

# TRAFFIC ACCIDENT STUDY GUIDE 2003

## SECTION SIX



This study guide is designed to provide the law enforcement Explorer with basic principles. The guide is not all inclusive, and does not delineate specific techniques that must be used. The focus of this guide is to provide principals that are flexible and adaptable to various law enforcement situations.

Following the basic principals in this guide should allow the law enforcement Explorer to successfully handle various law enforcement training activities safely and professionally.

The study guide was developed through the cooperation of International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.



# **SECTION SIX**

## **ACCIDENT SCENE PROCEDURES**

# SYLLABUS

**COURSE TITLE:** Accident Scene Procedures

**LENGTH OF PRESENTATION:**

LECTURE/CLASSROOM	LABORATORY	PRACTICAL EXERCISE	TOTAL
02:00	00:00	00:00	02:00

**DESCRIPTION:**

This unit of instruction provides the student with the techniques for collecting information from drivers and witnesses. It emphasizes the need for comparing verbal descriptions with physical facts to determine how and why the accident occurred. It also emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the events that are to take place upon arriving at the scene of an accident as the first responding officer.

**TERMINAL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:**

At the conclusion of this unit of instruction, the student will be able to identify the duties of the first officer at the scene of an accident in accordance with the principles delineated during the course of instruction.

**INTERIM PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Identify immediate priorities at the scene of the accident.
2. Identify procedures for gathering statements from the victims and /or witnesses.
3. Identify procedures for the protection of personal property at accident scenes.
4. Identify the procedures of traffic control and crowd control at the scene of an accident.

## **Instructor Guide**

### **METHODOLOGIES:**

1. Lecture.
2. Discussion.
3. Demonstration

### **TRAINING AIDS/EQUIPMENT:**

1. Instructor
  - a. Magnetic cars
  - b. Transparencies
  - c. Power Point
2. Student
  - a. Pen and paper for note taking.

### **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:**

None

## Outline of Instruction

### I. INTRODUCTION:

#### A. Establish rapport:

1. The traffic accident scene is often in complete confusion and chaos when the investigator first arrives. Priorities must be established and responsibilities met in very little time.
2. No two accidents are alike and a check list type of operation is totally unacceptable. Flexibility and leadership are very important in accident investigation.

#### B. Terminal Performance Objective:

At the conclusion of this unit of instruction, the student will be able to identify the duties of the first officer at the scene of an accident in accordance with the principles delineated during the course of instruction.

#### C. Interim Performance Objectives:

1. Identify immediate priorities at the scene of the accident.
2. Identify procedures for gathering statements from the victims and/or witnesses.
3. Identify procedures for the protection of personal property at accident scenes.
4. Identify the procedures of traffic control and crowd control at the scene of an accident.

### II. PRESENTATION:

#### A. **Identify immediate priorities at the scene of the accident.**

1. To keep the accident scene from getting any worse.

This is most often accomplished by the way the officer parks his/her patrol unit.

2. Survey the scene for potential dangers to self and others
  - a. Electrical wires down  
Clear the area and have dispatch notify Power Company
  - b. Fire Hazard  
Have dispatch notify Fire Dept. and advise them of problem.  
Attempt to control the spread of spilled fuel.  
Have fire extinguisher from patrol unit ready (will knock down small fires)
  - c. Ruptured tankers; possible toxic materials  
Maintain distance; resist running in to help  
Attempt to locate placard on vehicle to identify contents  
Establish a perimeter to keep others away  
Notify proper authorities as well as all responding agencies.
3. Injured persons (once the scene is safe)
  - a. Do the injured persons need an ambulance?  
If there is any question in your mind activate EMS  
Certain persons or groups may refuse medical treatment; it is best to have them do that to someone more qualified in that field. Someone that can explain the injury and dangers of not being treated.  
Note any refusal in your report.
  - b. Do the injured need first aid?  
Watch out for shock.  
Have victim sit or lie down, cover with blanket to reduce chills, and loosen clothing to improve breathing.

Reassure the victim and try to keep them calm.

Keep onlookers away from victims to eliminate remarks about the victim's condition. With multiple victims you may have to use onlookers to keep the victim calm. Instruct them not to talk about the injury.

- c. Determine where victim/s are being transported too.

Question ambulance drivers

**B. Identify procedures for gathering statements from the victims and/or witnesses.**

- 1. Locate drivers and obtain their driver's licenses

Assures that they remain at the scene.

Provides early recognition of hit-and-run.

- 2. Locate witnesses and request their driver's licenses.

- 3. Interview drivers and witnesses separately.

Eliminates arguments

Keeps them from becoming contaminated by other versions of what happened.

Make field notes of their statements.

Ask if they would write a brief statement for you and provide them pen, paper, and a place to do so (patrol car)

Determine location of witnesses when accident occurred.

Question if in doubt.

Do not develop prejudices

Do not take sides.

- 4. Depending on the circumstances you may wish to interview drivers together. (Use good common sense here)

Helps to verify their statements.

Inaccuracies can be pointed out.

5. Never use the word “witness” when looking for information.

Understand why people are reluctant to be a witness.

6. Consider allowing the witness to correct you.

Witness will want to show how much he/she knows.

7. Indicate on report where interview took place.

Accident scene.

Hoag Memorial Hospital

Police Department

8. Use a person’s own words.

Do not insert police technical terms.

9. Taking a statement in a hospital emergency room.

Obtain permission from attending doctor or head nurse before interviewing victim.

10. Obtain permission from responsible parties prior to interviewing in some cases

Children – have parents present

Military personnel on base – notify base commander

Hospital patients – speak to patients doctor

**C. Identify procedures for the protection of personal property at accident scenes.**

1. Remember that property of injured persons at an accident scene can and most often is one of your responsibilities.

Know your agencies policy

Inventory vehicles prior to storage or release to wrecker drivers.

Protect against looting; if necessary lock valuables in the trunk of your patrol unit.

Check for property that is scattered at the scene.

Theft is likely to occur at any time, but especially when:

Too few officers are present.

There are large crowds and a lot of confusion.

Officers are delayed in reaching the scene.

Articles are scattered over a wide area.

Accident occurred at night.

Request additional units for assistance if the scene is too large for you to control or assistance is needed with crowd control.

**D. Identify the procedures of traffic control and crowd control at the scene of an accident.**

1. One of our first priorities is to keep the scene from becoming any worse than it already is.

Position patrol unit/s in such a manner as to warn motorist of the upcoming danger. Use all emergency lighting available.

2. Traffic control by citizens.

Know your agencies policy regarding this matter. Use as a last resort.

Pick responsible people.

Give ample instructions, demonstrate if time permits, and stress safety.

As soon as additional officers arrive have them relieve the volunteers.

Make it a point to thank the volunteers for their assistance.

3. Safety at the scene.

Motorists passing the scene focus on items of interest, not on control measures.

*Note: Of the 155 police officers killed in the line of duty in the year 2000 vehicles struck twenty-two.*

Officers should not:

- Lose sight of their own safety

- Rely on flares

- Stand between vehicles

- Stand too close to cables on tow rigs

- Turn your back on traffic

- Attempt to move heavy objects without help

- Forget to check the scene over prior to leaving

- Are additional officers needed?

  - Traffic control

  - Assist in investigation

  - Crowd control

  - Transportation of arrested persons

  - Evacuation of the area

4. Crowd Control

When controlling bystanders movements, give them a place to go.

Sidewalk  
Off the roadway

Expedites removal of victims and vehicles.

Lessens fire danger.

Protects property and reduces thefts.

Aids in investigation by protecting physical evidence.

5. Is the Coroner needed?

If in doubt, treat as though victim is alive.

Have EMS check all victims.

Work with your local coroner or ME, know what they want , and know what they will allow.

Do not remove items from the victim without the coroners consent.  
(wallet, ID, etc.)

Cover the deceased with emergency blanket.

Guard against theft.

Wallet  
Rings  
Wrist Watch  
Purse  
Cash

6. Are tow trucks needed?

Know your agencies policy regarding towed vehicles.

Consider motorist preference if time and circumstances permit.

Consider the use of a rotation list.

### III. SUMMARY:

- A. Review the performance objectives.

1. Identify immediate priorities at the scene of the accident.
2. Identify procedures for gathering statements from the victims and / or witnesses.
3. Identify procedures for the protection of personal property at accident scenes.
4. Identify the procedures of traffic control and crowd control at the scene of an accident.

- B. Review teaching points.

Make the scene safe both for yourself and others.

Check for injured persons, activate EMS, and do what you can for the victims until assistance arrives.

Obtain licenses from drivers; and witnesses when possible, in order to keep them at the scene.

**Request** a written statement.

Use victim/witness own words.

Inventory vehicles prior to storage or release to wrecker drivers.

Check scene for scattered property.

Use citizens for traffic control as a last resort.

Never turn your back on traffic.

When controlling crowds give them somewhere to go.

Keep crowds away from the scene to protect physical evidence.

Don't hesitate to call for assistance if it is needed.

Know your agencies policies.

**Safety first.**

## **References**

Baker, J. Stannard (1975) Traffic Accident Investigation Manual First Edition, Traffic Institute, Northwestern University

California Highway Patrol Academy Accident Investigation Sacramento, California