Traffic crash reports
What are traffic crash reports

Traffic crash reports are completed by police officers at the scene of all road crashes, including non-injury crashes. They record the details of exactly where, when, how and why the crash happened.

These traffic crash reports are added to the NZ Transport Agency’s crash analysis system (CAS). At the end of 2012, CAS held records of almost 976,000 crashes.

Traffic crash reports provide essential information to a wide range of road safety and road construction partners who are engaged in the constant fight to reduce the approximately 2000 deaths and serious injuries recorded each year.

In accurately completing a traffic crash report, you directly influence road safety in the future.

How are traffic crash reports used?

Police officers and intelligence analysts use traffic crash reports at the crash scene, as a permanent record to use in evidence and to identify high-risk locations or at-risk populations for enforcement campaigns or safety cameras. CAS is used to develop risk target patrol plans and beat books, and supply traffic intelligence to police of all ranks.

Road controlling authority (RCA) engineers and safety planners use CAS to identify road safety risks, to prioritise road safety improvements such as intersection redesign, and to plan new developments with road safety in mind.

Traffic engineers and consultants use CAS to identify and analyse high-risk routes, intersections or blackspots, to prioritise safety improvements such as barriers and rumble strips and to prioritise maintenance interventions such as improving skid resistance.

Central government uses CAS reports to identify trends in deaths and serious injuries, identify causes, direct research, allocate resources and funding, and inform safety policy.

Insurance companies may use details on crashes involving their clients.

The news media use CAS reports to inform the public on road safety issues.

The general public use CAS reports, for example, for projects and community road safety campaigns.

Why are traffic crash reports so important for safer journeys?

Safer Journeys is New Zealand’s road safety strategy to 2020, with the vision of a ‘safe road system increasingly free of death and serious injury’.

At the heart of Safer Journeys is the Safe System approach, which recognises that many crashes are the result of simple mistakes and some crashes are inevitable. Our responsibility is to create a forgiving road system so that crashes don’t result in death or serious injury.

The Safe System principles are:

1. People make mistakes and some crashes are inevitable.
2. Our bodies don’t withstand crash forces well.
3. System designers and system users must share responsibility for managing crash forces to a level that doesn’t result in death or serious injury.
4. We need to strengthen all parts of the system: roads and roadsides, speeds, vehicles, and road users.

What this means for traffic crash reports is that we require accurate and timely information about all the factors that lead to crashes or affect their severity. By reporting fully on crashes, you give road safety partners the best chance of preventing future crashes.

Human error, deliberate or accidental, is almost always just one factor in a serious crash. While it may be the cause, the severity of the crash is always related to the speed, and is often a result of other issues on the road or roadside, or with the vehicles involved.

We need to know how weaknesses in each part of the system may have contributed to deaths and serious injuries in every crash, to provide the evidence base to improve the system as a whole, target local risks effectively and create safer journeys for all.

...we require accurate and timely information in the crash report about all the factors that lead to crashes or affect their severity.
A Safe System approach to filling out a traffic crash report

1. Accurately complete all sections of the form

Traffic crash report forms are a source of information to a wide range of people. Each item of information on the form is important to someone and is there for a good reason. From a Safe System perspective, understanding whether the vehicle speeds prior to impact were considered too fast for the conditions at the time, rather than greater or less than the legal limit, is always important, as is knowing the legal speed limit. Information about the vehicle, safety features such as airbags, and about factors that might have contributed to driver or rider error or to the severity of the crash are also important. For example, an unforgiving road or roadside can contribute to the severity of a crash and this is useful information for road safety engineers.

It is desirable to gather as much of the information as possible on site, but where this is not practicable information can be obtained later from interviews, maps, roading authorities, etc.

2. The location must be accurately described

That is, road name, distance and direction from the nearest side road, and name of nearest side road. Also record the compass direction (N E S W) taken from the intersection of this side road along the crash road to the crash site.

Ask yourself, could this description be located on a map by a stranger to the area? A bridge or some other landmark is useful to measure from.

3. A clear drawing showing how the crash happened

The intended vehicle movements prior to and actual movements during the crash, show a picture showing where the vehicles ended. Put directions of travel and identifying landmarks on the diagram, such as marker posts, trees, bridges and house numbers. It is essential that each vehicle’s direction of travel is given and the orientation of the drawing matches the ‘north’ arrow on the drawing space in the traffic crash report. Make sure that any hazards are clearly identified and also anything that made the system more or less forgiving, eg presence or absence of barriers or clear zones.

4. A concise version of the statement from each party

Summarise their version of where they were going, direction of travel etc, what happened and why. Don’t just write ‘see attached statement’.

5. A summary by the reporting officer explaining what happened and possible reasons why

Facts are important. However, as you may have arrived some time after the actual crash, some facts may be no longer readily available. This is where your opinion as an experienced police officer becomes invaluable. An educated guess is useful, eg ‘long grass possibly obscured visibility’ or ‘driver was unfamiliar with the area and did not see signs’. This is not to attribute blame but to provide clues to possible causes when the crash is investigated at a later date. Extraneous documents such as IONS, TONS or Victim Reports etc are not required to be attached.

REMEMBER:

- Report every crash
  This information can be used to prevent further deaths and injuries on our roads.
- Always use a bold black pen
  Never use a pencil or fine pen as the traffic crash report will be scanned and needs to be legible.
- Always measure distance from a side road or other prominent fixed object, eg bridge.
  Never guess the location.
- Always name the side road or other prominent fixed object, eg Porewa Stream Bridge. Never rely solely on GPS references as the current CAS system does not recognise them.

...an unforgiving road and roadside can contribute to the severity of a crash and this is useful information for road safety engineers.
**HOW TO DRAW A DIAGRAM**

Draw the diagram clearly and simply but with as much relevant information as possible to describe the situation. In some cases, a detailed plan may be necessary for legal evidence. (See Integrated Training Programme module DUT 142 Vehicle Collisions.)

Example of a rural crash scene drawing

Example of an urban crash scene drawing

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**What happens to the completed traffic crash report form?**

- The officer in charge checks the report.
- The copies are separated. Do not place all copies on the file.
- Check what your local arrangements are regarding where you should send the copies.

The top Transport Agency copy is sent to:  
(Not photocopy or carbon copy, these do not scan properly)

Crash Analysis System Administrator  
NZ Transport Agency  
Level 4  
50 Victoria Street  
Private Bag 6995  
Wellington 6141.

- The report is read and the crash is given movement and factor codes that accurately describe the reasons why the crash happened.
- The information on the report is entered into CAS.
- The precise location of the crash is electronically located on the CAS mapping system.
- The completed traffic crash report form is scanned into CAS and linked to the crash location.
- In a typical month in 2011, over 2000 queries were run by CAS users. As some of the information in CAS is sensitive (eg, names of people involved), only certain users who have signed a privacy agreement with the Transport Agency can see all of this detail.
- CAS users analyse the information for common locations and common factors, producing crash listings, electronic data, blackspot maps and various reports. Reports based on CAS are published on both the Ministry of Transport and Transport Agency websites.
### Traffic Crash Report

#### Local Body: Pongarei

#### Crash Road: SH N

#### Side Road: Pongarei Road

#### GPS: Fatal crash

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<th>Severity</th>
<th>Damage Location</th>
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<td>F1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious Injury</td>
<td>F2</td>
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<td>Minor Injury</td>
<td>F3, F4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-injury</td>
<td>F5</td>
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#### Time and Date
- **Time:** 6:53
- **Date:** 11/05/2009

#### Officer Arrival Time: 125

#### Where Stationed: CEURAL

#### Reporting Member: Initials/Reg No.: M 07 98 7

### Checklist

**Checked By:**
- Name: Sgt Smith
- Date: 5/5/2013

### Vehicle 1
- **Reg No.:** AB5678
- **Make & Model:** Holden Commodore
- **Model year:** 1990
- **CC:** 3800

#### Driver
- **Name:** Michael Sheppard
- **DOB:** 10/5/1947
- **Gender:** Male
- **Phone No.:** 06 843 288
- **Occupation:** Sharemilker
- **Licence No.:** A5543218
- **Wing class:** Restricted
- **Restrained:** Yes
- **Speed before crash:** 100 km/h
- **Speed after crash:** Stationary
- **Injuries:** Broken ribs, Lacerations, Whiplash
- **Driver Interview Notes:**
  
  I was driving north towards Taiape. As I crossed the bridge, the car began to twitch. I braked and the car just shot across the road, I tried to control it but lost it on the shoulder.
  
  I ended up in the ditch on the other side of the road.
  
  We only had two cans of beer.

### Alcohol
- **Alcohol Suspected:** No
- **Reason:** Not Available

### New Zealand Transport Agency COPY
### DRIVER INTERVIEW NOTES:

I was going south as I came round the bend I saw the green car spinning across the road. I swerved and braked to avoid him. I think the trailer must have jackknifed because next thing I knew I was upside down.

Driver 2 signature: S. Cooper

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**New Zealand Transport Agency COPY**
WHAT HAPPENED

Sheppard travelling north lost control on the wet road coming off the bridge into a right hand bend (85kph advisory). He overcorrected and slid into the opposing lane and then off the road into a culvert and tree. Affected by alcohol. Cooper travelling south saw Sheppard out of control and took evasive action but his ute/trailer combo rolled and went upside down against a fence on the western side of the road.

OBJECTS HIT: Culvert, tree, fence

New Zealand Transport Agency COPY
**WHY CRASH HAPPENED**

Road and Roadside factors (eg no barriers, no shoulder, large trees, limited visibility etc)
- Wet and slippery patches just north of bridge
- Large tree just north of bridge
- Rumble strips each side of road

Road User factors (eg impairment, fatigue, distraction, dark clothing etc)
- Sheppard lost control and overcorrected possibly entered curve too fast
- Had been drinking alcohol

Vehicle factors (eg brakes, steering, tyres etc)
- Cooper's vehicle had expired WOF. Trailer heavily loaded

Speed factors (eg speed too great for conditions, too great for corner etc)
- Sheppard too fast through corner

**DETAILS**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Speed limit</th>
<th>Advisory speed</th>
<th>Temp. speed limit</th>
<th>ROAD</th>
<th>1 way</th>
<th>2 way</th>
<th>0 or rd.</th>
<th>TOTAL LANES</th>
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<th>2</th>
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**CURVATURE**

- Exit
- Easy
- Moderate
- Sharp

**SURFACE**

- Wet
- Dry
- Ice or snow

**LIGHT**

- Bright sun
- Overcast
- Twilight
- Dark

**STREET LIGHTS**

- On
- Off
- N/A

**WEATHER**

- Rain
- Misty
- Snow
- Other
- N/A

**OTHER PERSONS INVOLVED EXCLUDING DRIVERS**

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<tr>
<th>Forenames</th>
<th>Surname</th>
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<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>NZTA Use</th>
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<td>Jemma Sheppard</td>
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**Rental**

European
NZ Maori
Samoan
Fijian
Tongan
Cook Islander
Nuean
Toa
Other Pacific Island
Asian
Other

New Zealand Transport Agency COPY
## INDEPENDENT WITNESSES OR OTHER NOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Surname</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Address: 58 Fox St, Levin</td>
<td>Phone: 03 471 9864</td>
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Fogging ice and trailer - saw it suddenly wobble and go off to the right. Was approaching bridge. Didn't notice other car until got closer.

Signature: A Turner

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<td>Business Address:</td>
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Signature:

Next of kin notified (when, where, by whom):

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### SPECIAL PROJECTS:

1. Project Name

2. Project Name

New Zealand Transport Agency COPY
Some facts about crashes

• Speed at the time of crash is the biggest predictor of crash forces.

• People are less likely to crash on safer roads and roadsides with median barriers which prevent head-on crashes at speed.

• Rumble strips reduce fatigue-related crashes.

• Roundabouts are generally safer than signalised intersections.

• People are generally less likely to be injured in a car manufactured after 2000, and much more so if it has a four or five star ANCAP rating.

• Motorcycling is the travel mode with the highest rate of deaths and serious injuries.

• Any level of alcohol increases the rate at which people make simple errors or mistakes while driving or riding. Alcohol also affects the extent of injury.

• Young drivers are at higher risk of crashing when they lack experience of driving or riding in a variety of situations.

• Even low levels of fatigue affect people’s ability to react to hazards.