
Aircraft Accidents

416.1 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.

416.1.1 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.

416.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Shasta County Sheriff's Office to provide an appropriate emergency response to aircraft accidents. This includes emergency medical care and scene management.

416.2.1 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITY

Deputies should treat an aircraft crash site as a crime scene until it is determined that such is not the case. If a military aircraft is involved, additional dangers, such as live ordnance or hazardous materials, may be present. The scene may require additional security due to the potential presence of confidential equipment or information.

The duties of the field deputy at the scene of an aircraft accident include the following:

- (a) Determine the nature and extent of the accident.
- (b) Request additional personnel and other resources to respond as needed.
- (c) Provide assistance for the injured parties until the arrival of Fire Department personnel and/or other emergency personnel.
- (d) Cordon off and contain the area to exclude unauthorized individuals as soon as practicable.
- (e) Provide crowd control and other assistance until directed otherwise by a supervisor.
- (f) Ensure the Coroner's office is notified if a death occurs.

Entering an aircraft or tampering with parts or debris is only permissible for the purpose of removing injured or trapped occupants, protecting the wreckage from further damage or protecting the public from danger. If possible, the investigating authority should first be consulted before entering or moving any aircraft or any crash debris. Photographs or sketches of the original positions should be made whenever feasible.

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The Fire Department will be responsible for control of the accident scene until the injured parties are cared for and the accident scene has been rendered safe for containment. Thereafter, sheriff's personnel will be responsible for preserving the scene until relieved by the investigating authority.

Once the scene is relinquished to the investigating authority, personnel from this agency may assist in containment of the scene until the investigation is completed or assistance is no longer needed.

An airport service worker or the airport manager may respond to the scene to assist the on-scene commander with technical expertise, should it be needed during the operation.

416.2.2 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

The National Transportation Safety Board (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 section.

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 on-site investigation, at the discretion of the pilot or the owner.

416.2.3 SHASCOM RESPONSIBILITIES

Dispatchers are responsible to make notifications as directed 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. Generally, the dispatcher will need to notify the following agencies or individuals when an aircraft accident has occurred.

- (a) Fire Department
- (b) The affected airport tower
- (c) Closest military base if a military aircraft is involved
- (d) Ambulances or other assistance as required

When an aircraft accident is reported to the Sheriff's Office by the airport tower personnel the dispatcher receiving such information should verify that the tower personnel will contact the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Flight Standards District Office and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). In the event that airport personnel are not involved, the dispatcher should notify the FAA and the NTSB.

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416.2.4 RECORDS SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Records Supervisor is responsible for the following:

- (a) Forward and maintain an approved copy of the accident report to the California Department of Aeronautics
- (b) Forward a copy of the report to the Patrol Division Commander and the manager of the affected airport

416.2.5 PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department Public Information Officer is responsible for the following:

- (a) Obtain information for a press release from the on-scene commander or his or her designee
- (b) When practical, the Department Public Information Officer should coordinate with the FAA Public Information Officer to prepare a press release for distribution to the Media

Information released to the press regarding any aircraft accident should be handled by the Department Public Information Officer (if one is designated) or in accordance with existing policy. The Public Information Officer should coordinate the release of such information with the FAA Public Information Officer.

416.3 DOCUMENTATION

Any aircraft accident (crash) within the County, regardless of whether injuries or deaths occur, shall be documented.