incident.

Supervisors should record the weather and road conditions on scene, position of the vehicles, and any other physical evidence including signs of transfer evidence such as paint chips, tire marks, or debris patterns. Supervisor should assist in the testing and/or inspection of department vehicles, safely and to the best of their ability, whenever defective equipment is alleged or suspected.

DOCUMENTATION

Whenever a Department member has a motor vehicle collision involving a Department vehicle, the operator must complete a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Operator's Report of Motor Vehicle Accident Form and a Boston EMS Vehicle Collision Report. Additionally, any Department member that witnessed the incident must fill out or co-sign a Boston EMS Vehicle Collision Report.

Reporters will be given reasonable time to complete required documentation. All documentation must be completed and hand delivered to a Field Supervisor prior to the conclusion of the shift in which the incident occurred. Hand-written documents must be legible, all fields completed (using the abbreviation "n/a", for any information Not Available or Applicable at the time the report is completed), and must be signed and correctly dated.

The investigating Supervisor shall review all produced documentation for accuracy, insuring that all reports provided by Department operators are complete. The Supervisor will then attach photographs (or flash card) of the accident scene, copies of the Police report, if available, and submit the package to Professional Standards. If the accident occurs at or near the end of the work shift, the Field Supervisor shall not be considered relieved of duty until all required reports have been completed, unless authorized by the Shift Commander.

INCIDENT REVIEW / DRIVING RESTRICTION

The Department recognizes that being involved in a motor vehicle collision, no matter how minor, can be a stressful event. Whenever an operator of a Department motor vehicle is involved in a collision, they are to refrain from driving a Department vehicle for the remainder of that shift whenever possible. This will not be possible in the case of a supervisor, or other single-person unit, or when a BLS crew must split up to drive an ALS unit to a hospital. In that case, the operator who had been involved in a collision earlier in the shift should drive the "empty" unit when possible.

Whenever a Department motor vehicle is involved in a collision serious enough that it results in a personal injury or either vehicle is inoperable and requires a tow from the scene, the operator of the Department vehicle will have their driving privileges restricted to the extent possible until the incident can be reviewed by Professional Standards.