

§ 20-166.1. Reports and investigations required in event of accident.

(a) Notice of Accident. – The driver of a vehicle involved in a reportable accident must immediately, by the quickest means of communication, notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of the accident. If the accident occurred in a city or town, the appropriate agency is the police department of the city or town. If the accident occurred outside a city or town, the appropriate agency is the State Highway Patrol or the sheriff's office or other qualified rural police of the county where the accident occurred.

(b) Insurance Verification. – When requested to do so by the Division, the driver of a vehicle involved in a reportable accident must furnish proof of financial responsibility.

(c) Parked Vehicle. – The driver of a motor vehicle that collides with another motor vehicle left parked or unattended on a highway of this State must report the collision to the owner of the parked or unattended motor vehicle. This requirement applies to an accident that is not a reportable accident as well as to one that is a reportable accident. The report may be made orally or in writing, must be made within 48 hours of the accident, and must include the following:

- (1) The time, date, and place of the accident.
- (2) The driver's name, address, and drivers license number.
- (3) The registration plate number of the vehicle being operated by the driver at the time of the accident.

If the driver makes a written report to the owner of the parked or unattended vehicle and the report is not given to the owner at the scene of the accident, the report must be sent to the owner by certified mail, return receipt requested, and a copy of the report must be sent to the Division.

(d) Repealed by Session Laws 1995, c. 191, s. 2.

(e) Investigation by Officer. – The appropriate law enforcement agency must investigate a reportable accident. A law-enforcement officer who investigates a reportable accident, whether at the scene of the accident or by subsequent investigations and interviews, must make a written report of the accident within 24 hours of the accident and must forward it as required by this subsection. The report must contain information on financial responsibility for the vehicle driven by the person whom the officer identified as at fault for the accident.

If the officer writing the report is a member of the State Highway Patrol, the officer must forward the report to the Division. If the officer is not a member of the State Highway Patrol, the officer must forward the report to the local law enforcement agency for the area where the accident occurred. A local law enforcement agency that receives an accident report must forward it to the Division within 10 days after receiving the report. Upon request of the driver of the motor vehicle involved in the accident or the insurance agent or company identified by the driver under subsection (b) of this section, and notwithstanding any provision of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes to the contrary, the officer writing the report may forward an uncertified copy of the report to the insurance agent or company identified by the driver under subsection (b) of this section if evidence satisfactory to the officer is provided showing a certified copy of the report has been requested from the Division and the applicable fee set in G.S. 20-42 has been paid. Nothing in this section shall prohibit a law enforcement agency from providing to the public accident reports or portions of accident reports that are public records.

When a person injured in a reportable accident dies as a result of the accident within 12 months after the accident and the death was not reported in the original report, the law enforcement officer investigating the accident must file a supplemental report that includes the death.

(f) Medical Personnel. – A county medical examiner must report to the Division the death of any person in a reportable accident and the circumstances of the accident. The medical examiner must file the report within five days after the death. A hospital must notify the medical examiner of the county in which the accident occurred of the death within the hospital of any person who dies as a result of injuries apparently sustained in a reportable accident.

(g) Repealed by Session Laws 1987, c. 49.

(h) Forms. – The Division shall provide forms or procedures for submitting crash data to persons required to make reports under this section and the reports shall be made in a format approved by the Commissioner. The following information shall be included about a reportable crash:

- (1) The cause of the crash.
- (2) The conditions existing at the time of the crash.
- (3) The persons and vehicles involved, except that the name and address of a minor child involved in a school bus crash who is a passenger on a school bus may only be disclosed to (i) the local board of education, (ii) the State Board of Education, (iii) the parent or guardian of the child, (iv) an insurance company investigating a claim arising out of the crash, (v) an attorney representing a person involved in the crash, and (vi) law enforcement officials investigating the crash. As used in this subdivision, school bus also includes a school activity bus as defined by G.S. 20-4.01(27).
- (4) Whether the vehicle has been seized and is subject to forfeiture under G.S. 20-28.2.

(i) Effect of Report. – A report of an accident made under this section by a person other than a law enforcement officer, or a Civilian Traffic Investigator employed pursuant to G.S. 160A-499.6, is without prejudice, is for the use of the Division, and shall not be used in any manner as evidence, or for any other purpose in any trial, civil or criminal, arising out of the accident. Any other report of an accident made under this section may be used in any manner as evidence, or for any other purpose, in any trial, civil or criminal, as permitted under the rules of evidence. At the demand of a court, the Division must give the court a properly executed certificate stating that a particular accident report has or has not been filed with the Division solely to prove a compliance with this section.

The reports made by persons who are not law enforcement officers or medical examiners are not public records. The reports made by law enforcement officers and medical examiners are public records and are open to inspection by the general public at all reasonable times. The Division must give a certified copy of one of these reports to a member of the general public who requests a copy and pays the fee set in G.S. 20-42.

(j) Statistics. – The Division may periodically publish statistical information on motor vehicle accidents based on information in accident reports. The Division may conduct detailed research to determine more fully the cause and control of accidents and may conduct experimental field tests within areas of the State from time to time to prove the practicability of various ideas advanced in traffic control and accident prevention.

(k) Punishment. – A violation of any provision of this section is a misdemeanor of the Class set in G.S. 20-176. (1953, c. 1340, s. 2; 1955, c. 913, s. 9; 1963, c. 1249; 1965, c. 577; 1971, c. 55; c. 763, s. 1; c. 958, ss. 2, 3; 1973, c. 1133, ss. 1, 2; c. 1330, s. 29; 1975, c. 307; c. 716, s. 5; 1979, c. 667, s. 33; 1981, c. 690, s. 14; 1983, c. 229, ss. 1, 2; 1985, c. 764, s. 33; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 17; 1987, c. 49; 1993, c. 539, ss. 376, 377; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1995, c. 191, s. 2; 1998-182, s. 12.1; 1999-452, s. 19; 2012-147, s. 1; 2016-90, s. 13.8; 2023-52, s. 2.)