

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
11-18-11

Regardless of when it happens or how serious it is, no motorist looks forward to being involved in a crash. A crash can happen anywhere and at any time, that's why police stress the importance of wearing safety belts. While taking precautions to prevent a crash is important, knowing what to do afterwards is as well. We are approaching the time of year when crashes become more numerous, mostly due to our changing weather. In fact, I recently compiled the October crash statistics and found a significant increase in the average, partly because of the Halloween weekend nor'easter. The Registry of Motor Vehicles logs over 140,000 crash reports annually in Massachusetts and we file about 300 reports to the State.

If you are involved in a crash, regardless of how serious, do not leave the scene. Leaving the scene of crash can result in a criminal summons to court and significant penalties if convicted. You are required to exchange your name, address, license and insurance information with the other party involved. If you hit a parked car, you must make an effort to locate the owner and make known your information. The best practice to follow is to contact police whenever there is a crash. Officers will assist with the exchange of paperwork, make note of damages and be able to answer questions you may have. Involved motorists should notify their insurance company as soon as possible. Motorists should also be wary of someone who seeks to capitalize on the crash. An offer to skip using the insurance company in exchange for a couple hundred dollars is a common occurrence. Quite often the party involved will come up with a fictitious number and then pocket the cash.

When the damage in a crash exceeds \$1000 or there is an injury or fatality, you must file a State Crash Report within 5 days. The crash report form may be found on the Registry of Motor Vehicles web site at Mass.gov/RMV or at many insurance agencies. A copy must be submitted to the Registry of Motor Vehicles, one is sent to the police agency with jurisdiction and your insurance company will need one too. Although at first glance the form appears quite ominous, it's actually very easy to complete and only takes a few moments.

You'll be asked to provide information about you, your vehicle and the others involved. You'll also be asked to draw a diagram of the crash and write a few sentences describing what happened. It's important to be honest and as clear as possible when doing so. Numerous factors can be involved when there's a crash; road conditions, an error by a motorist or weather to name a few. Crash statistics and patterns are reviewed regularly to identify dangerous locations and make changes. Unfortunately due to costs, those changes are not always made quickly enough.

The Amesbury Police Officers' Association will be hosting a Flatbread Pizza Benefit on Tuesday November 22nd at the Flatbread Pizza Company in the Millyard. A portion of every pizza sold between 5:00 and 9:00 PM will be donated to the Association. The APOA supports numerous charitable causes and community programs in our area, including the Council on Aging, VFW, Relay For Life, youth sporting and educational efforts, Pettingill House, Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center and many more. Your support helps to make Amesbury a safer and better City.

Finally, police officers and volunteers will be helping Our Neighbor's Table on Saturday November 19th with our 7th annual "Fill A Cruiser with Food" drive at the Super Stop & Shop on Macy Street. We'll be collecting non-perishable food items and donations between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM in the Marketplace parking lot. This year, the Food Pantry is in need of cereal, boxed or canned pasta, canned vegetables, canned soup and juice. Cash donations or checks payable to Our Neighbor's Table also help the Pantry provide fresh items, such as milk, eggs and bread. Helping out again this year will be the "greatest community station in the nation" WNBK 1450 AM of Newburyport. Items may also be dropped off at the Amesbury Police Station on School Street. On behalf of the Amesbury Police Officers' Association and Our Neighbor's Table, I'd like to thank you for your consideration and support.