



SDOT Policy Memorandum

To: Venu Nemani, P.E., Chief Transportation Safety Officer/City Traffic Engineer

From: David Burgess, Vision Zero Planning Lead 
David Burgess (05/18/2026 12:15:51 PDT)

Date: May 18, 2026

Subject: Programmatic Fatal Crash Response Policy

Background and Purpose

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) uses a multi-pronged approach to enhance street safety by investing in locations with recurring crash patterns and proactively implementing safety measures citywide. Reviewing locations with a recent recorded fatal crash provides another opportunity to evaluate and enhance safety. The purpose of this policy is to formalize a multiphase process to programmatically review, and where appropriate, develop spot design changes.

Objective

The objective of the programmatic fatal crash review and response process is to identify and, where appropriate, implement spot design changes at fatal crash locations. This is achieved by:

1. Developing a formal procedure for documenting site conditions and traffic control at locations with recorded fatal crashes.
2. Formalizing a process for identifying and remediating near-term maintenance and repair needs.
3. Establishing a regular cadence for reviewing fatal crash locations and constructing spot design changes, where appropriate.

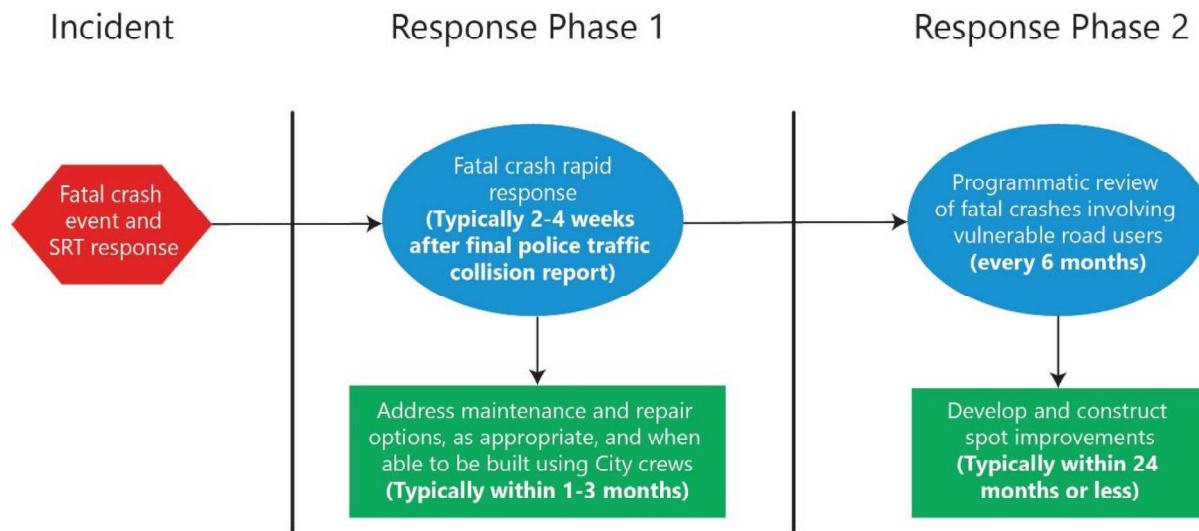
Programmatic Fatal Crash Response Process

The response to fatal crashes on Seattle's streets is divided into two phases based on the expected timelines to review crash details, identify and address maintenance issues, and where appropriate, develop and construct spot changes.

1. The first phase of the response will apply to any crash that resulted in one or more lives being lost and does not meet the below exemption criteria:
 - Involved a medical emergency,
 - Involved deliberate intent,
 - Involved a police pursuit,
 - Occurred outside of SDOT-managed rights-of-way (e.g., limited access highways, private property, etc.),
 - Recorded a delayed fatality 30 days or more after the crash.¹
2. The second phase of the response will programmatically review every six months the crashes captured in phase 1 which involve a vulnerable traveler (people walking, rolling, biking, using micromobility devices, or riding motorcycles or mopeds).

¹ These exemption criteria are based on the reporting guidelines established in [the Washington State Department of Transportation's Safety Analysis Guide](#) and [the ANSI Manual on Classification of Motor Traffic Vehicle Crashes \(ANSI D.16-2017\)](#).

Process Overview



Phase 1: Fatal Crash Rapid Response

Following the occurrence of a fatal crash that does not meet the exemption criteria above, SDOT staff will conduct an initial review. This will consist of documenting existing site conditions and traffic control and understanding contributing circumstances. This review is completed after the Seattle Police Department (SPD) transmits the police traffic collision report (PTCR) to SDOT.

Additionally, as part of the initial review, SDOT staff will complete the applicable fatal crash review form (see Attachment A) and identify any applicable maintenance and/or repair items that have not already been addressed by first responders or SDOT personnel. The draft form will be reviewed and finalized by the City Traffic Engineer and Chief Safety Officer. The goal is to complete this initial review within two to four weeks of receiving the PTCR and complete remediation or maintenance activities within 90 days thereafter. The timing of maintenance/remediation activities will be prioritized for implementation within constraints such as weather conditions, etc.

Phase 2: Semi-Annual Programmatic Review of Fatal Crashes Involving Vulnerable Road Users

SDOT staff will conduct a semi-annual programmatic review of fatal crashes involving vulnerable travelers. This programmatic review process will involve:

1. Assembling a list of fatal crash locations from the previous six months involving vulnerable travelers.
2. Compiling and reviewing the five-year crash history of each identified location. This also includes reviewing the outcomes from the Phase 1 fatal crash review.
3. Collecting additional traffic, programmatic, or operational data, as needed, including previous studies conducted at the fatal crash location.
4. Evaluating collected data, identifying potential safety measures, incorporating input from subject matter experts on feasibility and constructability, and documenting potential spot changes as appropriate. These may range from low-cost projects involving signs, markings, and signal upgrades to minor geometric changes.

The list of potential spot design changes will be used to inform Vision Zero program investments, as well as the department's maintenance, repair, and project delivery work plans, where appropriate, with leadership from the Vision Zero team. Shorter-term and smaller projects will be delivered by City crews, while larger projects will require more extensive planning, design, and contractor delivery. The goal is to conduct the Phase 2 review every six months (typically in March and September of each year) and complete any planned work within 24 months after the review, subject to available funding.

Disclaimer

While this process is intended to provide a programmatic framework for SDOT's Vision Zero Program to review locations that have recorded fatal crashes, it is not expected that every location will warrant design changes or have an engineering improvement advanced through this process. This process is also not intended to determine the underlying causes of a fatal crash. SDOT intends to utilize this process to programmatically evaluate fatal crash locations and apply best engineering judgment to determine whether changes are warranted and appropriate.

Approvals



[Matt Beaulieu \(05/18/2026 14:10:29 PDT\)](#)

Matt Beaulieu, P.E., Transportation Operations
Review & Operations Manager

05/18/2026

Date



Venu Nemani, P.E., Transportation Operations
Chief Transportation Safety Officer/City Traffic Engineer

05/18/2026

Date



Attachment A. Fatal Crash Form Template

Fatal Crash Location Review

Review by: Name
Fatal Notification: XX/XX/2026
Site Investigation: XX/XX/2026
Review Completed: XX/XX/2026

Collision Report Number: XXXXXXX
Location: Name Ave and Name St
Date/Time of Crash: XX/XX/2026, XX:XX AM/PM
Roadway: [Roadway conditions listed on PTCR]
Weather: [Weather conditions listed on PTCR]
Lighting: [Lighting conditions listed on PTCR]

Crash Description

Per the police report,

[1-3 sentences]

Area Description

[Street name] is a [two-way/one-way], [#-lane] [roadway classification] operating in the [N-S/E-W] direction. It is composed of [#] general purpose lanes in each direction. The posted speed limit is [##mph].

Markings

Per the field check performed on XX/XX/2026, [Note if markings are present, visible, and in what condition].

Signs

Per the field check performed on XX/XX/2026, [Note if signs are present, visible, and in what condition].

Signal or Beacon (if applicable)

Lighting (if crash occurred in non-daylight hours)

Per the field check performed on XX/XX/2026, [Collect data missing from lighting model. See 2025 Fatal Review Instructions for details.]

Photos

Photos taken on XX/XX/2026 are attached and may be found at:

Last Updated: 5/13/2026