

**8.12**  
**CRAIG POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**Office of Chief of Police**  
**General Order**

**Date Issued:** November 1, 1997  
**Subject:** Accident Investigations  
**To:** All Officers

**Revision Date:** April 1, 2009  
**Reference:**

**I. POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Craig Police Department to investigate traffic accidents (TA), not only to determine causation and traffic law violations, but also to obtain engineering data, to protect the rights of the individuals involved, and to assist in traffic education.

**II. AUTHORITY:**

CRS 42-4-109, Powers of Local Authorities; allows local jurisdictions certain powers to control traffic within their jurisdictions. This includes parking, traffic control devices, traffic movement, traffic accidents, etc. The City of Craig has adopted the Model Traffic Code for Colorado Municipalities (and all current revisions) that allows certain violations to be summoned in City Court.

**III. PROCEDURE:**

The following procedure is intended to provide officers with guidance in the investigation of traffic accidents within this municipality. Officers may not, without good justification, deviate from these guidelines to a lesser extent than provided by the guidelines. Officers may, at any time, choose to conduct a full investigation irrespective of these guidelines.

A. General Guidelines - Upon arrival at the scene of a traffic accident the officer shall:

1. Take all necessary steps to secure the scene, which includes determining the need for additional assistance, caring for the injured, preserving and protecting the scene, etc.
2. Locate and identify all drivers, passengers and witnesses involved.
3. Conduct a thorough investigation, which will include all necessary measurements to accurately prepare an accident diagram if required (see below). If there are serious injuries or a fatality, refer to section III, D, below.
  - a. In the case of extensive (high dollar) damage, the assistance of an Accident Investigation Specialist (Colorado State Patrol) can be requested. The responding officer shall notify the on duty/on call Supervisor prior to making any request. The Supervisor will make the determination if Accident Investigation Specialist assistance is needed.

b. In the case of vehicles being moved prior to the officer's arrival, locate the approximate point of impact and recreate the accident scene in the diagram as close as practicable.

4. Explain reporting requirements to drivers involved. Officers shall use discretion when and if Insurance Affidavits are issued after using all available means to ascertain if the Insurance Affidavit is warranted.

5. Take appropriate enforcement action when warranted after a thorough investigation.

6. Restore roadway and traffic flow to normal as soon as possible after all necessary information has been obtained for the accident diagram.

7. Document accident. Complete and submit all necessary reports.

## B. General Guidelines – Exchange Forms:

### 1. Insurance Exchange Forms

- The officer will complete an exchange of information form and give a copy to each party for:
  - Any accident that the damage is in excess of \$1,000, visible injury involved, a fatality, or
  - Private property accident

*You must complete the Exchange Form for hit & run private property TAs even when all you have is the victim vehicle, and turn them into records so they can create a file. This is used for insurance investigations and for follow-up investigation if the TA is ever solved.*

2. For accidents that are initially deemed as falling below the criteria and then later found to require a report, the report will be considered a "cold report," and handled as outlined in section G.

## C. Reports

1. State of Colorado Traffic Accident Reports will be completed in the manner described in the State Of Colorado Traffic Accident Report Manual as revised by the State of Colorado., and:

- Traffic Accident is on city, county or state streets with damage over \$1,000 to any one vehicle or property
- Spilling of load on roadway
- Any hit & run on a city, county or state street
- Any TA with complained of or evident injury
- Any TA involving drugs and/or alcohol on a city, county or state street
- Any TA where one party does not have insurance on a city, county or state street
- If one or more of the people involved requests a report.

2. During the process of investigation, officers shall initiate any arrests or issue any citations, which may be warranted. This applies to all accidents regardless of the amount of damage, occurring on public streets, alleys, highways, and private property when applicable, which is open to the public for vehicular traffic where damage or injury is involved, or the officer witnesses the violation.
3. When Diagrams are Mandatory
  - TA involving a train
  - TA involving SBI (serious bodily injury) or death. This requires the *Injury Severity* box at the bottom of the form to be a “03 – evident incapacitating” or “04 – fatal.”

*Even though a diagram may not be required, it is highly recommended that the officer do a sketch of the accident scene that will be kept in in-house records and can be used for court.*

4. People may be referred to Colorado State Patrol website to report a TA when it is:
  - Cold private property TA
  - Car/animal TA
  - When Officers are too busy with higher priority calls to respond to minor TA on city, county or state street
  - CSP Homepage: [www.csp.state.co.us](http://www.csp.state.co.us)
  - Direct link to crash site: <https://crash.state.co.us>

#### D. Serious Injury And/Or Fatal Accidents:

1. The assistance of an Accident Investigation Specialist may be requested for all serious injury and/or fatal accident investigations.
2. The first unit to arrive at the scene will notify the on-duty Supervisor, or in the event that no Supervisor is on duty at the time, notify the Supervisor who is on call. The first unit will then be responsible for protecting and securing the scene until relieved by the Accident Investigation Specialist, if available, and will assist in the completion of the investigation. This can include, but is not limited to, taking statements, taking measurements and serving summons.
3. Once notified, the Supervisor may notify the Accident Investigation Specialist. The Supervisor will also be responsible to notify the Investigation Division and Command Staff, if appropriate.
4. Upon arrival at the scene, the Accident Investigation Specialist will be briefed by the initial responding officer on all known facts regarding to the accident. After being briefed, the Accident Investigation Specialist will assume responsibility of the traffic accident investigation.

The Accident Investigation Specialist will be responsible to complete the traffic accident investigation and all reports/summons resulting from his investigation. Note: if the Specialist is a Trooper from the Colorado State Patrol, the Trooper will generally only complete the diagram and supporting documentation. The police officer will need to

complete the information sections on the accident report unless other arrangements are made with C.S.P.

5. At the discretion of the Accident Investigation Specialist, all consenting witnesses, uninjured drivers and passengers involved, may be transported to the Craig Police Department for interview and/or statements. If necessary, involved vehicles may be towed to the City of Craig Impound Lot and held as evidence.

#### E. Hit And Run Accident:

##### 1. At the scene:

a. Obtain and broadcast a description of the run vehicle, the driver and occupants, if known. Attempt to locate witnesses who can identify the driver and vehicle. Check the scene thoroughly for any physical evidence, height of damage, etc.

##### 2. Upon locating the Hit and Run Vehicle, attempt to establish the following:

a. Who was driving at the time of the accident?

b. The driver knew or should have known they were involved in an accident.

c. Why the driver evaded their legal responsibility to report the accident.

#### F. Private Property Accidents:

The Craig Police Department will respond on all accidents of this type. A State report will be completed if there is visible injury involved, a fatality. For any private property accident an insurance exchange form will be completed and given to the drivers.

#### G. Cold Accidents (Cold Reports)

A “cold accident” shall be defined as any accident where the accident report is not timely to the occurrence, and/or those involved have left the scene. If it is determined later that the damage to one of the vehicles or property was \$1,000.00 or more, or an injury, refer to #5 below.

People should be referred to Colorado State Patrol website to report a TA when it is:

- Cold private property TA
- Car/animal TA
- When Officers are too busy with higher priority calls to respond to minor TA on city, county or state street
- CSP Homepage: [www.csp.state.co.us](http://www.csp.state.co.us)
- Direct link to crash site: <https://crash.state.co.us>

1. If the parties do not want to file a web based report, and the accident occurred on a city street, all parties involved in the accident need to respond to the Craig Police Department

to complete a cold report. If the report occurred on private property they will be given an accident form to complete.

2. The employee receiving the forms will review the information for accuracy and completeness. "Cold" will be written in the box labeled City Serial Number.

3. Follow-up investigation will not normally be conducted on "Cold" accidents unless there is exigent circumstances surrounding the nature of the accident.

4. When it is determined later that an accident report must be filed with the State of Colorado, the investigating officer must complete the required reports.

**Approved by:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Walter K. Vanatta".

**Walter K. Vanatta**  
**Chief of Police**