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Traffic Collision Scene Preservation (Re-Issue DB 15-178)

Members are reminded that a traffic collision scene may transition into a crime scene during the investigation. The preservation of information and evidence related to the collision (i.e., clothing, beverage containers, position of vehicles, activated lights, turn signals) is essential when conducting a thorough and comprehensive investigation. Determining the actions of involved parties prior to the collision (i.e., talking on cell phone, being under the influence of alcohol/drugs, or experiencing a medical episode which may have contributed to the collision) may rest on evidence gathered at the scene and/or in the vehicles.

When a member determines that a traffic collision has transitioned into a crime scene, the member **shall** ensure the following steps are taken to preserve the scene until relieved by the investigating supervisor:

1. Take appropriate measures to render the scene safe and prevent additional injuries.
2. Request emergency medical assistance if injuries are apparent.
3. Secure the geographical area of the collision scene and restrict access to those who are engaged in emergency medical assistance or investigative duties.
4. Request a supervisor respond to the collision scene.
5. Initiate a crime scene log.
6. Notify supporting units (i.e., Traffic Company Collision Investigator, TCIU Investigator, Media Relations, Crime Scene Investigations) through the Department Operations Center.
7. Secure witnesses by requesting a driver's license, business card, and contact phone numbers and attempt to keep the witnesses separated until they are interviewed by investigators.
8. Canvass the area for the presence of video surveillance cameras at surrounding businesses, government facilities, etc., and provide the camera location information to investigators.
9. Re-open the area for public access only at the direction of the on-scene investigator.

If there is video evidence of the event, officers shall request a Video Retrieval Trained Officer to process the video evidence.

If TCIU is responding to the scene, officers shall not move or enter vehicles or, absent exigent circumstances, move other any other evidence, in an effort to preserve the integrity of the crime scene.

Traffic collisions involving serious or fatal injuries, city-owned vehicles, persons of notoriety, or suspects involved in a serious crime may attract members of the media, city department supervisors, employee labor representatives, members of the City Attorney's Office and other interested parties. Allowing non-law enforcement or non-medical personnel access into the collision scene for any reason while the investigation is on-going may contaminate evidence, render the evidence useless, or result in the evidence being inadmissible in court.

All non-law enforcement and non-medical personnel, including the media, shall be restricted from entering the crime scene. However, members shall not intentionally impede a person's ability to observe, record, film, or photograph from the perimeter of the crime scene.


WILLIAM SCOTT
Chief of Police

References:

- DGO 6.01 (Crime Scene Log)
- DGO 6.02 (Physical Evidence and Crime Scenes)
- DGO 8.01 (Critical Incident Evaluation and Notification)
- DM 22 (SFPD Media Resource Manual)

Per DB 17-080, sworn members are required to electronically acknowledge this Department Bulletin in HRMS.