



POLICE DEPARTMENT
COLLISION INVESTIGATIONS

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE #443

Responsible Executive:
Chief of Police
Responsible Office:
Vice President for Public Safety
Approved by:
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Issued: 07/25/2024
Revised: N/A

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Policy Statement

Proper investigation of traffic collisions can be a critical tool for preventing future collisions, managing traffic administration, and strengthening public safety. It is crucial that reported collisions, particularly those involving injuries and fatalities, are investigated to provide an explanation for the collision based on facts and evidence found at the scene. Only after thorough investigation should appropriate enforcement actions be taken. Additionally, properly reporting and investigating traffic collisions can help members of the community to resolve issues, pursue insurance claims, and complete repairs.

Who Is Governed by This Policy

This Directive governs all bureaus, sections, and their members, including sworn, nonsworn, and contractual or voluntary persons in service with the Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD).

Purpose

The purpose of this Directive is to establish policies, procedures, and guidelines for responding to traffic collisions within the JHPD patrol jurisdiction and for investigating and reporting collisions in accordance with Maryland law.

Definitions

Collision Investigation:	A process that requires collision reporting and the collection of evidence necessary to identify collision causes, charge violations of the Maryland Transportation Article, and prepare for a successful prosecution, as appropriate.
Collision Reporting:	The gathering of appropriate data and other information necessary to complete required reports.
Disabled:	Related to a vehicle; damage that prevents the removal of the vehicle from the scene of the collision in its usual operating manner, after simple repairs.
E-TIX:	Electronic Ticket Information Exchange.
Fatal Injury/Fatality:	Any injury that results in the death of any person involved in a collision at the time of injury or within one year of the collision.
Fault:	A traffic law violation that contributes to a vehicular collision incident.
Late-Reported Collision:	A collision in which all involved persons have left the scene and one of the persons contacts the JHPD at a later time to report the collision; does not include the removal of a vehicle from the roadway to a safe location to expedite traffic flow or ensure motorist safety.
Life-Threatening Injury:	Any injury that could result in the death of an individual. The determination of whether an injury is life threatening will be made by trained emergency medical personnel.
Member:	All members of the JHPD, including employees, officers, and volunteers, unless the term is otherwise qualified (e.g., member of the public, member of the Baltimore Police Department, etc.).
Motor Vehicle Collision:	When a moving motor vehicle collides with or crashes into another object (e.g., another vehicle, pedestrian, stationary object such as a tree or fence, animal, etc.).
Officer:	All sworn police officers, at any rank, as defined by MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-201, in service with the JHPD.

Policy

It is the policy of the JHPD to respond to traffic collisions within its jurisdictional area, to render aid as needed, and to conduct thorough collision investigations in accordance with Maryland law and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the JHPD and the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), dated December 2, 2022.

I. Response to Collision Scenes

- A.** Officers will respond to the scene of traffic collisions that are within the JHPD's primary jurisdiction (as defined in the MOU with BPD) and that involve any of the following:
- Death, injuries, or possible injuries
 - Hit and run
 - Impairment of an operator due to alcohol or drugs
 - Damage to Johns Hopkins vehicles or property
 - Hazardous material
 - Major traffic congestion resulting from a collision
 - Damage to vehicles or other property
 - Damage to vehicles to the extent towing is required (see JHPD Directive #446, Vehicle Towing & Storage)
 - Any collision where police are requested
 - Disturbances between involved parties
 - Any collision that occurs as a result of other criminal activity
 - Any collision involving a government or mass transportation vehicle
 - NOTE: Although the JHPD may be the first to respond to the scene of a collision, BPD will have primary responsibility in all pedestrian and vehicular collision investigations resulting in death or serious bodily harm. See Section II of this Directive.
- B.** The Johns Hopkins Public Safety (JHPS) Communications Center shall dispatch a sufficient number of members to render necessary aid, investigate collisions, record short-lived evidence, and restore order and normal traffic flows.
- The JHPD's collision response may be modified based on factors that include but are not limited to the following:
 - Accident severity
 - Disturbances between parties
 - Amount of traffic flow disruptions
 - Availability of officers
 - In the following situations, Commanders or patrol supervisors may temporarily suspend the JHPD's response to collisions in which no injuries have occurred and the involved vehicles are still drivable:

- Adverse weather conditions that contribute to an unusually high number of collisions; and
 - Emergency or exigent circumstances that require deployment of all available patrol personnel.
- NOTE: The State of Maryland has developed MOVE IT, a vehicle collision policy designed to help minimize traffic backups and improve traffic safety. The MOVE IT policy advises that if the collision does not result in any injuries and the involved vehicles are drivable, drivers should refrain from calling the police or filing a report. Instead, drivers should move off the roadway, ask witnesses to leave their name, address, and phone number, and use the Maryland Collision Information Exchange Form to exchange information with the other drivers. JHPS Communications Center personnel should be advised to inform drivers involved in these types of collisions about the MOVE IT policy, and to inform them that they may follow up with the JHPD at a later time to make a police report if needed. The time frame for making a report for the purpose of insurance claims is typically mandated by the individual insurance companies.
 - Use of any of these alternatives to avoid responding to traffic collisions shall be strictly prohibited.
- C. The level of response (e.g., normal speed versus emergency lights and siren) to a collision scene will be determined by the circumstances of the collision and will be conducted in accordance with JHPD Directive #440, Emergency Driving.
- D. The first officer arriving at the scene of a collision will generally be expected to take charge of the scene and remain in charge until the completion of operations. (CALEA 61.2.2.a) Exceptions include the following:
- When determined otherwise by a supervisor or commander.
 - Upon arrival of a supervisor at the scene.
 - Collisions involving death or serious injury, which will be investigated by BPD per the MOU.
 - As otherwise stated in this Directive.
- E. **Responsibilities of the first responding officer include the following:** (CALEA 61.2.2.g)
- Positioning the police vehicle and activating emergency warning lights to provide protection of the scene and alert the public. (CALEA 61.2.2.e)
 - Immediately determining if there are injuries requiring emergency medical attention. If medical attention is required, officers shall contact the JHPD Communications Center to request medical assistance. (CALEA 61.2.2.b)

- Administering emergency medical care or basic life support, consistent with their training and experience, until emergency medical personnel arrive. Assisting the injured takes priority over investigative procedures.
- Immediately identifying any fire hazards, potentially hazardous materials, or other situations requiring additional support and requesting medical, fire, police, or other assistance as needed.
- Notifying the shift supervisor to respond to the scene when the collision involves a fatality, life-threatening injury, or JHPD vehicle or member.
 - The shift supervisor shall notify BPD to respond if the collision involves a death or serious injury.
- Establishing a safe and efficient traffic pattern around the scene to reduce or eliminate traffic congestion by utilizing flares, traffic cones, barricades, and/or emergency vehicles.
- Stabilizing and establishing control of the scene.
- Safely separating any parties who are involved in disturbances, possibly placing them in separate vehicles or taking them into custody as needed and in accordance with JHPD Directive #412, Custody, Transport & Processing.
- Checking driver's licenses, vehicle registration, insurance information, and wanted status of individuals and vehicles involved in the collision.
- Determining if alcohol and drugs were involved and proceeding in accordance with JHPD Directive #444, Driving Impaired & Under the Influence.
- Examining damages to vehicles and property and making necessary notifications.
- Providing an Accident Information Exchange Form to the operators involved, instructing the operators to complete the form, and witnessing the exchange of forms between operators. Officers may also use the E-TIX Exchange Form and print in vehicle.
- Clearing and reopening roadways and driving lanes as soon as possible. Generally, vehicles and their contents will be removed in accordance with JHPD Directive #446, Vehicle Towing & Storage.
- Extinguishing flares and removing them to roadsides.

F. Fire Hazards (CALEA 61.2.2.c)

Officers arriving at the scene of a collision where a fire exists or there is a fire hazard (e.g., spilled gas, chemicals, sparking power lines, etc.) shall advise the JHPS Communications Center to notify the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD). In addition, the following steps will be taken:

- If appropriate, injured persons may be carefully removed from the hazard area. Anyone suffering a head or spinal injury should only be moved if the fire hazard is an immediate threat.
- All other persons in the immediate areas should be evacuated from the hazardous area. Officers shall isolate the area to prevent unauthorized persons from entering.
- Officers shall attempt to control fires when practical until the arrival of the assisting agency/agencies.

G. Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) (CALEA 61.2.2.c)

Officers will take all reasonable precautions when it is believed that collisions or spills involving HAZMAT have occurred and follow JHPD Directive #480, Critical Incident Response & Management, Section IX, as well as the additional guidance below.

- BCFD has primary responsibility in handling HAZMAT incidents. JHPD officers will provide support functions to assist BCFD in the control and removal of HAZMAT.
- When it is believed that HAZMAT incidents have occurred, responding officers will do the following:
 - Immediately request that the JHPD Communications Center notify BCFD.
 - Immediately request supervisors respond to the scene.
 - Establish perimeters and secure the area.
 - Evacuate nonessential personnel and all other persons from within perimeters.
 - Attempt to identify HAZMAT via placard numbers or symbols. Identifications should be made from as far away as possible, and officers should not jeopardize their own safety for material identification purposes.
- Supervisors or incident commander will coordinate all activities with BCFD in the safe resolution of HAZMAT incidents. The Commander should also ensure that Johns Hopkins University's emergency management team is notified.

H. Control of Property at the Scene (CALEA 61.2.2.f)

Officers shall safeguard the property of persons involved in collisions. When applicable, the following procedures are to be performed:

- Protect personal property from damage and/or theft when the owner is unable to care for the property.

- Collect and submit personal property of value that is left in a vehicle by any person who is transported to a hospital.
 - If a JHPD or BPD investigator is responding to the scene, the investigator will be responsible for decisions about removal of property. Any collection of property as evidence will be done in accordance with JHPD Directive #467, Evidence Collection & Preservation.
 - If permission is granted by the property owner, and the investigator has determined it has no evidentiary value, personal property may be given to a designated person or family member or secured in the vehicle.
 - When releasing a person's personal property to a third party, the officer shall record the person's identity, document this in the report, and, if feasible, secure a signed receipt.
 - If a vehicle needs to be towed, officers shall follow the instructions and complete all forms set forth in JHPD Directive #446, Vehicle Towing & Storage.

I. Animals

When collisions involve domesticated animals, officers will do the following:

- Attempt to determine the owners' identities and subsequently contact them. Request assistance from the Baltimore Office of Animal Control if animal owners cannot be determined or located.
- Provide owners with the names, addresses, phone numbers, vehicle registration, and insurance information of vehicle owners or drivers.
- Provide drivers of striking vehicles with names, addresses, and phone numbers of animal owners.

J. Hit-and-Run Collisions

When a collision is confirmed as a hit and run, the following procedures shall be performed:

- Immediately relay available description or other pertinent information about the suspect vehicle/driver to the JHPS Communications Center for broadcast.
- If the collision involves a serious bodily injury or death, and BPD will be taking over the response and investigation, the responding JHPD officers shall provide BPD with the information required to request a Yellow Alert.

NOTE: The Yellow Alert program is coordinated through the Maryland State Police (MSP) and provides rapid information dissemination to assist

with locating and apprehending persons who fail to remain at traffic collision scenes that may involve serious bodily injuries or deaths.

K. Collisions Involving Johns Hopkins Vehicles

The following additional steps shall be taken when responding to collisions that take place within JHPD’s jurisdictional area and that involve a vehicle that is registered to Johns Hopkins (excluding JHPD vehicles or vehicles driven by a JHPD member):

- Officers will instruct the driver to promptly notify their supervisors and comply with the university’s accident reporting procedures.
- Officers may take appropriate enforcement actions in accordance with JHPD Directive #442, Traffic Control & Enforcement.
- Records Management members are responsible for sending report copies to Parking and Transportation Services.

NOTE: Collisions involving Johns Hopkins–registered vehicles that occur outside the JHPD’s jurisdiction and that are being driven by non-JHPD members will be investigated by allied agencies with primary accident investigation authority for the location.

L. Collisions Involving Government or Public Vehicles

The following additional steps shall be taken when responding to collisions that occur within the JHPD’s jurisdictional area and that involve vehicles registered to government entities other than Baltimore City:

- Officers will tell drivers of governmental vehicles to promptly notify their supervisors and comply with their own accident reporting procedures. Officers may assist in making these notifications as appropriate.
- Officers may take appropriate enforcement actions in accordance with JHPD Directive #442, Traffic Control & Enforcement.
- Central Records personnel are responsible for sending reports to the governmental agencies as appropriate.

NOTE: Officers shall notify BPD if the collision involves a vehicle registered to Baltimore City. BPD will be responsible for investigating and reporting on these collisions regardless of whether they occur on campus or also involve a Johns Hopkins–registered vehicle.

II. Collision Investigations

- A. The JHPD will investigate and complete the required report through the MSP Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS) for the following types of collisions occurring within the JHPD’s primary jurisdiction:

- Personal injury collisions, other than those involving death or serious bodily harm.
 - For collisions involving death or serious bodily harm, the BPD shift supervisor or commander shall request that BPD's Crash Unit investigate and complete the investigation per the requirements of the MOU.
 - To be documented, nonserious injuries must be reported at the time of the collision, but no later than completion of the ACRS report.
- Collisions either attributed to or accompanied by an arrestable traffic offense, including operator impairment due to alcohol or drugs regardless of damage, personal injury, or fault. See JHPD Directive #444, Driving Impaired & Under the Influence.
- Collisions that occur within the JHPD's jurisdictional area involving any vehicles owned by local, state, or federal government, other than Baltimore City.
- Collisions involving any vehicle transporting hazardous materials.
- Any collision where a discrepancy exists regarding license, registration, or insurance status.
- When any involved driver or vehicle owner requests an investigation and:
 - The request is contemporaneous with the collision, and
 - The involved vehicles have remained at or near the scene of the collision.
- Hit-and-run collisions when any of the following exist:
 - A witness or photographic evidence can provide a description or partial description of the striking vehicle that would provide a unique characteristic that would allow for a positive identification (a make, model, and color would not provide enough investigative information), or
 - Significant physical evidence exists as a basis for possibly identifying the striking vehicle.
- All property damage collisions in which any vehicle involved becomes disabled.

B. The JHPD will not investigate, complete an ACRS or police report, or determine fault for the following types of collisions:

- Property damage collisions in which none of the vehicles involved become disabled.
- Property damage hit-and-run collisions where no evidence exists regarding the striking vehicle.

- Collisions that occur when reporting requirements are suspended as described in this Directive.
- Late-reported collisions where a reasonable investigation cannot be conducted.
- In such instances, officers shall do the following:
 - Provide each driver with a Collision Information Exchange Form (developed by the State of Maryland).
 - Assist in moving the involved vehicle(s) from the travel portion of the roadway.
 - Ensure that all operators possess a valid driver's license, registration, and insurance.
 - Ensure that all vehicles are properly registered.
 - Ensure that the vehicle drivers exchange all pertinent information.
 - Notify the involved parties that the JHPD does not write reports in these instances.
 - Refrain from making comments or offering any advice concerning the collision, particularly about findings of fault.
 - Document the identity of all persons and vehicles involved on the officer's body-worn camera (BWC). If the involved drivers request BWC video, the officer is responsible for gathering the time and camera location of the collision. This information will be given to the involved parties so they can inform their insurance companies to request BWC video from the JHPD.

C. On-Scene Investigation (CALEA 61.2.2.d)

When conducting an on-scene investigation, the investigating officer's duties include but are not limited to the following:

- To the extent it has not already been done by the first responding officers, verifying and documenting:
 - The Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) of the vehicles,
 - The status of the driver's licenses of the operators involved,
 - The registration of the vehicles involved, and
 - Whether there is adequate proof of insurance for the vehicles involved.
- Identifying and interviewing all involved drivers, passengers, and witnesses to determine the circumstances of the collision.
- Examining and recording vehicle damage.
- Examining and recording effects of the collision on the road surface.

- Taking measurements and/or photographs, as needed.
- Collecting and preserving evidence in accordance with JHPD Directive #467, Evidence Collection & Preservation.
- Identifying and documenting attending fire/rescue personnel and vehicles.
- Coordinate with BPD's Crash Unit, when involving serious injury or death or when additional expertise is needed.

D. Follow-Up Investigation

Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, conducting the off-scene investigation is the responsibility of the primary investigating officer. Any physical evidence will be collected, preserved, and submitted consistent with JHPD Directive #467, Evidence Collection & Preservation.

Follow-up investigative activities may include but are not limited to the following:

- Obtaining medical records, physicians' reports, blood tests, laboratory reports, breathalyzer results, etc.
- Obtaining and recording formal statements from individuals involved with or witnesses to the collision.
- Preparing accident diagrams.
- Requesting specialized technical services offered by BPD, MSP, or other agencies, such as:
 - Accident reconstruction
 - Commercial and passenger vehicle equipment inspection
 - Interpretation of physical evidence (e.g., tire marks, vehicle damage, road surface damage)
 - Preparation of scaled accident drawings
 - Specialized photography of accident scenes
 - Assistance in report and trial preparation for complex accident cases
- Preparing written reports in support of criminal or traffic charges resulting from the collisions.
- Completing any supplemental reports.

E. Enforcement Actions

Unless the officer witnessed the collision, evidence of a violation must be established through a thorough investigation prior to taking enforcement actions. Mere opinion, belief, or suspicion of a violation is not sufficient.

- All enforcement actions must be taken in accordance with the Maryland Transportation Article and JHPD Directive #442, Traffic Control & Enforcement.
- Traffic enforcement action need not be taken in all traffic collisions. However, appropriate enforcement actions shall always be taken in the following situations:
 - An apparent driver's license violation
 - A driver is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (see JHPD Directive #444, Driving Impaired & Under the Influence)
 - A party to the collision does not have adequate proof of insurance

III. Reporting Requirements

- A. JHPD will complete an ACRS report for all categories of collisions listed in Section II.A of this Directive. (See Appendix A.)
- B. Unless a collision requires a protracted investigation, ACRS reports will be completed and submitted within shift.
- C. Reports will be completed consistent with the ACRS Field Reference Guide.
- D. In instances of extreme weather conditions such as a declared snow emergency, the duty officer may suspend the usual collision reporting requirements, provided:
 - There is no personal injury,
 - All vehicles involved are attended and the operators are present, and the involved vehicles are all drivable,
 - There is no third-party damage or damage to city/state property, and
 - There is no involvement of government vehicles.

NOTE: In such instances, officers will provide for the exchange of information by all involved parties, ensure the roadway is clear of vehicles, and ensure that the operators have made arrangements for transportation and/or towing.

IV. Collisions Involving JHPD Members/Vehicles

- A. **Collisions Involving JHPD Vehicles Occurring Within the JHPD's Jurisdiction**
 - The member involved in the collision will do the following:
 - Immediately notify the JHPD Communications Center of the collision.

- Complete and submit to the investigating supervisor, before the end of their shift, a JHPD Vehicle Traffic Crash or Damage Report.

NOTE: If the member is hospitalized or unable to complete the report, it will be prepared by the investigating supervisor.

- Complete and submit to the investigating supervisor an administrative report when an injury is sustained.
- No officer involved in the collision will issue any citations or be involved in the making of the ACRS report.
 - In all instances where the member observed the operator of the other vehicle commit a violation that caused the collision, the investigative unit will be informed for appropriate action.
- For collisions involving personal injury or major collision, or if City of Baltimore property is damaged because of the collision, the JHPD shift supervisor will request a BPD field unit to respond and investigate the collision.
- For property-damage-only collisions involving JHPD vehicles, the JHPD will be the primary reporting and investigating agency.
- **Investigating Supervisor:** A higher-ranking officer than the operator of the JHPD vehicle involved in the collision will be assigned as the investigating supervisor to conduct an on-scene investigation in consultation with the Public Safety Accountability Unit (PSAU). The investigating supervisors shall conduct a collision investigation, in accordance with Section II of this Directive. In addition, the investigating supervisor shall do the following:
 - Complete the Report of Incident Form and submit to the Occupational Health Services Office when documenting an injury to the member. The completed report will be forwarded through the member's chain of command for approval.
 - Submit the investigative file to PSAU. The file will include:
 - The original Vehicle Traffic Crash or Damage Report,
 - The ACRS report,
 - The injured member's administrative report, and
 - The Report of Incident Form to the Occupational Health Services Office.
- PSAU will handle all collisions in accordance with JHPD Directive #350, Complaints Against Police Personnel.

B. Collisions Involving JHPD Vehicles Occurring Outside JHPD Jurisdiction

- The involved JHPD member will:
 - Contact the local police agency and request that it assign a unit to investigate the collision, and
 - Notify the JHPS Communications Center.
- The JHPS Communications Center will assign an investigating supervisor.
 - The supervisor will **not** conduct an on-scene investigation.
 - The supervisor will obtain a copy of the collision report prepared by the local agency and ensure PSAU is notified to handle in accordance with JHPD Directive #350, Complaints Against Police Personnel.
- The member involved in the collision will do the following:
 - Complete and submit to the investigating supervisor, before the end of their shift, a Department Vehicle Traffic Crash or Damage Report.

NOTE: If the member is hospitalized or unable to complete the report, it will be prepared by the investigating supervisor.
 - Complete and submit to the investigating supervisor an administrative report when an injury is sustained.

C. Collisions Involving JHPD Members Operating Private Vehicles

- Collisions occurring within the primary jurisdiction of the JHPD that involve off-duty members operating private vehicles will be investigated in the same manner as collisions involving individuals who are not members of the JHPD.
- A supervisor will be assigned to the scene and PSAU will be notified when:
 - The investigating officer believes, or a complaint is received, that the member allegedly operated the motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
 - The member has been injured and is unable to communicate with the investigating officer.
 - The member is on duty.

Policy Enforcement

Enforcement	Police Department managers and supervisors are responsible for enforcing this Directive.
Reporting Violations	Suspected violations of this Directive should be reported to PSAU.

Related Resources

University Policies and Documents
Operational Procedure #412, Custody, Transport & Processing Operational Procedure #442, Traffic Control & Enforcement Operational Procedure #444, Driving Impaired & Under the Influence Operational Procedure #446, Vehicle Towing & Storage Operational Procedure #467, Evidence Collection & Preservation
External Documentation
MD Code, Transportation, Title 20 Maryland Automated Crash Reporting System Field Reference Guide (2017), https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/documents/acrsfieldreference.pdf Memorandum of Understanding Between the Johns Hopkins Police Department and the Police Department of Baltimore City, Coordination of Law Enforcement Duties
Police Department Forms and Systems
https://powerdms.com/ui/login

Contacts

Subject Matter	Office Name	Telephone Number	Email/Web Address
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Policy Management	(667)306-8618	jhpdpolicyinquiry@jh.edu

Appendix A

Collision Reporting Matrix

	Roadways	Roadways— Late Reported	Private Property (Including Parking Lots)	JHPD Vehicles, Government Vehicles & School Buses	Government Vehicles (Non- JHPD) Involved with Deer
Property Damage Only (Nondisabling)	No Report	No Report	No Report	ACRS	ACRS
Property Damage Only (Disabling Damage)	ACRS	No Report	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS
Hit & Run (No Striking Vehicle Information)	No Report	No Report	No Report	ACRS	N/A
Hit & Run (Striking Vehicle Information Available)	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS	N/A
Personal Injury	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS
Serious Personal Injury or Fatal	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS	ACRS