

§2251. Accident reports

1. Definition. As used in this section, "reportable accident" means an accident on a public way or a place where public traffic may reasonably be anticipated, resulting in bodily injury or death to a person or apparent property damage of \$2,000 or more. Apparent property damage under this subsection must be based upon the market value of the necessary repairs and may not be limited to the current value of the vehicle or property.

[PL 2023, c. 27, §1 (AMD).]

2. Report required. A reportable accident must be reported immediately by the quickest means of communication to a state police officer, or to the nearest state police field office, or to the sheriff's office, or to a deputy sheriff, within the county in which the accident occurred, or to the office of the police department, or to an officer, of the municipality in which the accident occurred. The accident must be reported by:

A. The operator of an involved vehicle; [PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

B. A person acting for the operator; or [PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

C. If the operator is unknown, the owner of an involved vehicle having knowledge of the accident. [PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

[RR 1995, c. 2, §71 (COR).]

3. Form. The Chief of the State Police:

A. Shall prepare and supply forms and approve the format for electronic submission for reports that require sufficiently detailed information to disclose the cause, conditions, persons and vehicles involved, including information to permit the Secretary of State to determine whether the requirement for proof of financial responsibility is inapplicable; [PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. A, §35 (RPR).]

B. Shall receive, tabulate and analyze accident reports; [PL 2003, c. 434, §23 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

B-1. Shall send all accident reports to the Secretary of State; and [PL 2003, c. 434, §23 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

C. May publish statistical information on the number, cause and location of accidents. [PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

[PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. A, §35 (AMD).]

4. Investigation. A law enforcement officer who investigates a reportable accident shall:

A. Interview participants and witnesses; and [PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

B. Within 5 days from the time of notification of the accident, transmit an electronic report or the original written report containing all available information to the Chief of the State Police. [PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. A, §36 (RPR).]

Every reported accident must be promptly investigated.

If the accident results in serious bodily injury or death of any person, the investigation must be conducted by an officer who has met the training standards of a full-time law enforcement officer. A law enforcement officer who investigates an accident involving a bus or truck with a gross vehicle weight rating or a registered weight in excess of 10,000 pounds that results in the death of any person shall request a certified accident reconstructionist and the Bureau of State Police Commercial Vehicle

Enforcement Unit to assist in the investigation of the accident. The Attorney General shall designate an assistant attorney general familiar with federal commercial vehicle laws and regulations to serve as a resource to any district attorney who initiates a prosecution arising from an accident involving a bus or truck with a gross vehicle weight rating or a registered weight in excess of 10,000 pounds that results in the death of any person.

[PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. A, §36 (AMD).]

5. Forty-eight-hour report.

[PL 2003, c. 434, §25 (RP); PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

6. Financial responsibility information. The owner or operator of a vehicle involved in an accident shall furnish additional relevant information as the Secretary of State requires to determine the applicability of the requirement of proof of financial responsibility.

The Secretary of State may rely on the accuracy of the information until there is reason to believe that the information is erroneous.

[PL 2003, c. 434, §26 (RPR); PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

7. Report information. An accident report made by an investigating officer or a report made by an operator as required by subsection 2 is for the purposes of statistical analysis and accident prevention.

A report or statement contained in the accident report, or a report as required by subsection 2, a statement made or testimony taken at a hearing before the Secretary of State held under section 2483, or a decision made as a result of that report, statement or testimony may not be admitted in evidence in any trial, civil or criminal, arising out of the accident.

A report may be admissible in evidence solely to prove compliance with this section.

Notwithstanding subsection 7-A, the Chief of the State Police may disclose the date, time and location of the accident and the names and addresses of operators, owners, injured persons, witnesses and the investigating officer. On written request, the chief may furnish a photocopy of the investigating officer's report at the expense of the person making the request. The cost of furnishing a copy of the report is not subject to the limitations of Title 1, section 408-A.

[PL 2011, c. 662, §18 (AMD).]

7-A. Accident report database; public dissemination of accident report data. Data contained in an accident report database maintained, administered or contributed to by the Department of Public Safety, Bureau of State Police must be treated as follows.

A. For purposes of this subsection, the following terms have the following meanings.

- (1) "Data" means information existing in an electronic medium and contained in an accident report database.
- (2) "Nonpersonally identifying accident report data" means any data in an accident report that are not personally identifying accident report data.
- (3) "Personally identifying accident report data" means:
 - (a) An individual's name, residential and post office box mailing address, social security number, date of birth and driver's license number;
 - (b) A vehicle registration plate number;
 - (c) An insurance policy number;
 - (d) Information contained in any free text data field of an accident report; and
 - (e) Any other information contained in a data field of an accident report that may be used to identify a person. [PL 2011, c. 654, §8 (AMD).]

B. Except as provided in paragraph B-1 and Title 16, section 805-A, subsection 1, paragraph F, the Department of Public Safety, Bureau of State Police may not publicly disseminate personally identifying accident report data that are contained in an accident report database maintained, administered or contributed to by the Bureau of State Police. Such data are not public records for the purposes of Title 1, chapter 13. [PL 2023, c. 235, §9 (AMD).]

B-1. The Department of Public Safety, Bureau of State Police may disseminate a vehicle registration plate number contained in an accident report database maintained, administered or contributed to by the Bureau of State Police to a person only if that person provides the Bureau of State Police an affidavit stating that the person will not:

- (1) Use a vehicle registration plate number to identify or contact a person; or
- (2) Disseminate a vehicle registration plate number to another person. [PL 2011, c. 654, §8 (NEW).]

C. The Department of Public Safety, Bureau of State Police may publicly disseminate nonpersonally identifying accident report data that are contained in an accident report database maintained, administered or contributed to by the Bureau of State Police. The cost of furnishing a copy of such data is not subject to the limitations of Title 1, section 408-A. [PL 2011, c. 662, §19 (AMD).]

[PL 2023, c. 235, §9 (AMD).]

8. Violation. A person commits a Class E crime if that person:

A. Is required to make an oral or written report and knowingly fails to do so within the time required; [PL 2001, c. 360, §15 (AMD).]

B. Is an operator involved in a reportable accident and knowingly fails to give a correct name and address when requested by an officer at the scene; [PL 2011, c. 654, §9 (AMD).]

C. Is the operator involved in a reportable accident or the owner of a vehicle involved in a reportable accident and knowingly fails to produce the vehicle or, if the vehicle is operational, return it to the scene when requested by the investigating officer; or [PL 2011, c. 654, §9 (AMD).]

D. Obtains a vehicle registration plate number pursuant to subsection 7-A, paragraph B-1 and knowingly uses that vehicle registration plate number to identify or contact a person or knowingly disseminates that vehicle registration plate number to another person. [PL 2011, c. 654, §9 (NEW).]

[PL 2011, c. 654, §9 (AMD).]

9. Prima facie evidence. The absence of notice to a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction where the accident occurred is prima facie evidence of failure to report an accident.

[PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

10. Suspension. The Secretary of State may suspend or revoke the motor vehicle driver's license and certificate of registration of a person who is required to make a report and fails to do so or who fails to provide the information required by the Secretary of State.

[PL 2003, c. 434, §28 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

11. Exemption. The operator of a snowmobile or an all-terrain vehicle as defined by Title 12, section 13001, unless the all-terrain vehicle is registered for highway use by the Secretary of State under this Title, is exempt from the reporting requirements of subsection 2.

[PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF); PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. B, §10 (RPR); PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. B, §11 (AFF).]

12. Vulnerable users. A law enforcement officer who investigates a reportable accident involving a vulnerable user or an incident resulting in bodily injury or death to a vulnerable user and who has probable cause to believe that a traffic infraction, civil violation or criminal violation is connected to

that accident or incident shall inform a district attorney of relevant jurisdiction about the investigation within 5 days of initiating the investigation. The law enforcement officer shall submit a final accident report to that district attorney including any evidence relevant to the potential prosecution of an alleged criminal violation or civil violation resulting from the investigation as soon as is practicable and no later than 60 days after the accident or incident. A law enforcement officer may submit any additional evidence as soon as it becomes available after the submission of the final accident report. Nothing in this subsection precludes evidence submitted later than 60 days after the accident or incident from being used in the prosecution of a criminal violation or civil violation. Failure of a law enforcement officer to inform a district attorney in accordance with this subsection does not affect any authority of a district attorney to take any action or preclude a private citizen from notifying a district attorney about an accident or incident.

[PL 2021, c. 379, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1993, c. 683, §A2 (NEW). PL 1993, c. 683, §B5 (AFF). RR 1995, c. 2, §71 (COR). PL 1997, c. 172, §1 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 178, §3 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 61, §1 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 360, §15 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 340, §§9,10 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 414, §B46 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 434, §§23-28 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 688, §§A35,36 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 688, §B10 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 688, §B11 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 709, §4 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 348, §23 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 390, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 420, Pt. K, §1 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 420, Pt. K, §2 (AFF). PL 2011, c. 654, §§8, 9 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 662, §§18, 19 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 267, Pt. B, §24 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 379, §1 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 27, §1 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 235, §9 (AMD).

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