

CHAPTER 14
FREEWAY CRASH/INCIDENT PROCEDURES
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CHAPTER 14

FREEWAY CRASH/INCIDENT PROCEDURES

1. INTRODUCTION. This chapter provides safety guidelines for officers when investigating crashes/incidents on the freeway. It also provides information on media relations while engaged in these duties.

2. INVESTIGATION/TRAFFIC CONTROL.
 - a. Responding to Crashes. All crashes on a freeway should be responded to immediately.
 - (1) Other assigned beat officers and/or contiguous beat officers should respond to the crash location as necessary to help control the scene. As soon as they are no longer needed, they are to leave the crash scene. Officers should not become spectators.
 - (2) While the law provides legal protection for emergency response, an officer should not rely solely on their emergency equipment. Sound professional judgment and defensive driving habits should also be relied upon to ensure the safety of the officer and the public.
 - (3) Sergeants will normally respond to all major crashes or incidents whenever possible to advise and coordinate operations.
 - b. Protection of Crash Scene. The investigating officer is considered the officer in charge of the investigation and crash scene, unless relieved by a supervisor or a command post is established.
 - (1) When the vehicles involved in a crash are all on the roadway shoulder, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) vehicle should be moved and parked in front of the vehicles involved where practical. By doing this, witnesses and officers will be better protected from additional rear crashes as the crash vehicles will serve as a buffer (refer to Figure 14-1). This procedure applies particularly to multiple CHP vehicles on the scene, where the scene is protected by flares, etc. (refer to Figure 14-2).

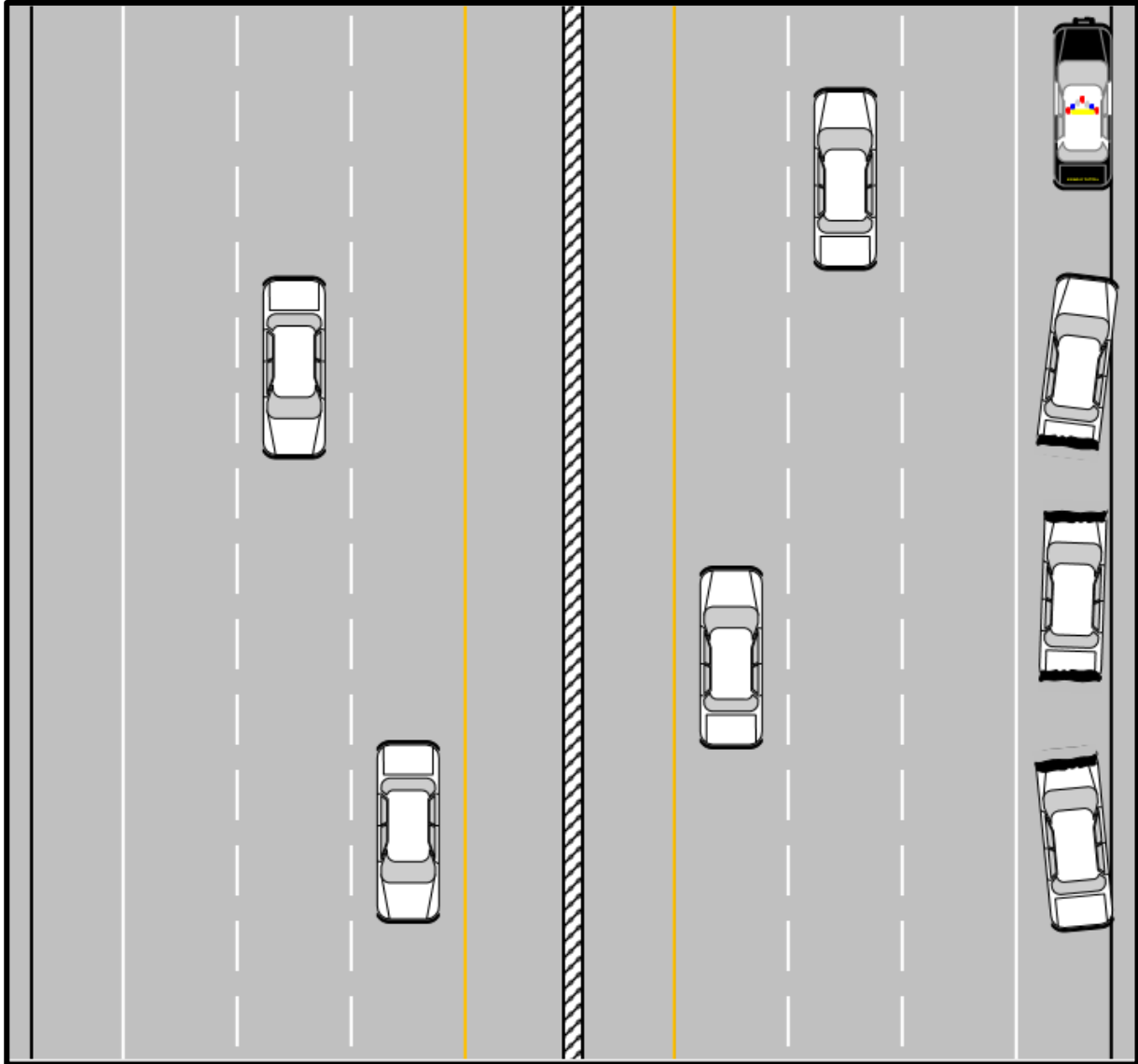


Figure 14-1, Location of CHP Unit (All Vehicles off Roadway)

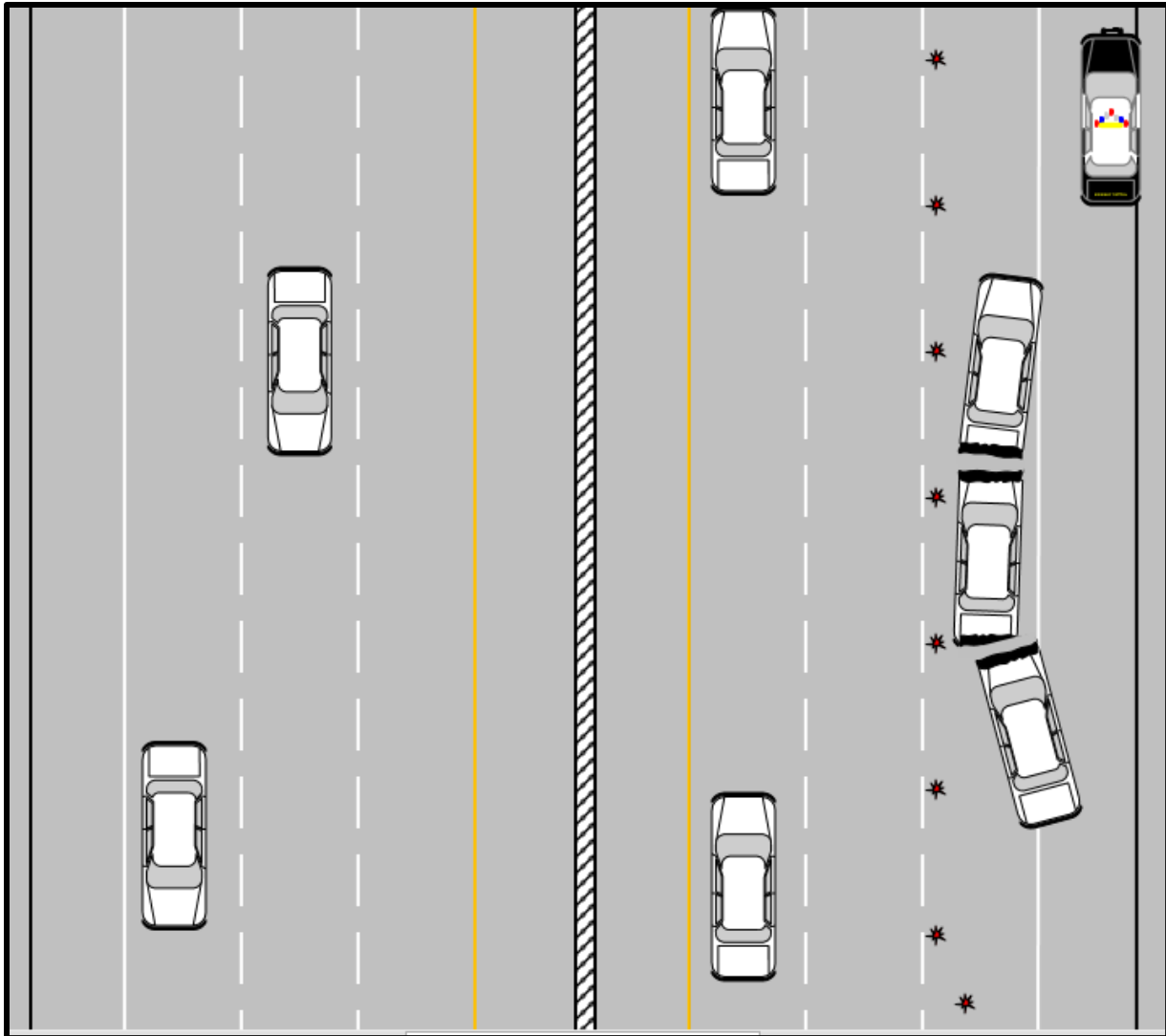


Figure 14-2, Location of CHP Unit (Scene Protected by Flares)

- (2) The on-scene officer should be aware of emergency vehicles and equipment arriving, and direct them where the officer wants them to park.
 - (3) Be alert to traffic moving in the opposite direction, and be prepared to direct it as deemed necessary.
- c. Proper Flare Patterns.
- (1) When deemed necessary by the officer, a flare pattern should be established at the crash or incident scene to warn and direct approaching traffic.

(2) Flare patterns should be periodically checked and maintained by the officer to ensure a hazardous traffic condition does not occur.

(3) Orange traffic cones may be used as an alternative or supplement with flares, especially during daylight hours. Traffic cones used as a supplement with flares under conditions of darkness shall have the available reflectorized collars in place and should be used in an alternating cone-flare sequence.

d. Traffic Control.

(1) The officer should not depend solely on a flare pattern to warn and direct approaching traffic. The officer shall actively direct traffic whenever possible.

(2) For some motorists, the only time they come into contact with an officer is at the scene of a crash. The public's perception of the Department is often formed by the activities of officers at crash scenes. Therefore, officers shall actively perform traffic control functions when normal traffic flow is impeded.

(3) Traffic will not only move rapidly and safely when an officer is actively directing traffic, the motoring public's perception of the Department will be enhanced if they see an officer doing everything possible to keep the road open and safe.

3. MEDIA RELATIONS.

a. General.

(1) All officers, while actively engaged in the discharge of their duties, shall cooperate as far as possible with bona fide members of the news media (press, radio, television). Factual information shall be divulged only; no statements shall be issued involving personal opinions. Any request by the news media for other than factual data shall be referred to the Area commander or supervisor on duty.

(2) Information requested by properly identified news media representatives at the scene of incidents should be disseminated by the officer or sergeant at the scene. In the event a sergeant is present, it is recommended that they serve as liaison with the news media.

(3) Properly identified members of the news media should not be restricted from entering locations where newsworthy events have occurred. In the event that entering such a location would be hazardous to the safety of the news

media representative, the individual should be advised of that fact before proceeding.

(4) Valid press cards are issued by other police agencies and other methods of establishing identification should also be accepted.

b. Code 20.

(1) Code 20 is the radio signal used as notification of a newsworthy event. Such an event may be a spectacular crash, major fire, injury to a prominent person, or any event which, in the opinion of the officer at the scene, would have news value.

(2) Officers should, upon arrival at the scene of a newsworthy occurrence, give notification as soon as possible to the communications center of the existence of a Code 20 situation along with a brief description.

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