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Simple form offers step-by-step information about what to do after a traffic accident in Germany

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MANNHEIM, Germany – Getting into an accident on the road anywhere is a stressful event. Having an accident in Germany and being uncertain about what drivers are expected to do under German law can add greatly to that stress, and possibly lead to criminal charges.

That's why U.S. Army Europe Office of the Provost Marshal officials are offering drivers some help that fits easily in their vehicles' glove compartments.

That help is Army in Europe Form 190-1Y (What to do if you have an accident). The one-page form offers step-by-step instructions describing what drivers should do if they are involved in car accidents in Germany. The form also offers a place for drivers to note contact information they'll need in an accident, such as insurance company and local police telephone numbers. OPM officials recommend that USAREUR-licensed drivers fill out the form and keep a copy in each of their vehicles.

OPM and USAREUR Registry of Motor Vehicles officials stressed that the most important thing to know is that a driver should never leave the scene of an accident.

“Drivers who are involved in an accident must stay at the scene for a reasonable period and wait for the police,” said Dan Saavedra, policy advisor at the USAREUR RMV.

Drivers who leave the scene of an accident without waiting a reasonable time for the police, without announcing their involvement in an accident, or without providing their personal and vehicle information, may be considered as fleeing the scene of an accident, Saavedra said. This is a serious criminal offense under German and military law that could also lead to loss of driving privileges or insurance coverage.

He advised drivers to take these steps immediately after an accident:

- Turn on the vehicle's emergency flashers and set up a warning triangle. Place the triangle 200 meters behind the vehicle on autobahns or 100 meters behind the vehicle on other roads.
- Provide first aid to those who need it, but do not move any seriously injured persons. Have someone call for medical help.
- Call the military police for on-post accidents, and both the German police and MPs if the accident was off-post. Be aware that German police may take a long time to respond if no one is injured and damage is minor.
- Drivers who damage property in a single-car accident – by backing into a parked car, for example -- must stay at the scene for a reasonable time and try to contact the property owner. If the owner cannot be found, the driver should leave a note with name, address, telephone number and insurance information. Report the accident immediately to local MPs, and call German police if there appears to be more than 1,500 euro in damage.
- Move the cars involved to avoid blocking traffic if no one is hurt and damage is slight. Take photos of the scene or mark the positions of the vehicles on the ground with chalk for police before moving them.
- Exchange information such as name, address, license number, insurance company and policy number with involved parties. Note the time and place of the accident and names and addresses of any witnesses.
- Drivers should not sign any document unless they know exactly what it says. "Helpful" people may appear on the scene and try to get drivers to sign powers of attorney, loan applications or car-rental agreements in the confusion.
- The U.S. Forces Certificate of License has a block that indicates whether the bearer is an organ donor. If someone who has agreed to be an organ donor is killed in an accident, he said, someone should call the telephone number below that block on the front of the license as soon as possible to alert personnel at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

Saavedra stressed the value of taking photographs of the scene, as they can be more reliable than accident reports and are acceptable in court. If a camera is not available, he suggested drivers sketch the scene, showing the positions of the vehicles, traffic signals and other key items.

He also explained German police may assess a fine -- called *Verwarnungsgeld* -- immediately at the accident scene. Drivers may refuse to pay, but risk being slapped with a more serious fine -- *Bussgeldbescheid* -- later. In addition, paying a *Verwarnungsgeld* does not influence the settlement of an insurance claim, but paying a *Bussgeldbescheid* could later be used as evidence that the driver was at fault, Saavedra said.

Drivers must provide German police with personal information to establish their identity and must sign a related form, he said, but added that drivers involved in accidents and people related to them are not required to make statements.

Finally, Saavedra recommends that drivers complete accident reports promptly and send in forms from their insurance companies within one week of an accident.

A copy of AE Form 190-1Y can be found on the following page. The form is also available online from the USAREUR forms and publications library at <https://www.aeaim.hqusareur.army.mil/library/> (available from computers on the .mil domain only).



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