



# The DISPATCH

PennDOT Crash Newsletter - News you can use!

## What's New?

### Crash Reporting System Users

When the Crash Reporting System was developed in 2001, the option for a written synopsis was requested as a way for reviewing officers to easily verify information entered. The synopsis option opened a screen with pertinent details from the data entered on the police crash report. In 2016, the crash report form was modified to address federal requirements for injury severity. The crash report data standard has been changed 4 times since then and the synopsis has not been modified to reflect any of these changes. The quality of the synopsis has degraded enough that a decision is needed on whether to fix or eliminate the feature. In a recent poll of some CRS users, we determined that the synopsis is not used by many police users. Rather than spend resources fixing this feature, PennDOT is using those resources for other improvements to the system and will decommission the synopsis in the next couple months.

Additionally, the Crash Reporting System will be integrated into the Commonwealth-wide security system. Every business entity that accesses state data systems will need to register with the Commonwealth and all users will need to set up a new COMMONWEALTH ID. Your old CRS user ID and password will expire when the new security system is launched this spring. Users will go to the account setup site to create a new user ID. Each agency will designate an administrator who will then link the new security system username to a Crash System Account. Password resets will be handled within the new security system with the new password sent to the email address associated with the COMMONWEALTH ID. More details will be provided to users as the date comes closer.

## Working Together



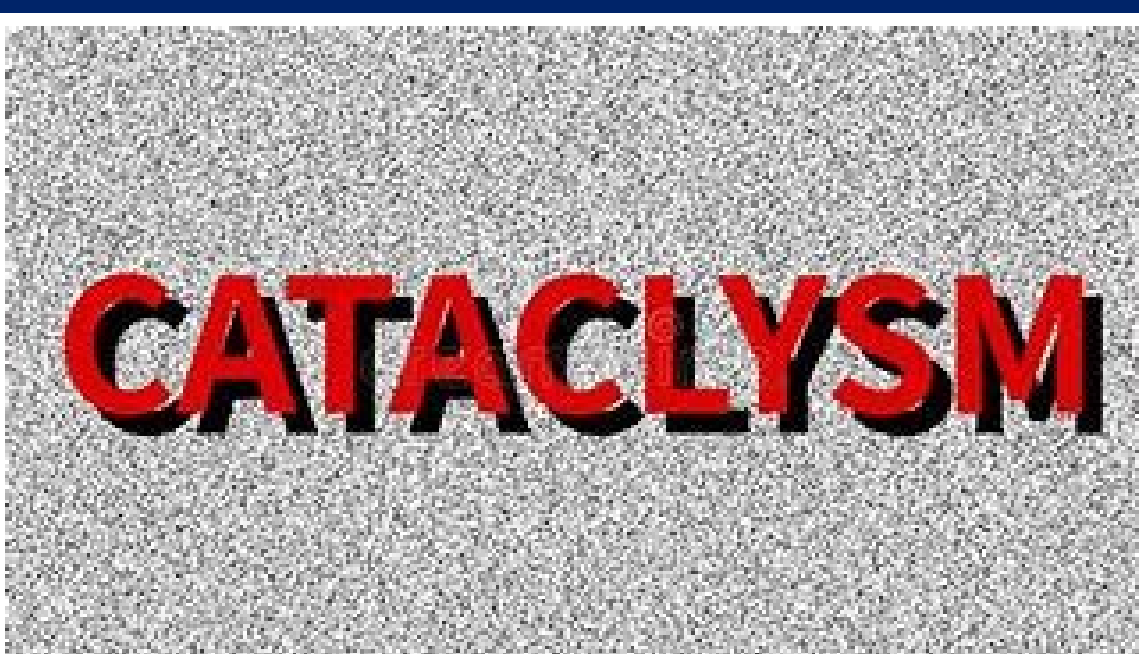
### Crash Data on Pennsylvania Driving Records

When a reportable police crash report is submitted to PennDOT, the case is often reviewed by a data analyst and then posted to the driving record of every Pennsylvania driver involved in the crash, as required by the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code. Like most states, Pennsylvania is a no-fault state, meaning the state cannot place fault for the crash on a driving record.

Insurance companies will often incorrectly assume that a crash on a driving record is an at-fault crash if they do not have a copy of the police crash report. When a driver asks the insurance company why they have an at-fault crash, they will sometimes claim that PennDOT or the police placed the crash on the driver's driving record as an at-fault crash. There is nothing that PennDOT or the police can do to make a crash on a driving record show as at-fault or not at-fault. The insurance company can only make that determination based on what they see on the police crash report. If the insurance company does not have a copy of the report, they will quite often continue to assume all crashes to be at-fault until the police report is obtained. This is why the Vehicle Code gives those involved, their insurer, and their legal representatives the ability to get a copy of the crash report from the investigating agency (for a fee).

While we know this is an unfortunate side effect of the use of a crash reporting process, PennDOT has no rationale for pacifying insurance company's needs. The crash report itself is designed, first and foremost, to contribute to PennDOT's safety programs. While it is not easy to numerically define, please know that the information provided on the reports likely has saved hundreds of lives each year. When updating the crash report, consideration is also given to you, the reporting police agency, on your needs. If you have comments or questions about PennDOT's safety programs, the crash report, or would like to participate in our biennial update review, please contact us [here](#).

## Understanding Crash Terms



### Cataclysm

A cataclysm is an avalanche, landslide/mudslide, hurricane, cyclone, downburst, flood, torrential rain, cloudburst, lightning, tornado, tidal wave, earthquake or volcanic eruption.

The following are typical definitions of cataclysms:

- **Avalanche:** A mass of snow, rock and/or ice falling down a mountain or incline.
- **Landslide/Mudslide:** Fast moving soil, rocks and water that flow down hills, mountain slopes and canyons.
- **Hurricane:** A tropical cyclone with surface winds in excess of 74 mph.
- **Cyclone:** A large-scale circulation of winds around a central region of low atmospheric pressure with winds in excess of 74 mph.
- **Downburst:** A strong downdraft current of air from a cumulonimbus cloud, often associated with intense thunderstorms and with winds in excess of 74 mph.
- **Flood:** The inundation of a normally dry area caused by an increased water level in an established watercourse, such as a river, stream or drainage ditch. A flash flood can be caused by a Cloudburst or Torrential



Rainfall that occurs in a short period of time, generally less than six hours.

Also, at times a dam failure can cause a flash flood.

- **Lightning:** A visible electrical discharge produced by a thunderstorm.
- **Tornado:** A violently rotating column of air, usually pendant to a cumulonimbus, with circulation reaching the ground.
- **Earthquake:** Shock waves detectable and sometimes causing violent tremors at the earth's surface.
- **Volcanic Eruption:** Formed by the partial melting of existing rock and dissolved gases; the liberation of this gas and magma under considerable pressure is considered an eruption. Products of the volcanic eruption include lava flows, pyroclastic materials (volcanic glass), volcanic dust/ash and gases.

Also to include: Any wind above the minimum speed associated with a category one hurricane (75 mph or more) and damage produced by very large hail.

**Exclusions include:**

- **Rain, snow, fog, small hail, ice, smog, etc.**
- **Winds below the minimum speed associated with a category one hurricane (74 mph or less).**
- **A few small falling rocks not associated with a landslide or avalanche.**
- **An old tree falling only due to a rotting root system.**
- **Shallow standing water**

**QUIZ: Location Type-Special Locations**

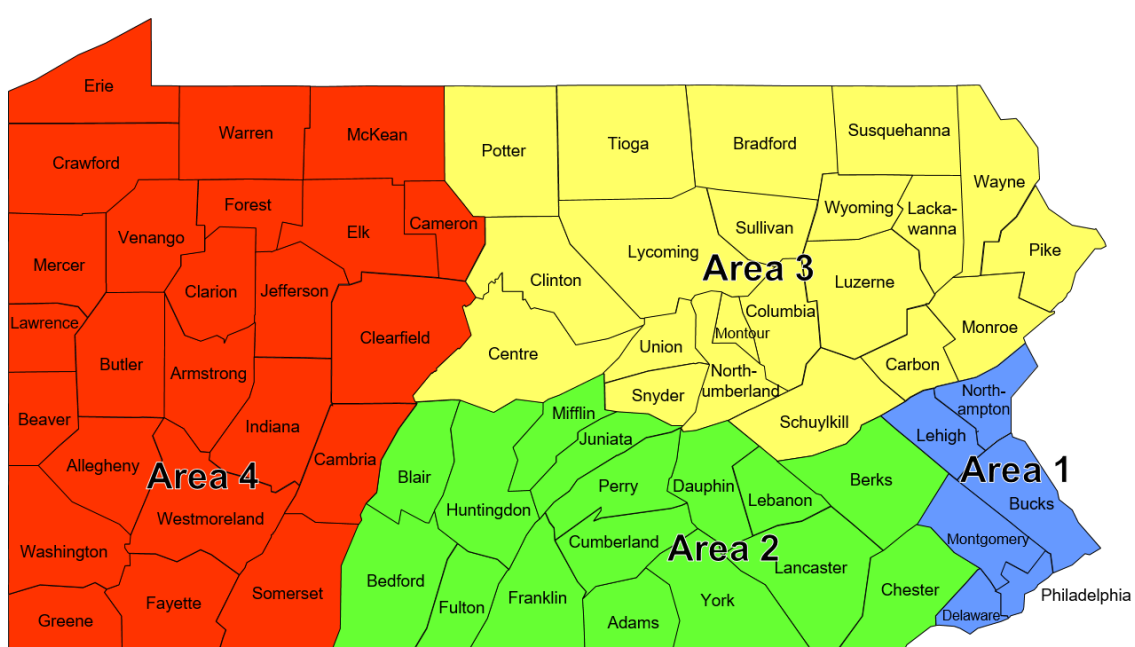
**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Be sure to save the links below to your favorites for easy access!

[Police Crash Reporting Tools](#)

[Current AA600 Form](#)

**Traffic Records Program Administrator Area Map (TRPA)**



**Area 1:** James Moriarty (215-292-0433) [jmoriarty@hsnetwork.org](mailto:jmoriarty@hsnetwork.org)

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**Area 3:** Rick Leymeister (570-516-7881) [rleymeister@hsnetwork.org](mailto:rleymeister@hsnetwork.org)

**Area 4:** Michael Ragan (412-327-9488) [mrgana@hsnetwork.org](mailto:mrgana@hsnetwork.org)



Now that you've made it to the end of the newsletter, how would you rate its content?

Not helpful at all  0  1  2  3  4  Very helpful

For questions or concerns, email us at [ra-pdleadhelp@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pdleadhelp@pa.gov).



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION