



May 29, 2025

Chief Shon F. Barnes
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Barnes:

Please see the Management Action Recommendation below.

Case Number

- 2024OPA-0462 / 2025COMP-0010

Topic

Preventable Vehicle Collisions

Summary

- It was alleged that a named employee violated multiple policies when he was involved in a preventable collision between his SPD vehicle and a bicyclist.

Analysis

- While responding to a call, the named employee hit a cyclist who was already in the intersection with their vehicle.
- SPD Policy 13.080¹ prohibits officers from driving discourteously or aggressively except as necessary for a recognized law enforcement purpose. OPA's investigation found the named employee was distracted and did not observe the bicyclist in the intersection, which resulted in the crash.
- OPA's investigation also found this accident was the named employee's eighth preventable collision. OPA would likely have remained unaware of the earlier collisions but for the OPA referral in this case.
- OPA's review of law and policy suggests potential benefits to more closely aligning SPD's Collision Review process with the system for progressive discipline:
 - SMC 4.79.020, the Employee Safe Driving Program² authorizes the personnel director to establish "safe driving practices," "collision and damage reporting," "management review and determination of collision and damage preventability" and "accountability and corrective measures."
 - A California based study of eight different agencies demonstrated a relationship between perceived likelihood of enforcement of agency driving policies and vehicle collisions, suggesting

¹ Seattle Police Department Policy [13.080 POL 11](#). Prohibited Activities During the Use of Department Vehicles. Effective 03/14/2018.

² Seattle Municipal Code. [Chapter 4.79.020 – City of Seattle Employee Safe Driving Program Authorization](#).



“agencies may reduce officer injuries and other costs by increasing supervision and enforcement of agency driving policies.”³

- “Preventable damage to agency vehicles” was highlighted as an early warning system (EWS) metric by the Congressional Research Service to “allow for proactive management and administrative interventions—such as training, counseling by supervisors, or referral to professional counselors—before serious problems arise.” Further, EWSs are considered “common features of content decrees that the department enters into with law enforcement agencies to reform their policing practices.”⁴
- OPA reviewed policies from comparable cities:
 - San Jose’s Internal Affairs Unit Commander tracks three-year officer summary data “of preventable accidents and known attempts to correct driving deficiencies.”⁵
 - Portland’s Vehicle Collision Review Board produces an annual report for managers to help “identify factors that may lead to improved training and education.”⁶
 - Spokane may include members of their Office of Professional Accountability on their Collision/Pursuit Review Board (CPRB), and according to policy, their training director provides a copy of any CPRB recommendations to the Office of Professional Accountability.⁷

Recommendations

- SPD should establish objective standards and procedures to determine when and under what circumstances a “preventable” collision must be referred to OPA.
- SPD should work with impacted stakeholders to study the feasibility of integrating the Collision Review process into the system of progressive discipline or any future revisions to the Frontline Investigation policy.

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Glenn
Interim Director, Office of Police Accountability

³ Hansen, J. Andrew et al. [“The influence of department policy and accountability on officer-involved collisions.”](#) Policing: An International Journal. Emerald. August 17, 2015.

⁴ Congressional Research Service. “Police Accountability Measures.” IN FOCUS. June 11, 2020.

⁵ San Jose Police Department Duty Manual. Policies, Rules, Procedures. L 7000, Accident Involving Department Members. [Policy L 7010, Responsibility of Commander of Internal Affairs Unit](#). Revised 02/20/2017.

⁶ Administrative Rules Adopted by Bureaus Pursuant to Rule Making Authority (ARB). Policy 0600, Field Operations. [PRB-0640.52 Vehicle Collision Review Board](#). Effective: January 15, 2024.

⁷ Spokane Police Department. Policy Manual. [Policy 314.9 Collision Review Board](#). Effective 07/19/2021.