



Seattle Office of
Inspector General

Review of Seattle Police Department Officer-Involved Collisions

October 20, 2025

Introduction

This memorandum provides an overview of Seattle Police Department (SPD) policies for investigation and review of officer-involved collisions (OIC), as well as an exploratory analysis of data from collisions reviewed by SPD's Collision Review Board (CRB). The memo summarizes emerging practices for collision review, reviews SPD policies and data, and compares emerging practices to SPD policy and policies in other jurisdictions.

To conduct this review, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed SPD policies for investigation and review of OICs by the CRB, as well as SPD data related to collisions involving department vehicles. The preliminary findings are summarized below.

Policy Review:

- SPD CRB policy lacks a disciplinary classification system for preventable collisions; and
- SPD does not retain records of re-training and/or disciplinary dispositions for OICs.

Data Review:

- Most accidents involving SPD officers occurred during routine or normal driving conditions; and
- Collisions involving SPD officers are mainly caused by misjudging distance, unsafe backing, failure to yield, and following too closely.

IACP Collision Review Board Model Policy

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) provides guidance for investigation and review of collisions involving department vehicles. IACP recommends agencies implement a CRB to evaluate accidents, identify contributing causes, and make recommendations to command personnel to prevent future incidents. The following section details IACP recommendations regarding collision reporting and investigation, structure and responsibilities of the CRB, as well as Board proceedings and disciplinary processes.

Reporting & Initial Investigation

IACP recommends agencies implement detailed procedures to ensure consistency in documentation and initial investigation of collisions. Officers should immediately report incidents to their agency's communications center to request a patrol supervisor and watch commander respond to the scene. The patrol supervisor should be primarily responsible for investigation of the incident and thus should be trained in traffic investigation. Involved officers, investigators, and supervisors must complete required reports within 24 hours and must include the following information:

1. Details of the crash, including all circumstances and factors that may have contributed to the accident (i.e., human factors, condition of involved vehicles, weather and traffic conditions).
2. The names, addresses, and insurance information of all drivers involved in the crash.
3. The names and addresses of all passengers in the vehicles involved, and of any



pedestrians or property owners affected by the incident.

4. Names, addresses, and statements of any other witnesses to the incident.
5. Details of any personal injuries or property damage suffered.
6. A statement as to whether the accident was “preventable” or “nonpreventable,” as defined by department policy.
7. Recommendations to help avoid similar incidents in the future.

CRB Structure and Process

CRBs act as a risk management tool for departments to evaluate collisions, identify causes, and make recommendations to help prevent future incidents. The CRB conducts administrative review and serves in an advisory capacity. As such, IACP cautions Boards not to make determinations regarding fault or potential discipline; the Board instead reports findings to the chain of command (COC) and chief executive.

Structure

Per IACP, the CRB should be an intra-departmental Board consisting of three to five voting members and chaired by a command-level officer or senior supervisor. The Chair is responsible for determining operating procedures, including selection and rotation of Board members.

The Board should review all department-involved collisions, no matter how minor, to maintain comprehensive records for officers and relevant information for potential future lawsuits.¹ Board meetings should occur as soon as possible following a collision to ensure any lessons learned are disseminated in a timely manner.

Administrative Review

Boards review incidents to identify causes and make recommendations. The Board considers incident reports written by officers, investigators, and supervisors, as well as previous incidents and collision details. The CRB also has authority to call department personnel to testify or provide additional information.

Board findings and recommendations are made by a majority vote. Collisions may be found to be preventable or nonpreventable, defined by IACP as the following:

- Preventable: IACP defines a collision as preventable if the vehicle operator and/or other departmental personnel involved (1) failed to exercise reasonable caution to prevent the crash from occurring, or (2) failed to observe applicable departmental policies, procedures, or training, including the misuse of, or failure to use, appropriate defensive driving tactics.
- Nonpreventable: IACP classifies a collision as nonpreventable when the Board concludes the vehicle operator and/or other departmental personnel involved (1) exercised reasonable caution to prevent the crash from occurring, and (2) observed applicable departmental policies, procedures, and training, including the use of appropriate defensive driving tactics.

¹ IACP cautions that crash investigation and review may impact civil litigation against the department and recommends including a legal advisor on the CRB as either an observer or voting member.

Outcomes

IACP identifies the following potential CRB recommendations:

- Retraining for the vehicle driver.
- Review and/or modification of:
 - Departmental driver training;
 - Departmental vehicles and other equipment; and
 - Departmental policies and procedures.
- Evaluation of officers involved in the incident for intoxicants, vision defects, stress-related problems, or other conditions affecting fitness for duty.

Findings and recommendations should be compiled in a preliminary report sent to the COC. The IACP model policy provides for an appeal process: Officers may submit appeals within ten days of the report's publishing due to alleged errors or oversights in the initial investigation or Board review, additional information not previously considered by the Board, or any other aspects of the review. CRB preliminary reports can be modified based on COC review or the outcome of an appeal hearing. The chief executive makes final determinations regarding disciplinary action, retraining, or modification to departmental trainings, policies, or procedures upon review of the CRB report.

SPD Collision Review

OIG reviewed SPD policies for investigation and review of OICs by the CRB, as well as SPD data related to collisions involving department vehicles.

SPD Policy

OIG reviewed SPD policies for investigation and review of OICs by the CRB, as well as SPD data related to collisions involving department vehicles.

SPD policy 13.010-POL requires sworn personnel from traffic or patrol sections to investigate all collisions involving department vehicles. If necessary, a sergeant from the Traffic Collision Investigation Squad (TCIS) may be called to conduct a more thorough investigation. Involved officers and their sergeants are required to complete reports documenting the incident and any injuries or damages. All reports are reviewed by the involved officer's chain of command (COC), with each level of command recommending a classification of "preventable" or "nonpreventable" before the precinct captain forwards the incident to the CRB for further review.²

The CRB reviews all collisions involving department vehicles. The Board consists of four voting members and a Board Chair. Incident review includes assessment of the officer's previous preventable collisions and collisions involving other department members. The Board makes classification recommendations to the involved officer's bureau chief for final determination. For preventable collisions, the CRB Chair notifies the involved officer, their precinct captain, and their bureau chief with the Board's findings. The chief of police makes final determinations regarding re-training and discipline. Officers may appeal findings and disciplinary determinations within 15 days of notification.

² SPD policy 13.010-POL does not currently provide definitions for preventable and nonpreventable incidents.

SPD Collision Review Board

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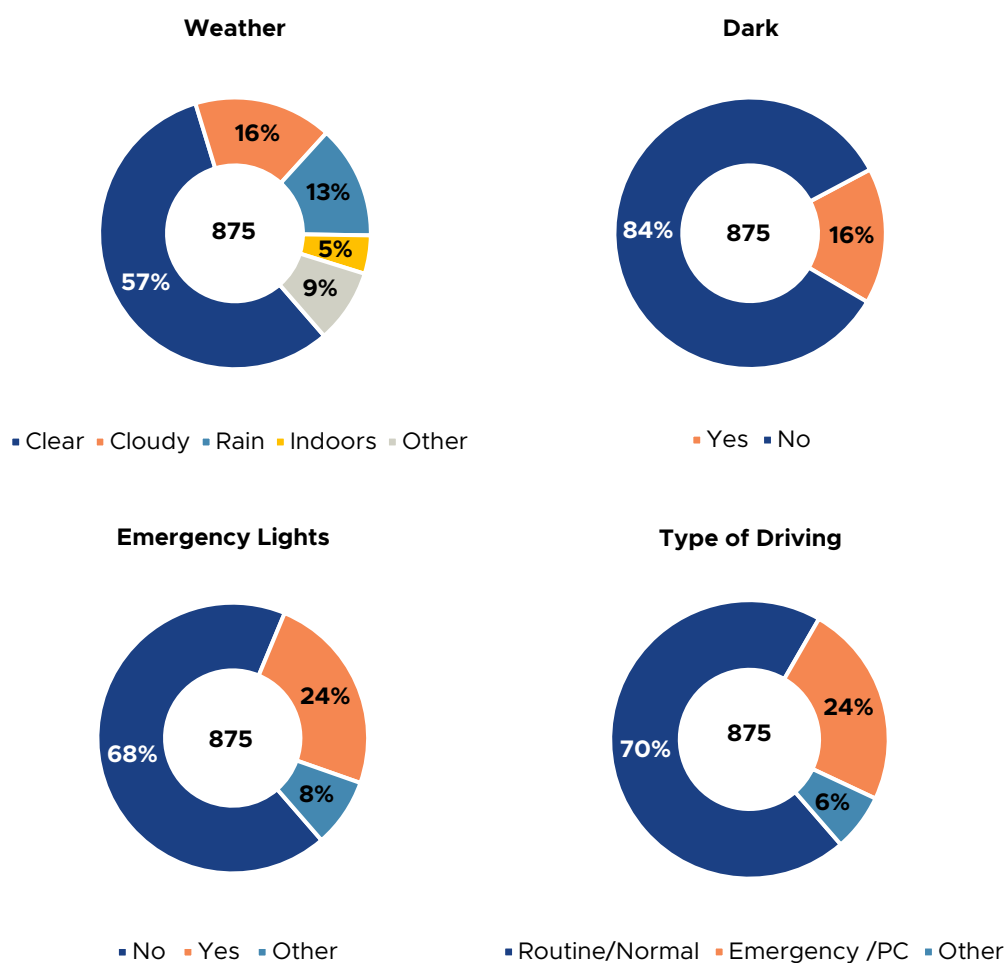
Table 1 tabulates the number of incidents and officers involved in collisions by year. Between 2019 and 2023, the CRB reviewed a yearly average of 176 incidents involving 184 officers. 2019 had the highest number of incidents and officers involved, followed by 2021, and 2023.

Table 1. Number of Incidents and Officers Involved by Year					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Incidents	234 (152)	148 (96)	193 (136)	119 (81)	185 (109)
Officers	234 (124)	154 (86)	206 (124)	126 (63)	201 (97)

Source: Internal Case Management System. Totals based on closed incidents.
Incidents: number of preventable cases in parenthesis.
Officers: number of officers at fault in parenthesis.

Most of these accidents occurred during routine or normal driving conditions (70%), without emergency lights (68%), in clear (57%) or cloudy (16%) weather, and during daylight (84%). The leading factors in these collisions were misjudging distance, unsafe backing, failure to yield, and following too closely.

Figure 1. OIC: Driving Conditions



Source: Data based on OIC reports' narratives. Note: PC, Priority Call.

During the review period, the CRB determined 66% of collisions were preventable, with 2021 having the highest rate of preventable collisions at 71%. Of the preventable incidents, 55% of involved officers were found at fault. Consistent with 2021's highest record of preventable collisions, the year also had the highest percentage of at-fault officers.



Comparison to IACP Model Policy

Jurisdictional Comparison to IACP Model Policy

OIG conducted an informal survey of crash review policies and procedures in other departments to compare with the IACP model policy. Twenty department policy manuals were reviewed, varying widely in level of detail.³ OIG sought out jurisdictions that generally adhered to IACP guidelines, highlighting the following six for further review:

- Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Police Department (BART-PD)⁴
- Columbus, Ohio Police Department (CPD)⁵
- Denver Police Department (DPD)⁶
- King County Sherriff's Office (KCSO)⁷
- Metropolitan DC Police Department (MPD)⁸
- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Police Department (OKCPD)⁹

Table 2 below shows how each jurisdiction adheres to the elements recommended in the IACP model policy. See Appendix C for a comprehensive review of other jurisdictions.

3 See Appendix B for the list of all jurisdictions reviewed.

4 BART Police Department [502 – Traffic Collision Involving Department Personnel](#).

5 Columbus Police Department Policy [5.04 Traffic Crashes Involving Division Personnel and Vehicles](#); [7.04 Boards, Committees, and Teams](#); [9.10 Fleet Safety Committee Manual](#).

6 Denver Police Department Policy [105.05 Use of Force Review Board](#); [203.07 Crashes Involving Police Equipment and Personnel](#).

7 King County Sheriff's Office Policy [9.0200 - Sheriff's Office Vehicles, Reviews Involving](#).

8 Metropolitan DC Police Department General Order [SPT 401-02 Crash Review Board](#).

9 Oklahoma City Police Department Policy [5-404 Department-Utilized Vehicle Collisions](#).

Table 2. IACP Model Policy Jurisdictional Comparison

<i>IACP Element</i>	Seattle Police Department	BART Police Department	Columbus Police Department	Denver Police Department	King County Sheriff's Office	Metropolitan DC Police Department	Oklahoma City Police Department
<i>Driver's Training</i>							
<i>Recruit Training</i>	<i>NO (WSCJTC BLEA)</i>	Y (POST)	Y (POST)	Y (POST)	<i>NO (WSCJTC BLEA)</i>	Y (Dept.)	Y (POST)
<i>Reporting & Investigation</i>							
<i>Officer Report</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Supervisor & Traffic Section Inv.</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Supervisor Report</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Timeline Requirements</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	<i>NO</i>
<i>Review Board Structure</i>							
<i>Collision-Specific Review Board</i>	Y - Collision Review Board	Y - Collision Review Board	Y - Collision Review Board	<i>NO - Tactics Review Board</i>	Y - Collision Review Board	Y - Collision Review Board	Y - Collision Review Board
<i>All Collisions Reviewed</i>	Y	Y	Y	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	<i>NO</i>
<i>Membership & Voting</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Pursuit-Related Collisions Reviewed</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Administrative Review</i>							
<i>Definitions</i>	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Identified Causes</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	Y	<i>NO</i>	Y	<i>NO</i>	<i>Off-road damage only</i>
<i>Classification Recs.</i>	Y	<i>NO - Final determinations</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Recs. for Future</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>Outcomes</i>							
<i>Disciplinary Recs to COC</i>	Y	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	<i>NO</i>
<i>Disciplinary Structure</i>	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Retraining</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Policy/Procedure Change</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>Training Change</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	Y	Y	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>Equipment Change</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>Appeal Process</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

SPD Comparison to IACP Model Policy

As described above, SPD policy 13.010-POL requires officers, supervisors, and on-scene investigators to document all OICs inside the City as recommended by IACP. Investigating supervisors must include details about the involved parties and a complete description of the circumstances surrounding the collision in incident reports. The policy does not require supervisors to make classification recommendations per IACP guidance, nor does it include timeline requirements for initial reporting and investigation.

SPD policy 13.015-POL does not include definitions of preventable and non-preventable collisions, despite the requirement that each level of the review COC make recommendations regarding preventability. Per the policy, administrative review by the CRB does not cover potential causes of collisions or recommendations to prevent them in the future. Similarly, the Board is not required to identify necessary changes to department policy, training, or equipment as recommended by IACP. While general disciplinary processes are governed by collective bargaining agreements with the City, the inclusion of a disciplinary structure specific to OICs would allow for improved consistency and tracking of collision-related discipline.

Comparison to IACP Model Policy

Between 2019 and 2023, the City of Seattle paid over \$667,000 (20.2%) in settlements for claims related to preventable collisions.¹⁰ This cost, in addition to potential danger to community members and officers, underscores the importance of departmental review of and improvement upon collision review processes.

After review of SPD processes and comparison to IACP guidance and policies in other jurisdictions, OIG identified several potential improvements to SPD collision review policies and practices. These are listed by theme below.

Training

- Provide non-emergency vehicle operation training to recruits, in addition to emergency driving training.¹¹

Reporting & Initial Investigation

- Update SPD 13.010-POL to require department personnel involved in a crash to locate and secure witnesses for the investigating officer. Employees may identify witnesses but should not conduct a crash investigation review.
- Expand supervisor reporting requirements to include classification recommendations.
- TCIS should advise the involved officer's supervisor if the initial investigation indicates the collision may be preventable in accordance with procedures for post-crash testing.
- Implement procedures to require mandatory chemical testing of on-duty, member-involved traffic crashes in certain instances.¹²

¹⁰ Note: 229 SPD fleet claims were filed for losses between 2019 and 2023. OIG identified OIC reports for 57.6% (133) of those claims. The City paid \$667,531.11 for those claims, which is 20.2% of \$3,310,739.9 for all SPD claims that occurred and were reported between 2019 and 2023. Data last accessed Q4, 2024.

¹¹ SPD recruits receive Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) training from the WSCJTC. The BLEA curriculum does not provide non-emergency driving training to new officers.

¹² San Francisco Police Department Policy [DG 2.06.04](#) requires supervisors to "determine if the involved member (driver) must respond to a chemical screening test."

Collision Review Board

- Update SPD 13.015-POL to define preventable and nonpreventable collisions, at-fault, and any other necessary classification terms.
- Expand the stated purpose of the CRB to identify patterns and trends suggesting necessary changes to department policy, training, and equipment.
- Modify membership requirements to include an emergency vehicle operator course (EVOC) instructor at CRB meetings as a non-voting observer.
- Require CRB members to identify potential causes of collisions (including mitigating and aggravating factors) and recommendations to prevent similar incidents in the future.
- Grant the CRB Chair authority to make referrals to OPA for potential policy violations.
- Document and publish final determinations by the Chief of Police regarding classification and imposed discipline.

Outcomes

- Specify all possible outcomes of the administrative collision investigation (i.e., officer retraining, officer discipline, changes to department policy, training, equipment).
- Maintain records of remedial driving classes indicating the content of the training.
- Consider use of a discipline matrix to specify circumstances for re-training and disciplinary action to ensure consistent application across incidents.



Appendix A. Descriptive Statistics for Collisions and Payments

Table 3. Characteristics of Collisions Reviewed by CRB

	Number	Percentage
Weather		
Clear	496	57%
Cloudy	144	16%
Rain	118	13%
Indoors	40	5%
Other	77	9%
Dark		
Yes	142	16%
No	733	84%
Emergency Lights		
No	592	68%
Yes	211	24%
Other	72	8%
Type of Driving		
Routine/Normal	610	70%
Emergency/Priority Call	207	24%
Other	58	7%

Source: Internal Case Management System.

Table 4. Claims Settled Related to Officers Involved in Collisions

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Amount	\$357,354.73	\$97,165.78	\$103,806.82	\$36,894.24	\$72,309.54

Source: Internal Case Management System and Finance and Administrative Services Internal Database. Payments based on claimants' loss year.

Appendix B. Jurisdictions Reviewed

- Austin Police Department
- Baltimore Police Department
- Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Police Department
- Bellevue Police Department
- Berkeley Police Department
- Boston Police Department
- Chicago Police Department
- Columbus Police Department
- DC Metro Police Department
- Denver Police Department
- Indianapolis Police Department
- King County Sheriff's Office
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Minneapolis Police Department
- Oklahoma City Police Department
- Philadelphia Police Department
- Portland Police Department
- San Francisco Police Department
- San Jose Police Department
- Tacoma Police Department



Appendix C. Jurisdictional Comparison to IACP Model Policy

Recruit Training

While non-emergency driving training is not specified by IACP, five of the six agencies reviewed offer driving instruction to recruits through state Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) training¹³ or department-specific training.¹⁴ KCSO is the only agency reviewed that does not provide basic driver's training for new employees. KCSO officers receive Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) training provided by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC).¹⁵ The BLEA curriculum, required for all new officers in the state, does not include instruction related to basic driving skills but does offer trainings for emergency and pursuit driving.

Reporting and Investigation

Reporting and investigation procedures were similar across the agencies reviewed. All six agencies require involved officers to complete incident reports, as well as on-scene investigation and reports by the officer's supervisor or a traffic section detective. None of the policies reviewed provided specific reporting metrics as outlined in the model policy. In line with IACP guidance, DPD and KCSO policies include timeline requirements for investigation and reporting.

Review Board

Structure

All six agencies define potential classification determinations in policy. Classification determinations include "preventable" and "nonpreventable" in all policies per IACP guidance. KCSO provides definitions for collisions, damage, eluding and pursuit, and legal intervention to further specify incident classification. OKCDP defines reasonableness and recklessness within its disciplinary structure.

Excluding DPD, all the agencies have specific review boards for OICs.¹⁶ DPD policy provides for a department-wide Tactics Review Board to review all incidents involving possible deviations from department policy or training, including pursuits and OICs. The review Board policy sets basic membership and voting requirements and operating procedures as recommended by IACP.

IACP notes the importance of agencies reviewing all OICs. Policy requires review of all OICs for BART-PD, CPC, MPD, and KCSO. KCSO maintains a precinct-level Driving Review Board (DRB) to provide in-depth post-incident review, as well as an agency-level DRB to review incidents referred to the Board by the involved officer's COC and those involving injuries, damages over \$5,000, and pursuit driving. DPD's Tactics Review Board reviews incidents referred due to potential policy violations identified by the COC. OKCPD's Collision Review Board reviews incidents referred by a Division Commander if further review is required to determine appropriate classification.

¹³ BART-PD, CPD, DCMPD and OKCPD.

¹⁴ DPD.

¹⁵ [Basic Law Enforcement Academy | Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission](#).

¹⁶ BART-PD: Collision Review Board. CPD: Fleet Safety Committee. MPD: Crash Review Board. KCSO: Driving Review Board. OKCPD: Collision Review Board.

Administrative Review

In line with IACP guidance, each of the policies reviewed provide definitions for key terms and classifications, including “preventable” and “non-preventable” classifications. IACP also recommends review boards be charged with 1) providing classification recommendations to the involved officer’s COC, 2) identifying the causes of collisions, and 3) issuing recommendations to reduce future incidents.

Five of the six agencies require review boards to make classification recommendations to the officer’s COC. BART-PD’s Collision Review Board makes final classification determinations in lieu of COC review. Only CPD’s Fleet Safety Committee and KCSO DRBs are required to identify potential causes for all OICs (i.e., roadway conditions, vehicle conditions, human factors); OKCPD’s Collision Review Board identifies causes only for incidents involving off-roadway damage. None of the agencies reviewed require boards to identify recommendations for prevention of future incidents.

Outcomes

The IACP model policy outlines potential outcomes of review Board deliberations, recommending boards provide disciplinary and retraining recommendations to the officer’s COC, as well as recommendations to the agency regarding necessary modifications to policy, procedures, trainings, and equipment.

Each of the agencies reviewed provides a disciplinary structure for officers involved in preventable collisions. The structures varied in specifics, but outlined disciplinary outcomes based on the officer’s previous driving records and other recorded misconduct. Excluding BART-PD and OKCPD, disciplinary recommendations are made by the Board to the officer’s COC. All six agencies provide retraining for officers involved in preventable collisions. Of the agencies reviewed, only KCSO DRB makes recommendations regarding agency-wide changes to policies, procedures, and trainings. DPD’s Tactics Review Board determines potential changes to policies and procedures upon completion of the Conduct Review Board’s evaluation. In line with IACP guidance, all jurisdictions reviewed provide officers the opportunity to appeal classification and disciplinary findings.