

MPD Investigation and Reporting of Minor Traffic Accidents

(Last Updated – February 2012)

Recommendation	Status
<p>MPD should retrain officers on General Order 401.03 so that officers are familiar with its requirements. The training should reinforce the general order's requirements, namely, that officers must notify motorists involved in a minor traffic accident that a Traffic Crash Report is not required, disseminate the PD Form 10-Cs, conduct WALES checks for the motorists, and ensure that accurate information is exchanged for those traffic accidents where the damage is less than \$250. It is important that officers understand that their responsibilities regarding minor traffic accidents are <i>not discretionary</i>. Because officers have not consistently followed the general order's provisions, drivers involved in minor traffic accidents are left empty-handed and puzzled. PCB understands that the PD Form 10-C is currently being revised. However, until the form is issued, officers should distribute the current form so that drivers have a written record of the accident.</p>	<p>Pending. MPD states that it regularly reviews its practices and trainings, and if the General Order is revised, the Department will determine what training to provide its officers.</p>

<p>MPD should revise General Order 401.03 to require MPD officers to ensure the exchange of accurate information for all traffic accidents. Under current MPD policy, officers must ensure that drivers exchange information only if the damage is less than \$250. This leaves a loophole whereby motorists who have property damage of \$250 or above, but do not otherwise meet the requirements needed for a Traffic Crash Report, have no way of ensuring that they are receiving proper information from the other motorist, thus making it challenging for them to file an insurance claim if they have received inaccurate information. In addition, it may be difficult for officers to accurately and consistently approximate vehicle or property damage. This may result in officers prematurely leaving the scene before ensuring that proper information is exchanged. Accordingly, MPD should revise its directive to close this loophole.</p>	<p>Pending. MPD reports that once DDOT finalizes revisions to the PD 10-C, MPD will determine whether the General Order needs revision. MPD will take into consideration PCB's recommendations, including the dollar amount for damage assessments.</p>
<p>MPD and DDOT should consider creating a webpage outlining MPD and DDOT's policies regarding the completion of traffic reports. Widespread public knowledge and understanding among the driving public will foster greater compliance and make more certain that DDOT is receiving the critical information that it is currently lacking. PCB recommends that the two agencies use all available channels to raise awareness of MPD's and DDOT's policies regarding the completion of traffic reports. The two agencies should consider creating a webpage outlining their policies and possibly include a "Frequently Asked Questions" segment on the webpage. This webpage should be accessible from both the MPD and DDOT websites. Printed copies of the webpage should also be made available in police stations and DMV service centers. If the creation of such a webpage proves to be too costly, as an alternative measure, the two agencies could also place information pertaining to accident reporting on existing agency webpages.</p>	<p>Pending. MPD states that while a separate website may not be cost-effective, placing information on the Department's current webpage may be beneficial and will be reviewed when appropriate.</p>

MPD and DDOT should issue the revised PD Form 10-C and make it accessible to motorists involved in traffic accidents. Again, PCB commends MPD and DDOT for its efforts in revising the PD Form 10-C to make it much more useful to motorists and the District. To date, however, the revised PD Form 10-C has not been issued. Because the revised form would be helpful to DDOT in assessing traffic crashes and collisions in the District and would allow for motorists to provide more detailed information to insurance companies, PCB urges the two agencies to complete any changes and issue the form promptly, posting the form online on MPD's and DDOT's websites and making printed copies of the form available in police departments, DMV service centers, and car rental agencies.

Pending. MPD reports that it is awaiting final approval of the PD Form 10-C from DDOT, and anticipates both the new form and policy directive will be implemented soon.