
Ocean City Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines

Safety

Subject: Accident Reporting and Investigation
Revised: 15 September 2018
Approved: 18 December 2018
Effective: 1 February 2019
Section: 710.00

710.01 Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to create a standard system to report and investigate all department vehicular accidents and near misses; a near miss is defined as an incident in which no property damage and no personal injury occurred, but where, given a slight shift in time, position or other circumstances, damage or injury would or may have occurred.

710.02 Scope

This guideline applies to all personnel who operate fire department vehicles.

710.03 Policy

A. Reporting Accidents

1. Members shall report department vehicular accidents to the communications center immediately. The report should include the following:
 - a. Unit identification or apparatus number.
 - b. Exact location of the incident.
 - c. An indication for the need of additional medical assistance.
 - d. An estimate of the extent and nature of the injuries and vehicle damage.
 - e. An indication of whether or not the vehicle is drivable.
 - f. An indication of the need for another unit to cover the original assignment if the accident were to occur while responding to an incident.
2. Members shall also notify the on-duty shift commander.

B. Shift Commander Responsibilities

1. Contact the Volunteer Division Duty Chief if the accident involves a piece of fire apparatus, a department building, or volunteer personnel.
2. Contact the Assistant Chief of the Career Division under all circumstances if career personnel are involved.
3. Contact the Deputy Chief of the Career Division and/or Volunteer Division, and the Chief of the Department, in addition to the previously mentioned personnel, if a member and/or civilian suffers any injury.
4. Initiate the department's investigation into the accident. This task includes the following:

- a. Ensure that all applicable reports/forms are completed and forwarded to either the Assistant Chief of the Career Division, or the Duty Chief of the Volunteer Division, depending on the personnel involved, as soon as possible, preferably by the end of the assigned shift. Those forms include:
 - i) Incident Report - to be completed by the driver/operator of the department vehicle.
 - ii) First Report of Injury/Illness – to be completed by the responsible supervisor.
 - b. Photograph the incident scene and involved vehicles.
 - c. Obtain the name and badge number of the law enforcement officer investigating the collision.
5. Obtain witness names and contact information.
6. If necessary, transport the individual member operating the vehicle to the appropriate facility for drug and alcohol testing. This should be completed when:
- a. The on-duty officer in charge believes that it is necessary, or
 - b. Anyone, civilian or uniformed, is injured in the incident.
- C. While at the accident scene, members should:
1. Initiate appropriate medical care, if necessary.
 2. Not discuss the incident with anyone other than fire and police representatives.
 3. Not move the involved vehicles unless it is creating a traffic hazard. If the vehicles must be moved, chalk the position of the tires prior to moving them.
 4. Remain at the scene until the police and fire department representatives have completed their investigation.
- D. Once the appropriate paperwork has been completed, it shall be forwarded to:
1. The Risk Management Director if the collision involved career personnel or a vehicle titled to or leased by the Town of Ocean City. Either Assistant Chief or Deputy Chief of the Career Division will normally handle this task.
 2. The VFIS agent of the Ocean City Volunteer Fire Company and/or the Worcester County Human Resources Department. The administrative assistant assigned to the Volunteer Division will normally handle this task.
- E. Categories of Violations
1. Category “A”
 - a. An incident supporting circumstances that can be characterized by no fault on the part of the driver.
 - i) Examples include:
 - (1) Equipment failure – not driver related
 - (2) Other driver at fault
 - (3) Accident involving an animal
 - (4) No driver error determined
 - (5) Extreme inclement weather where the driver took all of the necessary precautions
 - ii) Damage to the vehicle is minor in nature and the cost of repair would not typically exceed \$1000.00. Minor damage includes dings, dents, small scratches, or broken lights/lenses. This would include similar damage to buildings.
 - b. Discipline

i) First category “A”

(1) Minimum of an oral counseling if the Accident Review Board (ARB) finds the incident to have been avoidable.

(2) Written reprimand if the circumstances dictate

ii) Second category “A” infraction within six months of the first

(1) Minimum of a written counseling if the ARB finds the incident to have been avoidable.

(2) The Office of Training, Health and Safety will develop and implement a remedial training plan to be conducted with the individual’s officer. Once the training plan is complete, a performance observation will be conducted by the Office of Training, Health and Safety.

iii) Third category “A” within a six month period of the second

(1) Minimum of a written counseling and 12 hour unpaid suspension for career members, and suspension of driving privileges for 15 days for volunteer members if the ARB finds the incident to have been avoidable.

(2) The Office of Training, Health and Safety will develop and implement a remedial training plan to be conducted with the individual’s officer. Once the training plan is complete, a performance observation will be conducted by the Office of Training, Health and Safety.

iv) The level of discipline and the decision of the individual’s driving status shall be determined by the appropriate Deputy Chief.

2. Category “B”

a. An incident where supporting information may indicate carelessness on the part of the driver.

i) Examples include:

(1) Improper braking

(2) Operation on unsafe terrain

(3) Failure to maintain appropriate clearance

(4) Failure to properly secure equipment (doors, hoods, hand tools....)

(5) Failure to maintain control of the vehicle (i.e. not setting the parking brake)

ii) Damage to the vehicle is moderate and the cost to repair would not exceed \$5,000.00. Moderate damage may include wrinkled fenders, bumpers, and crumpled assemblies. This would include similar damage to buildings.

b. Discipline Range

i) A written counseling for all involved in the incident is found to be avoidable by the ARB.

ii) Any category “A” incidents that have occurred within the past two years may be taken into consideration when determining discipline.

- iii) Minimum of 24 hour unpaid suspension for career members, and suspension of driving privileges for 30 days for volunteer members if the ARB finds the incident to have been avoidable.
- iv) The Office of Training, Health and Safety will develop and implement a remedial training plan to be conducted with the individual's officer. Once the training plan is complete, a performance observation will be conducted by the Office of Training, Health and Safety.
- v) The level of discipline and the decision of the individual's driving status shall be determined by the appropriate Deputy Chief.

3. Category "C"

a. An incident where supporting information may indicate carelessness and/or inattentiveness on the part of the driver, and not reckless conduct or flagrant violation of traffic laws.

i) Examples include:

- (1) Vehicle improperly parked – parking brake not set, wheels not chocked.
- (2) Rear-end collision
- (3) Improper passing
- (4) Failure to yield right of way to oncoming traffic
- (5) Unsafe lane changes

ii) Damage to the vehicle is significant and exceeds \$5,000.00 and/or the incident involves personal injury to department members and/or civilians.

b. Discipline Range

i) The individual's driving status will be immediately suspended.

ii) The ARB shall meet within 24 hours of the incident.

iii) A written counseling shall be generated if the incident is found to be avoidable by the ARB.

iv) Minimum of 48 hour unpaid suspension for career members, and suspension of driving privileges for 60 days for volunteer members if the ARB finds the incident to have been avoidable. The potential for termination also exists.

v) The Office of Training, Health and Safety will develop and implement a remedial training plan to be conducted with the individual's officer. Once the training plan is complete, a performance observation will be conducted by the Office of Training, Health and Safety.

vi) The level of discipline and the decision of the individual's driving status shall be determined by the appropriate Deputy Chief.

4. Category "D"

a. An incident where supporting information indicates the driver may have been irresponsible in operation of the vehicle.

i) Examples include:

- (1) Excessive speed
- (2) Exceeding the capabilities of the vehicle
- (3) Reckless driving
- (4) Disregard of a traffic control device (red light, stop sign...)
- (5) Driving under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol

b. Discipline Range

- i) The individual's driving status will be immediately suspended.
- ii) The ARB shall meet within 24 hours of the incident.
- iii) A written counseling shall be generated if the incident is found to be avoidable by the ARB.
- iv) Minimum of 72 hour unpaid suspension for career members, and suspension of driving privileges for 90 days for volunteer members if the ARB finds the incident to have been avoidable. The potential for termination also exists.
- v) The Office of Training, Health and Safety will develop and implement a remedial training plan to be conducted with the individual's officer. Once the training plan is complete, a performance observation will be conducted by the Office of Training, Health and Safety.
- vi) The level of discipline and the decision of the individual's driving status shall be determined by the appropriate Deputy Chief.

F. Accident Review

1. Accident Reviews shall be conducted by a minimum of five personnel. These committee consists of the following:
 - a. Department Health and Safety Officer
 - b. At least one representative of management from each of the three Divisions.
 - c. At least one representative of operational personnel from each of the three Divisions.
2. All accident reviews shall be completed within 45 days of the conclusion of the investigation into the accident.
3. The purpose of the accident review is to determine whether or not the accident was preventable or non-preventable.