



GREENVILLE COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

# GENERAL ORDERS

## TRAFFIC COLLISION INVESTIGATION

**PURPOSE:**

Investigating traffic collisions is the primary responsibility of the **South Carolina Highway Patrol (SCHP)**. Occasionally with supervisor approval, the Traffic Unit will assist SCHP with collision investigation. Whenever a South Carolina Department of Public Safety vehicle is involved in a collision, the Sheriff's Office investigates the incident, regardless of the circumstances or the location of the collision in the County; **§South Carolina Code of Laws 56-5-765**. This policy establishes guidelines for vehicle collision response to achieve the following objectives:

1. Investigation.
2. Reporting.
3. Collision scene protection.
4. Public safety.
5. Traffic law enforcement.
6. Public education for collision prevention.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Traffic Collision Investigation** – Collecting factual information identifying and describing people, roads, and vehicles involved in a collision. Describing results of the collision in terms of damage to vehicles and roadside objects, injuries to people, marks and residue on the road, and final positions of vehicles and bodies. Interpreting factors in terms of road user behavior and on occasion, attempting to specify the peculiar combination of factors required to produce a particular collision.

**Traffic Collision Reporting** - Basic data collecting to identify and classify a traffic collision and the persons, vehicles, time/location, planned movements involved, and possible contributing factors, such as traffic law violations.

**COLLISION  
INVESTIGATION:**

Most collisions can be adequately investigated and reported by completing the **South Carolina Department of Public Safety Uniform Collision Report** form. Other collisions may require more detailed investigation including speed determination, scale diagrams, or collection of data for reconstruction.

**The Sheriff's Office will investigate:**

1. Deputy involved collisions (for internal review only).

2. Collisions involving SC Department of Public Safety personnel (or others as provided by law).
3. Disturbances resulting from traffic collisions.
4. When assistance is requested by other law enforcement agencies and approved by the Sheriff or his designee.

**NOTE:** Under exigent circumstances, a traffic supervisor may approve an on-duty traffic unit to investigate a collision not listed above.

**Responsibilities of the first deputy responding to the scene of a collision:**

1. Administering medical aid to victims.
2. Summoning ambulance and/or additional support (fire truck, tow truck).
3. Protecting the collision scene.
4. Preserving short-lived evidence.
5. Establishing a safe traffic pattern around the collision.
6. Locating and identifying witnesses.
7. Recording information.
8. Expediting the removal of vehicles, persons, and debris if no injuries are claimed by persons involved.

Normally, the traffic deputy assigned to the call by Communications is responsible for the investigation, unless otherwise relieved.

**In the event of a serious or complicated collision, the collision reconstruction team can be called for support. In any event, the investigating deputy is responsible for the following:**

1. Interviewing principals and witnesses.
2. Examining and recording vehicle damage.
3. Examining/recording effects of the collision on roadway.
4. Taking measurements.
5. Having photographs taken.
6. Collecting/preserving evidence.
7. Exchanging information among principals.
8. Timely submission of initial report within 24-hours.

**Follow-up activities, if required, include:**

1. Collection of off-scene data.
2. Obtaining formal statements from witnesses.
3. Preparing formal reports for use in court.
4. Presenting information to a Collision Reconstructionist.

After consulting with a Traffic Reconstructionist in the Traffic Unit, the investigating deputy may obtain assistance from surveyors, mechanics, physicists, physicians, or other specialists needed to complete the investigation.

**PATROL VEHICLES** - Patrol vehicles are to be equipped with a first aid kit, emergency blanket, fire extinguisher and six (6) flares. In addition, traffic enforcement vehicles are to be equipped with measuring tapes, marking crayons, chalk, paint, templates and other equipment as needed.

**TRAFFIC VEHICLES** - Deputies investigating collisions will take appropriate enforcement action consistent with State law. Private property collisions will normally not involve traffic law violations, but in other cases citations may be issued when evidence clearly indicates a violation.

**COLLISION  
RECONSTRUCTION  
TEAM:**

**A team of specially trained deputies is frequently used to investigate particular vehicle collisions involving SCDPS vehicles or employees and Sheriff's Office Vehicles.** The team consists of Deputies trained in Collision Reconstruction appointed by the Sheriff or his designee and each serves at the Sheriff's pleasure. The team's activities are in addition to their day-to-day duties.

**The collision reconstruction team investigates collisions involving:**

1. Severe personal injuries or death, deputy or civilian.
2. At the request of a supervisor due to special circumstances when significant damage to vehicles or other property occurs.

**County vehicle collisions will be investigated by a supervisor.**

During the employee's normal tour of duty the affected division supervision will investigate. Division is determined by the employee's assignment in the Sheriff's Office. If the collision occurs outside the employee's normal tour of duty, the on duty Uniform Patrol supervisor will investigate the collision. It is the responsibility of the investigating supervisor to:

1. Respond to collision scene.
2. Determine circumstances of the collision.
3. Make the determination if a traffic unit needs to respond.
4. Request photographs.
5. Complete an incident report and ensure the employee involved completes a damaged vehicle report documenting damage to a county vehicle.

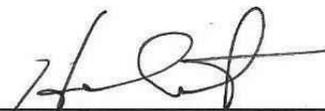
**TRAFFIC CONTROL:**

Deputies responding to a collision scene are to render aid to the injured and restore traffic control using standardized traffic direction signals as taught by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy. If a fire or fire hazard is present, the local fire department is summoned to the scene. The on-scene deputy is to use his/her fire extinguisher, if possible. If hazardous materials are present, the scene is to be evacuated and a perimeter established until such time as properly trained and equipped officials can respond to deal with the hazard (refer to the Emergency Response Guide-ERG). Deputies may use flares, barricades or reflectors to protect the scene and detour traffic.

If a victim cannot take control of their personal property at the scene, investigating deputies are to place valuables in **Property and Evidence** until they can be turned over to the owner. The collision report is to include an inventory of items placed into P&E.

**COLLISION REPORT FORMS:**

Collisions are reported on **the South Carolina Department of Public Safety Uniform Traffic Collision Report**. However, in cases where the Sheriff's Office investigates a deputy-involved collision or a collision with serious injury or death, an incident report is to be completed in addition to the collision report; see also GO 126 RISK MANAGEMENT.



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Hobart Lewis, Sheriff