

[KJ reviewjournal.com](http://www.reviewjournal.com)<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/metro-stops-responding-non-injury-crashes-march-3>

Metro stops responding to non-injury crashes on March 3

By STEVEN SLIVKA LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

February 24, 2014 - 6:53pm

Southern Nevadans involved in minor, non-injury car accidents shouldn't expect a response from Las Vegas police starting Monday, part of the department's shift to focus more on serious accidents and preventing fatalities.

"Fatalities are more important than property-damage crashes," said Capt. Mark Tavarez of the Metropolitan Police Department's Traffic Bureau. "We need to focus more on preventing fatalities."

The bureau has lost 30 officers in the past 18 months after budget cuts, but Tavarez said it's more about being proactive than it is about losing cops.

"I've personally been working on this for two years," he said. "This has always been an issue for us. This didn't just come up within the last week or month."

There were 114 traffic fatalities in Metro's jurisdiction in 2013, 15 more than in 2012 and 52 more than in 2011.

"If you have a traffic crash that has property damage and your vehicle is movable, we ask that you move your vehicle to the side of the road and collect information from the driver," Tavarez said.

If the vehicle is disabled, Tavarez said, Metro will call a tow truck. If there is an injury, then medical personnel will come to the scene and determine whether anyone needs to be transported.

However, Bob Compan, vice president of the Nevada Insurance Council, said 90 percent of accident injuries don't manifest until at least two days after the accident.

Police substations also no longer will accept accident reports, so Tavarez is urging drivers involved in an accident to collect the the driver's name, address, license plate number and type of car to provide information for the insurance companies.

"Document your crash before and take pictures of the vehicles," Tavarez said. "That will allow the insurance adjuster to figure out exactly how it happened."

The Los Angeles and San Francisco police department are among other agencies that do not respond to property damage crashes, according to Tavarez.

Given the work involved in handling even minor accidents, the change should free up more time for officers to tackle higher priorities.

One property damage accident crash takes an officer more than 90 minutes to handle, Tavarez said, and during that time, more crashes are happening.

"Sometimes our citizens are waiting up to three hours to get a police officer to come to investigate their traffic crash," he said.

Compan said he doesn't see any good coming out of Metro's new plan.

"As a resident of Las Vegas, I'm offended by this," he said. "Metro is making a big mistake."

Compan said a police officer is supposed to be the third party to determine who is at fault during an accident. The absence of a police officer will tie up insurance companies, which will be forced to regulate every accident.

"This is going to seriously clog up the judicial system because of all the he-said, she-said lawsuits," Compan said. "I could also see more road rage happening because of this."

From a financial standpoint, Compan said drivers with better records are going to see an increase in insurance payments because without any documented accidents, they will be assimilated with drivers who have a long history of accidents.

In his opinion, Las Vegas is going to lose money as long as Metro decides to handle accidents like this.

"The person who caused the accident isn't going to pay a ticket," he said. "There aren't going to be any fines or citations, and the city is going to lose money because of it."

Contact reporter Steven Slivka at 702-383-0381 or at sslivka@reviewjournal.com. Follow [@StevenSlivka](https://twitter.com/StevenSlivka) on Twitter.