
Aircraft Accidents

427.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide department members with guidelines for handling aircraft accidents.

This policy does not supersede, and is supplementary to, applicable portions of the Crime and Disaster Scene Integrity, Emergency Management Plan and Hazardous Material Response policies.

427.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Aircraft - Any fixed wing aircraft, rotorcraft, balloon, blimp/dirigible or glider that is capable of carrying a person or any unmanned aerial vehicle other than those intended for non-commercial recreational use.

427.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Irvine Police Department to provide an appropriate emergency response to aircraft accidents. This includes emergency medical care and scene management.

427.3 ARRIVAL AT SCENE

Officers or other authorized members tasked with initial scene management should establish an inner and outer perimeter to:

- (a) Protect persons and property.
- (b) Prevent any disturbance or further damage to the wreckage or debris, except to preserve life or rescue the injured.
- (c) Preserve ground scars and marks made by the aircraft.
- (d) Manage the admission and access of public safety and medical personnel to the extent necessary to preserve life or to stabilize hazardous materials.
- (e) Maintain a record of persons who enter the accident site.
- (f) Consider implementation of an Incident Command System (ICS).

427.4 INJURIES AND CASUALTIES

Members should address emergency medical issues and provide care as a first priority.

Those tasked with the supervision of the scene should coordinate with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) before the removal of bodies. If that is not possible, the scene supervisor should ensure documentation of what was disturbed, including switch/control positions and instrument/gauge readings.

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427.5 NOTIFICATIONS

When an aircraft accident is reported to this department, the responding supervisor shall ensure notification is or has been made to NTSB, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and when applicable, the appropriate branch of the military.

Supervisors shall ensure other notifications are made once an aircraft accident has been reported. The notifications will vary depending on the type of accident, extent of injuries or damage, and the type of aircraft involved. When an aircraft accident has occurred, it is generally necessary to notify the following:

- (a) Fire department
- (b) Appropriate airport tower
- (c) Emergency medical services (EMS)
- (d) Closest military base if a military aircraft is involved
- (e) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- (f) National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
- (g) State of California Department of Transportation – Department of Aeronautics
- (h) Appropriate Command Staff notifications, per policy

427.5.1 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD (NTSB)

The NTSB has the primary responsibility for investigating accidents involving civil aircraft. In the case of a military aircraft incident the appropriate branch of the military will be involved in the investigation. The NTSB is concerned with several aspects of a crash as described in this policy.

Every effort should be made to preserve the scene to the extent possible in the condition in which it was found until such time as NTSB or other authorized personnel arrive to take charge of the scene. Military personnel will respond to take charge of any military aircraft involved, whether or not injuries or deaths have occurred. If the accident did not result in a death or injury and the NTSB elects not to respond, the pilot or owner may assume control of the aircraft.

Removal of the wreckage shall be done under the guidance of the NTSB or military authorities, or, if the NTSB is not responding for an onsite investigation, at the discretion of the pilot or the owner.

427.6 CONTROLLING ACCESS AND SCENE AUTHORITY

Prior to NTSB arrival, scene access should be limited to authorized personnel from the:

- (a) FAA
- (b) Fire department, EMS or other assisting law enforcement agencies
- (c) Coroner
- (d) Air Carrier/Operators investigative teams with NTSB approval
- (e) Appropriate branch of the military, when applicable

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- (f) Other emergency services agencies (e.g., hazardous materials teams, biohazard decontamination teams, fuel recovery specialists, explosive ordnance disposal specialists)

The NTSB has primary responsibility for investigating accidents involving civil aircraft. In the case of a military aircraft accident, the appropriate branch of the military will have primary investigation responsibility.

After the NTSB or military representative arrives on-scene, the efforts of this department will shift to a support role for those agencies.

If NTSB or a military representative determines that an aircraft or accident does not qualify under its jurisdiction, the on-scene department supervisor should ensure the accident is still appropriately investigated and documented.

427.7 DANGEROUS MATERIALS

Members should be aware of potentially dangerous materials that might be present. These may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Fuel, chemicals, explosives, biological or radioactive materials and bombs or other ordnance.
- (b) Pressure vessels, compressed gas bottles, accumulators and tires.
- (c) Fluids, batteries, flares and igniters.
- (d) Evacuation chutes, ballistic parachute systems and composite materials.

427.8 DOCUMENTATION

All aircraft accidents occurring within the City of Irvine shall be documented. At a minimum the documentation should include the date, time and location of the incident; any witness statements, if taken; the names of IPD members deployed to assist; other City resources that were utilized; and cross reference information to other investigating agencies. Suspected criminal activity should be documented on the appropriate crime report.

The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) Manager shall be responsible for forwarding a copy of the accident report to any affected government agency who requests a copy.

427.8.1 WRECKAGE

When reasonably safe, members should:

- (a) Obtain the aircraft registration number (N number) and note the type of aircraft.
- (b) Attempt to ascertain the number of casualties.
- (c) Obtain photographs or video of the overall wreckage, including the cockpit and damage, starting at the initial point of impact, if possible, and any ground scars or marks made by the aircraft.

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1. Military aircraft may contain classified equipment and therefore shall not be photographed unless authorized by a military commanding officer (18 USC § 795).
 - (d) Secure, if requested by the lead authority, any electronic data or video recorders from the aircraft that became dislodged or cell phones or other recording devices that are part of the wreckage.
 - (e) Acquire copies of any recordings from security cameras that may have captured the incident.

427.8.2 WITNESSES

Members tasked with contacting witnesses should obtain:

- (a) The location of the witness at the time of his/her observation relative to the accident site.
- (b) A detailed description of what was observed or heard.
- (c) Any photographs or recordings of the accident witnesses may be willing to voluntarily surrender.
- (d) The names of all persons reporting the accident, even if not yet interviewed.
- (e) Any audio recordings of reports to 9-1-1 regarding the accident and dispatch records.

427.9 MEDIA RELATIONS

The Press Information Officer (PIO) should coordinate a response to the media, including access issues, road closures, detours and any safety information that is pertinent to the surrounding community. Any release of information regarding details of the accident itself should be coordinated with the NTSB or other authority who may have assumed responsibility for the investigation.

Depending on the type of aircraft, the airline or the military may be responsible for family notifications and the release of victims' names. The PIO should coordinate with other involved entities before the release of information.