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**69 Denise Dr.  
Burlington NC 27215  
www.alert45.com  
619-578-2459  
Fax 314-754-9964**

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# **"Accident Scene Management"**

Series II Video 3

Program Overview  
Training Guide  
Test Questions and Answers

**ALERT, Inc.**

## "Accident Scene Management"

*Series II Video 3*

Program Overview

Training Guide

### Objectives

1. Describe an overview of the many responsibilities facing an officer responding to an accident.
2. Identify areas of concern for officers responding to an accident.
3. Recognize areas of concern for officers after arriving at an accident scene.
4. Explain the need to prioritize time spent investigating accident scenes.

### Five Important Areas of Accident Scene Management

- I. On Learning of the Accident
- II. On Arrival at the Scene of the Accident
- III. When the Emergency is Under Control
- IV. When Urgent Data-Collection is Complete
- V. When Work at the Scene is Finished

**Think about the following about the transmission of information:**

"Transmission of information in computers is electrical in nature, and consequently very fast ( about 300,000,000 m/sec); in the nervous system the medium for transport is primarily chemical in nature, and by comparison to a computer, information moves through the human brain and nervous system at a snail's pace (about 20-120 m/sec).

This slowness in the nervous system accounts for the relatively slow reaction time of most people, about .5 to .75 seconds, to simple stimuli in which the response requirement is well-learned—reacting to a red traffic signal for example. It also explains why people often emerge from collisions claiming initially that the events happened so quickly that their recollections were just a blur."

"Dr. Patrick J. Robins,  
of the Institute for Police Technology and Management,  
as quoted by J. E. Badger, "Human Error in Memory,"  
**Law & Order**, September 1995: 14.

## I. ON LEARNING OF THE ACCIDENT

### **Three Ways You Will Find Out About an Accident:**

1. The Dispatcher
2. You observe the accident yourself
3. A witness or victim tells you about the accident

### **ASK QUESTIONS FIRST**

*Exactly when and where did accident happen?*

*How serious was the accident?*

*What kind of vehicles were involved?*

*Did you see the accident happen?*

*Where can you or the accident be found?*

### **DECIDE WHETHER TO GO TO THE SCENE**

*Will the scene have been cleared by your arrival time?*

*Is it in the investigator's area?*

*Decide if you should inform or consult headquarters?*

### **FIND OUT THE FOLLOWING (if necessary)**

*Is traffic blocked?*

*Has ambulance, wrecker, or fire apparatus been called?*

### **ARRANGE FOR ANY NEEDED HELP**

*Do you need the electric company, gas company, or public works?*

*Will you need backup from department?*

#### START FOR THE SCENE

*Use your radio to set the two previous traffic considerations into motion.*

*Depending on the severity of accident, drive with caution to reach the scene. Be alert and drive with your and the public's safety in mind.*

#### CHOOSE BEST APPROACH

*Consider the time of day or night, possible traffic considerations, possible route of drivers involved.*

#### BE ALERT FOR VEHICLES LEAVING THE SCENE

*They might be possible witnesses or hit-and-run drivers.*

*Document or mentally record vehicle descriptions or license numbers of any likely looking vehicles.*

*Be aware of any vehicles with damaged areas, oil or gas spilling from them, headlights out when they should be on, bumpers hanging off, and steam rising from leaking radiators.*

#### LOOK FOR DRIVING CONDITIONS

*Be aware of low visibility (rain, snow, fog), view obstructions (trees, embankments, bridges, trains, houses, waterways), and traffic considerations (rush hour traffic, interstate, dirt roads).*

#### NOTE HAZARDS TO APPROACHING TRAFFIC

*Pay attention to blocking wreckage, hazardous materials, downed electrical wires, vehicles on fire.*

## II. ON ARRIVAL AT THE SCENE OF ACCIDENT

### SELECT A PARKING PLACE CAREFULLY

*Park a safe distance from scene, but close enough to get back as quickly as possible if necessary. Position your vehicle to protect you and others at the scene.*

*Will your car block traffic?*

*Try to use your headlights, if possible, to illuminate scene.*

### OBSERVE BYSTANDERS AND OTHERS

*Look at crowd for drivers, possible witnesses, and volunteer helpers with traffic.*

### LOOK FOR FIRE AND ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

*Get these hazards under control immediately.*

*Have spilled gasoline guarded.*

### LOOK FOR TRAFFIC HAZARDS

*Put out flares and or traffic cones on roadway.*

*Ask helper to direct traffic around or away from scene.*

*Keep bystanders out of roadway.*

### LOOK FOR PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Have it guarded until it can be examined, collected, or located by measurements.*

### LOOK FOR CONGESTION

*Direct traffic or have it directed for you.*

#### CARE FOR INJURED

*Start CPR where needed.*

*Stop arterial bleeding.*

*Help injured from vehicles.*

#### ASK FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

*You can use Public Works, Electric Company, Fire Department, or Private Citizens, depending on Departmental Policies.*

#### LOCATE DRIVERS

*Consider the possibility of a hit-and-run accident and need to alert headquarters. Drivers do not always identify themselves at a scene. They may be in shock or disoriented.*

#### LOOK FOR WITNESSES AT SCENE

*Arrange to question and get names and addresses of possible witnesses. Don't be so quick to clear a scene of onlookers, because a valuable witness might be in the crowd who could identify driver, placement of vehicles, or offer important information to your investigation and report.*

#### ARRANGE FOR CLEARING ROADWAY

*Delay removal of vehicles except to aid injured, until positions are clearly marked.*

*You can avoid additional accidents by getting traffic moving.*

*If only a "fender bender" or minor accident, move to clear and safe area to get traffic going and to continue your investigation.*

*Don't move vehicles if accident scene looks like crime scene, vehicular homicide, alcohol-related death, serious injury, moving vehicle would lead to serious injury, sometimes if government or law enforcement vehicle is involved.*

### III. WHEN EMERGENCY IS UNDER CONTROL

#### PRELIMINARY QUESTION DRIVERS

*Determine who was driving each vehicle and what were the drivers' travel plans?*

*Note unpremeditated statements.*

*Look for signs of nervousness, confusion, intoxication.*

#### GATHER CLUES FOR HIT-AND-RUN CASES.

*Note another color of paint in and around impact.*

*Search for and note car parts and tire tracks that do not belong to any vehicles at the scene.*

#### QUESTION OTHER WITNESSES

*Be aware of bystanders that seem overanxious to leave scene.*

*Get signed statements of anyone that could be difficult to reach later, such as out-of-towners.*

#### EXAMINE DRIVERS' CONDITIONS

*Look for signs of intoxication and drugs: glassy eyes, dilated pupils, staggering, slurring speech, inability to focus.*

*Check for beer cans or bottles and drug paraphernalia on or near scene.*

*Question about drinking.*

*Get specimen for chemical test.*

*Question about trip plan for possible fatigue.*



### QUESTION DRIVERS MORE FULLY

*Check license and vehicle registration. Record data to verify address and identity.*

*Get detailed step-by-step account of what driver saw and did. (Remember that drivers might be in anxious conditions. Physical evidence is going to be more reliable than personal accounts.)*

### OBSERVE VEHICLE CONDITION

*Carefully look vehicles over and note lights that are on or off, how much damage to them, the position of switches, gear position, position of car resting.*

*Was the vehicle moved after impact? If so, how far and why?*

### TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEO OF SCENE

*Document on film or video tire marks and location of vehicles.*

### MEASURE

*Locate, mark, and measure marks on road and vehicle final positions.*

### RECORD

*Keep notes on what place to which injured persons and damaged vehicles were or are to be taken.*

### HAVE ROAD CLEARED

*If traffic is obstructed, make a thoroughfare to avoid additional accidents of onlookers.*

## IV. WHEN URGENT DATA-COLLECTION IS COMPLETE

### DECIDE WHETHER PROOF OF VIOLATION IS ENOUGH

*If you have enough proof to support an arrest or traffic violation, make the arrest or issue citation (s).*

### TALK TO DRIVERS

*Tell each driver specifically what reports they must make and then dismiss them.*

### HAVE DRIVERS EXCHANGE INFORMATION

*Tell drivers to exchange names and insurance data.*

### MAKE TEST SKIDS

*If needed and not possible later, now's the time to perform test skids if your department policy permits.*

### COMPLETE EXAMINATION OF VEHICLES.

*Doublecheck VINs, license plate numbers, insurance registrations.*

### MADE ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS

*Look at obstructions, vehicle damage, pavement conditions, control devices, and general overviews of the scene.*

### MEASURE FOR MAP

*If scene is difficult to reach, use your squad car to measure off tenths of miles from main arteries or recognizable mileposts.*

### CLEAN UP LOCATION

*Clear roadway of obstructions or arrange to have it done*

### REPORT TO HEADQUARTERS

## V. WHEN WORK AT SCENE IS FINISHED

### NOTIFICATION

*Now is the time to notify relatives of injured and dead and the owner of vehicle.*

*Call employers and let them know of accident and condition of drivers.*

### INFORM AUTHORITIES

*Call appropriate agencies of conditions needing attention: downed telephone poles, damaged fireplugs, gouged roadways.*

### IDENTIFICATION

*Identify all notes with place, title, date, or time where necessary.*

### COMPLETE FACTUAL DATA

*If not completed, fill out factual data with further detailed explanation.*

### COMPLETE REPORT

*Submit to supervisor for approval and file in appropriate place easy accessibility.*

### PRESENT CASE SUMMARY TO PROSECUTOR.

### STAY SAFE AND STAY ALIVE OUT THERE.

ALERT would like to thank the Wisconsin Department of Justice Law Enforcement Standards Bureau; Sheriff Allan Kehl, Lieutenant Gary Preston, Sergeant Harvey Hedden, of the Kenosha County, Wisconsin, Sheriff's Department, for their professional assistance with the production of this video and training guide.







Alert Publishing Inc.  
69 Denise Drive  
Burlington NC 27215

Phone 619-578-2459  
Fax 314-154-9964  
mikeg@alert45.com

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