**Scope**

* What to do if there is a vehicle accident in a XXX vehicle or hired vehicle
* What to do in case of vehicle breakdown in a remote/insecure area

**What do I need to do?**

In many contexts, driving is the most dangerous activity that humanitarian staff are involved in and a large number of humanitarian staff have been killed and injured while driving. Great effort should be made to ensure safe driving, and well-maintained vehicles, so that accidents are avoided as far as possible.

**Traffic accident**

**MINIMISE THE RISK**

See SOP Vehicle preparation and journey planning

**DURING**

What to do in the event of a vehicle accident is highly context and location specific. The general principles that apply are the same as for any critical incident:

* Protect life over property
* Help others as long as it does not endanger your or others' safety/security

Once an accident has happened:

* Stop quickly and safely. Pull off the road if it is safe to do so.

OR

* Retreat to a safe location (e.g. police station, nearest base or other NGO office).

 In some cultures it is not safe to stop if you have just been involved in an accident, since onlookers are likely to beat or kill the occupants of any vehicle they think has caused the accident. In these cases it is normal to drive on, even if there have been casualties, and seek help from the police or other responsible authority. In other cultures it is imperative to stop immediately, indeed it is a criminal offence not to do so. This underlines the importance of good local knowledge, and briefing for new staff.

*Each Local Security Plan should specify if it is advisable to stop or to drive on after an accident in the specific context.*

If you stop and remain at the incident location, prevent further danger to passengers, onlookers and other road users. This may involve:

* Removing passengers from vehicles who are in imminent danger
* Putting out warning signs. Warning triangles should be placed far in front of the accident, facing towards oncoming traffic in both directions. If a warning triangle is not available, improvise an alternative (e.g. place a person there to signal to traffic, or use a warning known to local people, such as twigs and leaves on the road).
* Putting out a fire, or preventing a fire if one is likely (e.g. if there has been a fuel spill)
* Directing traffic past the accident, if necessary
* Directing pedestrians and any onlookers out of the way of traffic and other hazards
* Giving first aid to any who needs it if it is safe to do so
* Making arrangements to take casualties to the nearest emergency medical facility, perhaps using your own vehicle
* When it is safe to do so, informing the nearest XXX office / base of what has happened and request any assistance you need, give an initial incident report
* Calling the police if this is the first authority to call – in some programmes with hired vehicles it is necessary to inform the hire company who themselves will inform the authorities
* Taking the names and addresses of any witnesses if it is safe to do so
* Exchanging contact details with any other parties involved in the accident
* If you have a camera, taking photographs of the positions of the vehicles after the accident, and any damage caused, if doing so will not antagonise bystanders.
* On the arrival of the police, cooperating fully with them
* Showing courtesy and respect to all parties. If anyone has been injured in the accident, even if the fault was not yours, consider visiting them and/or their family, bringing a small present if appropriate. This helps to build local goodwill and can therefore be helpful to your security.

**AFTER**

* Make a detailed record of the incident on an incident report. If XXX has been involved in an accident where other people have been injured or killed this could have very serious implications. Full information about what happened and any other vehicles or factors involved should be written down as soon as possible.
* Identify any lessons learned, and ensure that any necessary changes in procedures are made. If disciplinary action is appropriate, ensure that it is taken swiftly and fairly. Proper accountability is particularly important relating to road accidents, because of the large numbers of deaths and injuries they cause to humanitarian staff.

**Non-XXX Vehicle Accidents**

If encountering the apparent aftermath of an accident – or indeed breakdown – whilst on the road, bear in mind that in some countries such “incidents” are staged by criminals in order to attack vehicles that stop to assist.

* Pass the incident slowly and stop around 200 metres beyond
* Contact base by radio or mobile phone to inform and ask the officer in charge for permission for the course of action you proposes

**Vehicle breakdown**

If your vehicle breaks down in an unsafe/insecure area:

* Stay in the vehicle and lock the doors
* Make contact with the nearest XXX base and submit an immediate incident report
* Remember: protect staff safety and welfare before the vehicle/property
1. Wait for rescue/repair as instructed

OR

1. Self-rescue, by finding alternative means to get to base with approval of the PGM/Country Director

OR

1. If immediate help is not possible - then decide with managers whether to wait or leave the vehicle to go to a close by safer location.

In decision making consider:

* Availability of supplies (water/food etc)
* Weather and terrain conditions
* Security of local area
* Security in immediate location of staff and the vehicle
* First aid supplies
* Power supplies (can you charge communications equipment?)

If leaving, agree whether a driver or staff member should stay with the vehicle. If not and the vehicle is being left unattended, remove sensitive and valuable items (communications equipment, call sign lists, registrations, ID etc.) and take them with you. Consider a temporary hire of a local person to guard the vehicle.

**AFTER**

* The logistics team will be involved in decisions about vehicle repair and recovery