



THE POLICE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF NEW YORK

March 4, 2013

Honorable James Vacca
Chairman, Transportation Committee
New York City Council
3040 East Tremont Avenue, Room 104
Bronx, New York 10461

Dear Chairman Vacca:

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding our review of the types of cases that will be investigated by the Highway District Accident Investigation Squad.

As you are aware, the Accident Investigation Squad (AIS) has responded to accidents when there has been a fatality or when there is serious physical injury and the victim is considered likely to die. An exhaustive on-scene examination and the extensive follow-up investigation conducted by AIS personnel is necessary and appropriate in these types of cases. However, after a careful review, it has now been determined that AIS personnel will also be notified to respond when there has been a critical injury or when a Police Department duty captain believes the extent of injuries and/or unique circumstances of a collision warrant such action. Therefore, I expect there to be an increased number of collisions that will be investigated by AIS. I would note that this decision was made possible by the record reduction in traffic fatalities that has occurred in New York City over the last several years. A key consideration of our review was to ensure that this change would not unduly affect the ability of AIS to conduct quality investigations.

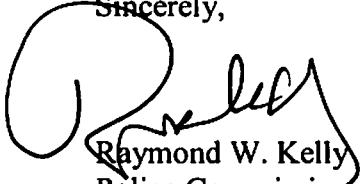
To elaborate further, AIS will now be notified when it has been determined that an individual involved in a collision has sustained a critical injury. This determination will be based upon the on-scene assessment of EMS personnel utilizing existing FDNY EMS guidelines. This step was chosen as there is already a standardized protocol utilized by EMS to assess the severity of a patient's injuries. According to these guidelines, a critically injured patient will be defined as a patient either receiving CPR, in respiratory arrest, or requiring and receiving life sustaining ventilator / circulatory support. The relevant Patrol Guide procedure, which is currently in the final stages of review, has been substantially revised in order to provide our patrol personnel with additional guidance when making a determination as to whether the injuries that have been sustained in a vehicle collision warrant notification to AIS. In addition, this revised procedure also outlines additional layers of supervisory review when making this assessment. The new procedure will require patrol personnel to confer with on-scene FDNY EMS when assessing a patient condition.

We have also taken several additional steps to help support this change in procedure. We are in the process of increasing both the overall uniformed headcount of the Highway District as well as the number of investigators assigned to AIS. There will also be an expanded number of specialized collision investigation training provided to both AIS investigators and Highway District personnel. I am confident that this additional training will result in significant benefits to the Department over time.

In closing, I would also like to inform you of an additional policy change. The Police Department will replace the term "accident" with the term "collision". The term "collision", which is utilized by other jurisdictions throughout the country, provides a more accurate description. In the past, the term "accident" has sometimes given the inaccurate impression or connotation that there is no fault or liability associated with a specific event. The term "collision" will now be utilized in all relevant Department materials, forms and manuals. When this change is formalized, the Accident Investigation Squad will also be re-named the Collision Investigation Squad (CIS). It is important to note, however, that accident forms produced by the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles will remain unchanged.

As always, I appreciate your support of the New York City Police Department.

Sincerely,



Raymond W. Kelly
Police Commissioner