

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT MANAGEMENT

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Eureka, California*

This book explains in detail the procedures for managing all types of accidents from minor "fender benders" to major multiple fatalities. Those aspects of the subject that will be of practical value to the reader charged with traffic accident management are emphasized.

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to my kids
Joe, Jenny, and Jill

PREFACE

THE TITLE *Traffic Accident Management* differs somewhat from the usual title of an accident investigation manual. The title was purposely selected to draw attention to the need for a broader scope of study by an officer whose responsibility it is to investigate traffic accidents. It is true that at some point in his involvement with the accident he must focus his attention specifically upon the investigation of the event in order to determine what truly occurred and to uncover any violation of law. The resulting report becomes a history document that will be referred to by many people for different reasons. Therefore, there is no attempt to belittle the investigation function. In fact, considerable detail has been devoted to that specific subject. However, it is the author's opinion, based on eighteen years of field experience and several thousand hours in the classroom, that a larger picture must be perceived by a traffic officer when assigned to handle a traffic accident situation. The officer's responsibility includes a myriad of tasks and obligations that are not directly related to his function as an investigator. It is the intent of this text to address those areas as well. The contents of the text are presented with the intent of giving the reader *practical* information. There is very little theory contained within this book that has not been thoroughly tested and proven.

When a member of a small police department is assigned to investigate or *manage* a traffic accident, he will probably be approaching the situation as a generalist. In other words, his normal tasks include all aspects of police work due to the small size of his department. Further, his opportunities to manage a traffic accident will be less numerous than those of his counterpart in a metropolitan area. This officer needs a guide reference in order to establish a routine for a specified procedure that will allow him to complete

his task successfully. On the other hand, his big-city counterpart who is assigned to traffic accident management on a specialized basis may have considerably more experience but may not necessarily have valid information as a background. This is not to say that schools and academies do not produce valid instruction. It means, unfortunately, that much practical information has been left out on the assumption that the student already knows it or that it was not sufficient to justify a separate class, etc. This text addresses all aspects of the management responsibilities that a traffic officer inherits when he is assigned to an accident scene.

The beginning student in this aspect of the police science field will have a valuable reference in this book. He will be invited to follow a thread that the author has carefully woven. The sequence of chapters was organized to provide a general beginning building to the more technical material.

Traffic accident management is a complicated career field that requires an organized mind, a calm, controlled nature, and the ability to be analytical of fact as well as comforting to victims. It is a fascinating field covering several sciences as well as social and psychological aspects that make it unique from any other. The writing of this book was predicated on an enjoyment of this particular specialty in police work, and it is hoped that the reader will catch the enthusiasm and enjoy this work as well.

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Considerable credit goes to my wife, Mary, for her constant support and encouragement during the writing of this book.

D.J.B.

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TRAFFIC ACCIDENT MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 1

WORDS, PHRASES, AND ABBREVIATIONS DEFINED

IT IS NECESSARY, for the purpose of clarity, that a definition be established for certain words, phrases, terms, and abbreviations that are used in this text. The definitions listed in this chapter are intended to insure unity of understanding when the items are encountered in following chapters. It is also the intent of the author to promote the use of these words, phrases, terms, and abbreviations by traffic officers when writing their reports and when giving testimony in court. A student of traffic law enforcement is the student of a scientific process that requires uniformity of reference.

When unfamiliar words, phrases, terms, or abbreviations appear in later chapters, it is recommended that the reader turn back to this part of the book and read again the specific meaning of the item. Then its use will make sense and the message will hopefully become clear.

ACCIDENT (TRAFFIC). An unintentional event that involves property damage or personal injury as the result of a vehicle in motion.

ACCIDENT PROBABILITY CHART. A graphic illustration of the projection of accident statistics in such a manner as to predict the pattern and frequency of future accidents for the purpose of preventive deployment of law enforcement personnel.

AEV. Authorized emergency vehicle.

AIR BRAKES. A brake system that uses compressed air to actuate the service brakes at the wheels of a vehicle or as a power source for controlling or applying service brakes that are actuated through hydraulic or other intermediate means.

ALCOHOL. A colorless, volatile, flammable liquid (C_2H_5OH) that is the intoxicating agent in fermented and distilled liquors.

ALLEY. Any highway, having a roadway that does not exceed twenty-five feet in width, that is primarily used for access to the rear or side entrances of abutting property (*see also* HIGHWAY and ROADWAY).

ARREST. The restriction of a person's movement or the detaining in custody by authority of law.

AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE. Any publicly owned vehicle used by police, firefighters, ambulance, or rescue crews for the purpose of responding to a reported emergency.

AXLE. A structure consisting of one or more shafts, spindles, or bearings in the same vertical transverse plane by means of which, in conjunction with wheels mounted on said shafts, spindles, or bearings, a portion of the weight of the vehicle is continuously transmitted to the roadway.

BICYCLE. A mechanical device that may be mounted by a person and propelled exclusively by human power through a belt, chain, or gears and having either two or three wheels in a tandem or tricycle arrangement.

BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL (B.A.). A form of measurement that determines the volume of alcohol in a person's bloodstream by means of chemical analysis.

BUS. A motor vehicle designed to accommodate more than ten seated persons and used or maintained for the transportation of passengers.

BUSINESS DISTRICT. Roadside property of which a preponderant ratio consists of buildings occupied and in use for business purposes.

CAMPER. A structure designed to be mounted upon a motor vehicle and to provide facilities for human habitation or camping purposes.

CENTRIFUGAL SKID. Skidmarks produced by vehicles that are traveling in an arc or curved direction.

CONTACT PATCH. The area of interface between a vehicle tire and the ground surface.

CROSSWALK (MARKED). Any portion of a roadway that is distinctly indicated for pedestrian use by means of lines or markings on the pavement surface.

CROSSWALK (UNMARKED). The prolongation of the boundary lines of a sidewalk at a junction where two roadways intersect at approximately right angles.

CTR. Came to rest.

CTRP. Came to rest position.

CUSTODY. Immediate charge and control exercised by a person in authority.

D-1. Driver number one.

DARKNESS. The time period from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise or any time when visibility is so limited that a person or object cannot be clearly discerned at a distance of 1,000 feet.

DISPATCHER. The base station radio operator of a police or fire department who notifies mobile field units of requests for service and information related to emergencies and acts as a central communications figure.

DOA. Dead on arrival.

DRIVER. The person occupying or mounted upon a vehicle who has actual physical control of the vehicle and the capability to control its movement.

DRIVER'S LICENSE. Permission in writing to drive a specified type of motor vehicle or combination of vehicles, issued by the authority having jurisdiction.

DRUG. Any substance or combination of substances, *other than alcohol*, that, if ingested, would impair the psychomotor functions of a human being.

DRUNK. See INTOXICATION.

DUI. Driving under the influence.

DWI. Driving while intoxicated.

E/O. East of —.

EMERGENCY. A situation that involves an immediate threat to persons or property, or an event still in progress in which injury or damage has occurred.

EMERGENCY VEHICLE. See AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE.

ESSENTIAL PARTS. All integral and body parts of a vehicle, the removal, alteration, or substitution of which would tend to conceal the identity of the vehicle or substantially alter its appearance.

ETA. Estimated time of arrival.

E/WCL. East of the west curbline.

FENDER. A guard over the wheel of a vehicle that serves to re-