	Houston Independent School District Police Department Directives	DIRECTIVE: 450-021
		EFFECTIVE DATE: April 13, 2021
	SUBJECT: Traffic Investigations	REVISED DATE: January 14, 2023

PURPOSE

This directive aims to establish policies for vehicle accident investigation by personnel of the Houston Independent School District Police Department. This directive applies to all Houston Independent School District Police Personnel.

JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

Outside agency officers will not investigate accidents on HISD property except for serious bodily injuries or fatalities. However, the HISD Police Department may investigate minor injury accidents.

HISD Officers normally do not investigate accidents on city streets but may assist motorists and maintain control of the scene until the local law enforcement agency having jurisdiction arrives and assumes control. However, HISD Police Officers who view minor accidents (no injuries) that do not involve HISD vehicles may complete the accident paperwork or forms with the permission of an on-duty supervisor. HISD officers may investigate accidents that involve:

- a) HISD vehicles; or HISD personnel in the performance of their duties for HISD
- b) HISD Police Department officers shall, if requested, assist with traffic control.

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

HISD Officers will thoroughly investigate accidents occurring on HISD property that involve vehicle damage of an apparent extent of at least \$1,000 or that involve district vehicles or property.

ACCIDENT REPORTING

A Texas Department of Public Safety ST-3 form or local equivalent shall be completed on all accidents that must be reported to the State of Texas.

An HISD Accident Report Form shall be completed on all accidents that occur on HISD property, involve HISD vehicles, or involve HISD personnel in the performance of their duties for HISD and are not required to be reported to the State of Texas, such as those that occur on private property.

Upon arrival, officers shall:

- a) Check for injuries;
- b) Determine who was driving at the time of the accident, identify their vehicles, and obtain their operator's license and proof of financial responsibility, if any;
- c) Separate the drivers and get a brief description of the events from each one;
- d) Locate witnesses and obtain and note their statements;
- e) Take proper measurements and photos, if necessary;
- f) Reconstruct the accident and determine who was at fault;
- g) Explain the results of your investigation to the persons involved and the violation(s) involved;
- h) Issue citations if necessary;

- i) Request an Accident Investigator when a serious injury or fatality is involved;
- j) Be as accurate and complete as possible; and
- k) Ensure that pertinent information is exchanged among all drivers.

DEATH OR SERIOUS BODILY INJURY

The local law enforcement agency having jurisdiction will investigate deaths or serious bodily injuries. Upon arrival at an accident involving deaths or serious bodily injuries, HISD officers:

- a) Shall secure medical attention, if necessary;
- b) Shall secure the scene until officers from the local law enforcement agency having jurisdiction arrive.
- c) Shall not move any evidence; and
- d) If a death is involved:
 - 1. Shall make every attempt to shield the body from public view that will not destroy evidence or make it unusable.
 - 2. Shall not search or move the body without the consent of the the medical examiner or medical investigator.

DAMAGE TO HISD PROPERTY

Any damage to HISD property shall be noted on the appropriate accident report.

Driver information of the person responsible for the damage will be taken and forwarded to HISD Risk Management so they may file for restitution.

HIT AND RUN

Hit-and-run investigations involve:

- a. Investigation of incidents involving Failure to Stop and Render Aid and Failure to Stop and Give Information.
- b. Gathering information for future prosecution
- c. Upon arrival at the accident scene:
 - 1. Call for an ambulance if one is needed.
 - 2. Gather information from other operators (s) and witnesses.
 - 3. Look for evidence on struck vehicles or parts from striking vehicles that may be left at the scene.
 - 4. Make a thorough investigation and complete the ST-3 form.

IMPAIRMENT OF AN OPERATOR DUE TO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

Accident investigations involving persons suspected of Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) and Driving Under the Influence (DUI) situations will involve the following:

- a) Proper gathering of evidence;
- b) The suspect may be required to complete a field sobriety test including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Reciting the alphabet in English or another known language understood by the officer;
 - 2. Walking in a straight line;

3. Turning movements with arms extended;
 4. Performing a Static Balance Test. This involves standing with heels together and arms extended, head tilted back, and eyes closed.
 5. Submitting to a Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus Test, if the officer is trained to administer it.
- c) Maintaining safe traffic conditions; and
 - d) The arrest of the suspect, if warranted.
 - e) Include the field sobriety test results and any observations in the offense report if an arrest is made.
 - f) Arrest the driver and call for a wrecker if a prisoner's vehicle is towed. Indicate the disposition of the vehicle in the offense report.
 - g) Transporting the prisoner to the Intoxilyzer / Video area for testing. While transporting to or while at the testing/video area:
 1. Do not argue with or engage in discussions with prisoners.
 2. Do not allow prisoners to smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink any liquid once arrested and until processing is completed.
 3. Do not cite the suspected driver for moving violations.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

In an accident investigation involving hazardous materials, the priority is protecting life. If an officer encounters a hazmat condition, they will notify the dispatcher of the situation and call for:

- a) Ambulance and fire units.
- b) Accident investigator.
- c) Additional HISD units.
- d) Request a supervisor on the scene.
- e) Attempt to determine the material and inform the dispatcher to notify the appropriate fire department.
- f) Evacuate any persons within the hazardous area and deny further entry.
- g) Avoid contact with material and attempt to remain upwind of gases.
- h) Enter the spill area only to save lives. Limit entry to the shortest amount of time possible.
- i) Remove all persons at least one-fourth (1/4) mile from the spill.
- j) When a supervisor arrives on the scene, they shall be responsible for the following:
 1. Coordinating all HISD units;
 2. Conferring with fire department personnel;
 3. Determining if an extension of the evacuation area is warranted unless this duty is assumed by fire department personnel.
 4. Remaining at the scene until relieved or the hazard has been removed.

DISTURBANCES BETWEEN PERSONS INVOLVED IN AN ACCIDENT.

If required, evaluate the situation and call for additional HISD and other law enforcement units.

Maintain radio contact, and give dispatcher updates concerning:

- a. The number of persons involved and their demeanor,
- b. The number of injured or threatened persons and if weapons are involved.

- c. Take action to protect injured persons in the immediate area and move them to safety. Take whatever other actions are deemed immediately necessary.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION AS A RESULT OF AN ACCIDENT

In the event of traffic congestion as a result of an accident, the officer will:

- a) Ensure that the dispatcher has the exact location of the accident;
- b) Continually evaluate the situation and call for additional HISD and units from other law enforcement agencies, if required;
- c) Maintain radio contact with and frequently update the dispatcher;
- d) Keep persons in their vehicles;
- e) Facilitate the orderly and expeditious flow of traffic;
- f) Remain at the scene until the congestion has cleared.

TOWING OF DAMAGED VEHICLES


If an officer elects to conduct a non-consent tow, the officer will;

- a) Check the vehicle for stolen or wanted;
- b) Have the dispatcher request a wrecker;
- c) Ensure that an inventory is performed on the contents of the vehicle and listed on the wrecker slip if the vehicle is to be towed;
- d) Assess the condition of the vehicle to be towed and list any damaged or missing parts on the wrecker slip;
- e) The vehicle may be released to a third party at the driver/prisoner's request.
- f) Verify that the name and identification number (Texas Driver's License, Social Security Number, etc.) of the person the vehicle is released to are on all forms and reports.
- g) If the person the vehicle is to be released to does not have a valid driver's license and the vehicle is in a location that requires it to be moved, do not release the vehicle to the person.
- h) The vehicle can be left legally parked at the driver/prisoner's request. Indicate the vehicle's location, and the driver/prisoner requested the vehicle to be left at the scene on all forms and reports.
- f) A vehicle will not be released, driven, or left at the scene if:
- g) Operation of the vehicle would be a safety hazard; or
 - 1. The vehicle was involved in an accident and might have been rendered unsafe; or
 - 2. The vehicle has an invalid safety inspection sticker or is illegally registered.

Follow-Up Accident Investigations

The HISD Police Department shall only perform follow-up accident investigations on accidents that take place on:

- a) HISD Property;
- b) Involve HISD vehicles;
- c) Involve HISD personnel in the performance of their duties for HISD; and
- d) The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction shall perform follow-up accident investigations taking place off district property.

Approved By 
Pedro Lopez Jr., Chief of Police