



# ACTAR Overview

*Accreditation Commission for  
Traffic Accident Reconstruction*

*Accreditation Program Summary*

Thank you for your interest in the accreditation for traffic collision reconstruction offered by the Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR). Enclosed is your application, as well as answers to frequently asked questions about ACTAR, the application process, the accreditation and renewal processes and the costs and benefits of the accreditation program.

Accreditation adds a new dimension to the word "professionalism" in the area of Traffic Accident Reconstruction. ACTAR's purpose is the organization and implementation of a comprehensive accreditation and certification program, accident investigation and reconstruction curricula and related programs leading to degrees and/or certification in the field and to assist individuals and academic institutions in planning their educational programs.

ACTAR is pledged to promote the intellectual development of those individuals, organizations and institutions involved in traffic accident investigation and reconstruction.

ACTAR is dedicated to promote recognition of the ACTAR accreditation program and, in doing so, encourage the integrity, consistency and professionalism of those involved in traffic accident investigation and reconstruction.

The ACTAR Governing Board of Directors is pleased that you have expressed an interest in your professional development and individual accreditation and wish you success in your application and career.

## ***An Overview of the ACTAR Accreditation Program***

ACTAR, the Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction, offers the attached multipart application leading to an opportunity for the applicant to compete in the examination for accreditation as a "Commission Accredited Traffic Accident Reconstructionist."

The ACTAR program is a professional accreditation that begins with the application process and continues throughout the career of an accredited reconstructionist. All accreditation candidates must successfully complete a multipart examination, which is offered in numerous areas throughout the United States and Canada, or internationally as needed. Candidates who successfully complete the examination portion of the accreditation process will be fully accredited by ACTAR as an "Accredited Traffic Accident Reconstructionist".

Applications are reviewed on an as received basis. The applicant will be notified of acceptance or rejection of the application within 90 days of receipt of the application. Approval of the application entitles the applicant to sit for the examination. A *nonrefundable* application fee of \$150 (\$175 for individuals who are not members of an ACTAR Participating Organization) is due with the application.

Approved candidates may then register for an exam at a convenient location. Exam locations and dates are posted on the ACTAR website. There is an administrative testing fee of \$50 (\$100 for individuals who are not members of an ACTAR Participating Organization) due upon registering for an exam. ACTAR imposes no "membership dues" or fees other than subsequent attempts to complete the examination (which require another examination registration fee) or until accreditation renewal.

Accreditation renewal or reaccreditation is necessary 5 years after the successful completion of the accreditation examination.

After accreditation, Accredited Traffic Accident Reconstructionist will be expected to demonstrate that a minimum level of continuing education, involvement and participation in the field of Traffic Accident Investigation and Reconstruction has been maintained. This minimum ongoing education process can be demonstrated by the completion of courses and seminars, as well as other traditional educational opportunities. A cumulative number of 80 Continuing Education Units gathered over a five year period will be necessary for reaccreditation.

### ***Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about ACTAR.***

The application process, the Accreditation and Reaccreditation processes and the Costs and Benefits of the Accreditation Program.

#### **Q: Who Organized ACTAR and when?**

**A:** In 1985, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provided a grant to develop national guidelines for the standardization of training in the field of traffic accident reconstruction. A committee of accident reconstructionists, engineers, educators, and attorneys met and developed a report entitled *Minimum Training Criteria for Police Traffic Accident Reconstructionists*. In the report, the committee addressed the "ultimate certification" of individuals in the field, and recommended that "a certification board be formed" to certify accident reconstructionists.

In late 1990, eleven professional accident reconstruction associations and societies with international representation met to explore the possibility of forming an

internationally recognized accreditation program open to both police and civilian accident reconstructionists. The Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR) is the result of that coalition of professional associations and societies.

**Q: Why was ACTAR created?**

**A:** ACTAR was formed as a result of renewed interest in an accreditation or certification program by a majority of the membership involved professional traffic accident investigation and reconstruction organizations after the 1985 NHTSA grant study. A survey of the membership of the participating organizations showed that more than 90% of the membership of these organizations \_ from both the public and private sectors \_ were in favor of establishing an accreditation program.

The creation of ACTAR and evolution of the accreditation program and final testing process is a result of that interest.

**Q: Who serves on the ACTAR board and how are they appointed?**

**A:** There are currently twenty four voting members on the Governing Board of Directors of ACTAR. Each board member represents one of the ACTAR participating organizations. These members are appointed by the organization they represent.

Each of the representatives serves without pay. The representatives include police officers, engineers, educators, and private consultants all working in the traffic accident investigation and reconstruction fields in the United States and Canada.

**Q: From what sources does ACTAR derive its authority.**

**A:** ACTAR was founded by, exists for the benefit of, and derives its primary authority from the traffic accident investigation and reconstruction community as represented by the membership of the twenty four

participating organizations.

ACTAR is not obligated to or controlled by any governmental body or agency. Participation in the ACTAR accreditation program is voluntary and is a continuing source of ACTAR's accreditation authority. It is also the ongoing goal of ACTAR to promote, within the legal and scientific community, recognition of the minimum standards established by the 1985 NHTSA grant study as well as those developed by an ongoing review of the latest technology and trends in the profession.

**Q: How is ACTAR funded?**

**A:** ACTAR's formative meetings were directly funded by the participating organizations. Each organization paid expenses for their representative to the initial meetings from which the program emerged. Continuing financial support for ACTAR is being aggressively solicited from interested agencies and organizations, but current ongoing funding is supported by application and continuing education unit fees collected from applicants and accredited reconstructionists.

Monies collected will fund the continuing development of the testing procedure, administrative maintenance, and onsite testing costs. Representatives serving on the Governing Board of Directors are serving in voluntary positions at the will of their participating organization.

**Q: What is the accreditation program designed to accomplish?**

**A:** The *minimum* standards of the accreditation program have been designed to:

- advance the recognition of the ACTAR accreditation program and, in doing so, encourage integrity, consistency and professionalism of those involved in traffic accident investigation and reconstruction

- promote the professional and intellectual development of those individuals, organizations and institutions involved in traffic accident investigation and reconstruction
- assist the legal and scientific community in weighing the suitability of individuals offering themselves as Accident Reconstructionists improve public awareness of the profession as it relates to the legal system, both civil and criminal

**Q: How were the ACTAR minimum standards developed?**

**A:** In 1985, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provided a grant to develop national guidelines for the standardization of training in the field of Traffic Accident Reconstruction. A committee of accident reconstructionists, engineers, educators, and attorneys met and developed a report entitled *Minimum Training Standards for Police Traffic Accident Reconstructionists*. In the report, the committee addressed the "ultimate certification" of individuals in the field, and recommended that "a certification board be formed" to certify accident reconstructionists. ACTAR is committed to effectively applying the intentions, ideas and recommendations made in the 1985 NHTSA study.

In 1990, eleven professional accident reconstruction associations and societies with international representation met to explore the possibility of forming an internationally recognized accreditation program open to both public and private sector accident reconstructionists. The Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR) is the result of that coalition of professional associations and societies.

The ACTAR coalition representatives are responsible for meeting with the membership of the organizations they

represent and act on the guidance by their respective membership's wishes.

Through committee discussions of different aspects of accident investigation and reconstruction training programs as well as reviewing other disciplines practicing in the field, the ACTAR board worked out a formula for minimum training and experience requirements. Applying these minimum standards to a higher level of understanding and knowledge in the collision investigation and analysis field, the ACTAR board has developed and continually refines a multipart Accreditation Examination for candidates. The examination has been reviewed by outside independent professionals in the testing field, educators and others to eliminate ambiguities and ensure an objective, clear, and thorough examination.

**Q: Must a practicing accident reconstructionist apply to ACTAR for qualification and accreditation?**

**A:** No one is *required* to apply for Commission Accreditation; however, one of ACTAR's specific goals is to reach out to and inform the legal and scientific community and other agencies of the existence of and the specific standards set by ACTAR.

Until now, lacking any other coordinated effort or suggestion of some manner of standards, evaluating a reconstructionist has been left almost to chance. The ACTAR standards (endorsed by the twenty four participating organizations and developed through coordination with outside interested agencies) will provide a means by which the Accident Reconstruction expert can be objectively evaluated.

**Q: How will my application be evaluated and by whom?**

**A:** The application for ACTAR Commission Accreditation has been designed to elicit specific background information from the individual candidate. Each section of the application will carry a relative weight in the

final review of the application.

The ACTAR board believes that a balance of the "police background" versus the "engineer background" has been reached in the evaluation process and favors neither to the exclusion of the other.

Experience, traditional education in an area related to traffic accident analysis, specific course work in accident investigation and reconstruction and credit for professional licenses are rated more heavily than attendance at seminars and presentations. Preparation of published works and experience as an instructor in accident investigation and reconstruction courses will be given less weight than accident specific training as will completion of an undergraduate degree.

Optionally, the applicant may submit a sample of work product for review by ACTAR. If submitted, this work product must include specific opinion(s) rendered as well as include the documentation, diagrams and photos necessary to support the opinion(s). Such submissions can have the involved persons/information deleted for confidentiality purposes, however, all the foregoing requirements must still be included. Submission of this material is optional. If the applicant provides return postage for the material submitted, it will be returned after review by the applications committee.

**Q: Can accreditation be denied?**

**A:** The initial level of ACTAR Commission Accreditation is based on demonstrating a minimum level of training and experience in the field of motor vehicle traffic collision analysis and accident reconstruction. Those applicants who do not meet the minimum level will be confidentially notified of the area(s) in which they are lacking and suggestions offered which might guide the applicant toward being more fully qualified and ready to compete in the exam for accreditation.

**Q: What if I don't qualify or don't pass the test?**

**A:** The examination portion of the accreditation process will require an actual understanding and knowledge of the applied arts and sciences used in the field. It would be expected that persons who are properly trained, experienced and who practice in the field of traffic accident reconstruction will successfully complete the examination. The exam can be attempted up to three times during a two year period from the time the applicant's application is approved. After that, the applicant must reapply. A new application fee will also be required.

**Q: How is the exam administered?**

**A:** The exam consists of two parts – a 75-question theory portion and case problem portion. The Theory portion features questions formatted for true/false, multiple choice and written response answers.

The case problem portion requires the completion of a scaled diagram and the analysis of data compiled from an actual crash test to complete a reconstruction of that collision.

**Q: What materials are permitted to assist with the exam?**

**A:** There is no restriction on the quantity or type of printed reference material that a candidate may bring and refer to during the exam. Candidates may not share reference material. Effective May 1, 2011, all reference material must be in a printed format as the use of electronic devices will be strictly restricted.

Effective May 1, 2011, all electronic devices used during or to assist with the exam are limited to those approved by ACTAR. The current list of approved devices includes only the following calculators:

- **Casio:** All fx-115 models. Any Casio calculator must contain fx-115 in its model name.

Examples of acceptable Casio fx-115 models include (but are not limited to)

fx-115 MS  
fx-115 MS Plus  
fx-115 MS SR  
fx-115 ES

- **Hewlett Packard:** The HP 33s and HP 35s models, but no others.
- **Texas Instruments:** All TI-30X and TI-36X models. Any Texas Instruments calculator must contain either TI-30X or TI-36X in its model name. Examples of acceptable TI-30X and TI-36X models include (but are not limited to)

TI-30Xa  
TI-30Xa SOLAR  
TI-30Xa SE  
TI-30XS Multiview  
TI-30X IIB  
TI-30X IIS  
TI-36X II  
TI-36X SOLAR

- **Sharp:** EL-531WB(BL or BK). Any Sharp calculator must contain EL-531WB in its model name.

The list may be reviewed and amended by ACTAR. Refer to latest list on web site.

**Q: What information is released regarding an inquiry into an ACTAR Accredited Reconstructionist?**

**A:** The candidate's examination and results are destroyed 60 days after the examination date. No numerical scores are recorded whether the candidate passes or fails the examination. Candidates who successfully complete the examination process have their accreditation number, passing date, and accreditation expiration date released to inquiries. The status of all other candidates are referred to as in processing or expired as appropriate.

**Q: Who is eligible for Commission Accreditation?**

**A:** Any individual who is involved in preparing or offering expert opinion testimony with respect to the analysis of an

automobile traffic collision is eligible to apply for Commission Accreditation.

ACTAR has adopted the following definition of "Accident Reconstruction:"

"...a systematic process of evaluating the evidence associated with a particular collision sequence and applying accepted physical principles in order to ascertain how the collision occurred..."

**Q: How long will it take to be accredited?**

**A:** All candidates will be required to successfully complete a practical examination. Most areas of the US and Canada are convenient for accreditation candidates to meet and participate in the examination during the candidates two-year window to complete the test portion of the accreditation process.

ACTAR provides examinations around the US and Canada in conjunction with regular meetings of the participating associations or if sufficient applicants require testing in a specific geographical area. ACTAR will also provide examinations on an international basis as needed.

**Q: For how long will I be accredited and what will I have to do to be reaccredited?**

**A:** ACTAR Commission Accreditation will be valid for five (5) years from the date of the successful completion of the accreditation examination. During the 5 years after the examination, the Reconstructionist will be expected to gather a minimum of 80 continuing education units (CEU), credits or points.

Continuing education can be demonstrated by attendance at ACTAR approved collision specific training programs, attendance at seminars and by means of completing traditional education programs related to or applicable to accident investigation or reconstruction.

**Q: What are the benefits of ACTAR Commission Accreditation?**

**A:** The status of being an ACTAR "Accredited Traffic Accident Reconstructionist" will provide the individual:

- international recognition of having met standards set by twenty four participating professional organizations
- continued professional growth and development
- personal and professional confidence in the reconstructionist's abilities
- employer confidence
- recognition by the legal and scientific community that the Accredited Reconstructionist has met the only broad based, objective and meaningful standards available anywhere in the world
- inclusion in a directory of ACTAR Commission Accredited Traffic Accident Reconstructionists.
- inclusion in an electronic database on the ACTAR Internet Web Site. This database can be searched by the legal community seeking traffic accident reconstructionists as expert witnesses.

The Current Participating Organizations of ACTAR are as follows:

- American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) - *Admitted 1996*
- California Association of Accident Reconstruction Specialists (CAARS) - *Admitted 1999*
- Canadian Association of Technical Accident Investigators and Reconstructionists (CATAIR)\*
- Colorado State Patrol (CSP) - *Admitted 2000*
- Denver Research Institute-University of Denver - *Admitted 2008 through 2013*
- Forensic Accident Reconstructionists of Oregon (FARO) - *Admitted 1996*
- International Association of Accident Reconstruction Specialists (IAARS) \*
- Illinois Association of Technical Accident Investigators (IATAI)\*
- Maryland Association of Traffic Accident Investigators (MdATAI)\*
- Michigan State Police (MSP) - *Admitted 1996*
- Midwest Association of Technical Accident Investigators (MwATAI)\*
- National Association of Professional Accident Reconstruction Specialists (NAPARS)\*
- National Association of Traffic Accident Reconstructionists and Investigators (NATARI)\*
- New Jersey Association of Accident Reconstruction Specialists (NJAARS) - *Admitted 1995*
- New York Statewide Traffic Accident Reconstruction Society (NYSTARS) - *Admitted 1998*
- Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) - *Admitted 2004*



- Oregon State Police (OSP) - *Admitted 2005*
- Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) - *Admitted 1995*
- Society of Accident Reconstructionists (SOAR)\*
- South Carolina Highway Patrol - *Admitted 2009*
- Southwestern Association of Technical Accident Investigators (SATAI) \*
- Texas Association of Accident Reconstruction Specialists (TAARS)\*
- University of Central Missouri, Safety Center (UCMO) - *Admitted 1996*
- Washington Association of Technical Accident Investigators (WATAI)\*

\*Founding Organizations