

		Policy & Procedures			No. 1.19	
		Subject: Hit and Run				
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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The objective of a hit and run investigation is to determine responsibility for the collision and to identify both the offender and the vehicle involved. This is often a difficult task because the very elements of the crime include flight from the scene. Hit and run accidents may involve property, persons or both. As the circumstances are more serious when a human life is involved, these procedures are primarily directed at hit and run investigations involving persons.

I ELEMENTS

- A. The elements of the offense are as follows:
 1. the defendant goes away
 2. having operated
 3. a motor vehicle
 4. upon any way or in any place to which the public has a right of access, or any place to which members of the public have access as invitees or licensees.
 5. after knowingly colliding with or otherwise causing
 - a. injury to any person, or
 - b. injury to any other vehicle or property
 6. without stopping and making known
 - a. his name
 - b. residence, and
 - c. the registration number of his motor vehicle.

II. ON-SCENE DUTIES

- A. Officers should first make provisions for the medical treatment of the victim if necessary. Investigating officers are to follow-up on the condition of the victim after he/she is transported to a hospital to ensure appropriate charges are filed. If there is any possibility that the victim could die of his injuries, a charge of motor vehicle homicide should be considered.
- B. Officers should obtain the best possible description of the operator and his vehicle from the victim and available witnesses. The following information about the vehicle is important:
1. make;
 2. model;
 3. year;
 4. color
 5. extent and location of damage;
 6. license plate (including partial numbers or letters);
 7. unusual markings or equipment (including school, fraternal or organizational signs or stickers);
 8. direction of travel before and after the collision;
 9. number of passengers, if any, and their descriptions.
- C. Descriptive information obtained shall immediately be communicated to the dispatching officer.
- D. Officers should search the area around the scene of the crash including the automobile which was struck (including the clothing of any pedestrian struck) for physical evidence including:
1. personal property left behind by the offender;
 2. glass fragments or paint chips;
NOTE: In the event a pedestrian is struck and injured, ask the hospital, if possible, to secure any such evidence which may have been dislodged from the victim's clothing during transport. Also, hospital personnel should be requested to give the victim's clothing and any associated paint chips or glass fragments to police;
 3. pieces of chrome or grill work;
 4. hub caps;
 5. tire marks;
 6. oil, gas or water marks leading away from the scene; and
 7. mud or dirt dislodged on impact.
- E. Photographs and measurements should be taken at the scene when required. This will be done at the direction of the Shift Supervisor or detective on scene. Officers should examine the person and clothing of the victim. Particularly important are traces of paint or parts of the vehicle. If necessary, an officer may take and preserve articles of clothing or other samples of evidence such as hair, blood, etc. Outer clothing should be examined for indentations left by impact points of the suspect vehicle as these may serve to identify the vehicle. If such indentations exist, the clothing should be

carefully preserved to prevent their obliteration.

- F. Officers should be observant for persons foreign to the scene or who are behaving in a suspicious manner.
- G. Where appropriate, officers should conduct a door-to-door canvas of residences and businesses in the vicinity of the hit and run scene. Often persons who did witness some aspect of the incident are reluctant to come forward and must be sought out by the police.
- H. A preliminary search for the suspect car and driver should be conducted as soon as possible. Because of the great distance a fleeing vehicle can travel even in a short time, all police on patrol plus the State Police and adjacent police departments should be notified via the BAPERN radio network and given as complete a description as is then available. If the victim dies or is in critical condition and motor vehicle homicide charges are being considered, it may be advisable, upon the decision of the Chief or his designee, to contact the media. This will facilitate in alerting the public and enlisting their aid in locating the suspect vehicle and driver.
- I. If a reasonable effort to apprehend the offender is unsuccessful, officers should communicate such to dispatch and return to regular patrol duty unless directed otherwise by the proper authority.

III. FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION

- A. An in-depth or follow-up investigation should be conducted upon the direction of the Detective Sergeant.
- B. The follow-up investigation, if any, should include the following types of activity:
 - 1. checks of records on stolen cars;
 - 2. communication of information relative to the description of the offender and vehicle to other members of the Department, to police departments in surrounding communities and to the State Police;
 - 3. a second search of the accident scene covering a wider area;
 - 4. repeated visits to and surveillance of the scene at the same time of the day that the accident occurred; and
 - 5. visits to garages, auto parts dealers, auto glass dealers, car dealers, auto body repair shops, car wash facilities, etc.
- C. If the vehicle involved is located, it should be carefully examined.
 - 1. Dents and body damage should be measured as to width, depth and pattern. Photographs should be taken if possible.
 - 2. Obtain samples of paint chips, broken glass, pieces of clothing, dirt, evidence of blood, hair, flesh, etc.
 - 3. Inspect the interior for personal articles which may identify the offender.
 - 4. Observe and note any signs of recent repair or any broken or missing parts.

Note: The above steps must be taken in accordance with the departmental policy and procedure. In the event a search warrant is sought, the vehicle should be kept under surveillance until a warrant is obtained. The identity of any person attempting to enter the vehicle or to destroy evidence should be established.
- D. If the operator of the suspect vehicle is located, he/she should be questioned promptly.

If applicable, the Miranda procedures shall be followed. Prompt interrogation of the suspect driver is important. For example, if he can not provide an alibi or if he provides an alibi that is later discredited, these will be critical factors contributing to a successful prosecution.

- E. In conducting a hit and run investigation, it should be noted that a hit and run driver is not necessarily the operator responsible for the accident, but he may be fleeing the scene of a crime. There may be a warrant for his arrest, he may be intoxicated, he may not have a valid license or his license may be suspended or revoked. It is also not unusual for a hit and run driver to abandon his vehicle and then report it to the police as stolen in order to escape responsibility for the accident.
- F. Any hit and run accident reported with personal injury, with a suspect, or with damage of approximately one thousand dollars or more, must be followed up with a full and complete report including details about the accident and the particulars of any follow-up investigation.