

Public Roads

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Turning the National Spotlight on TIM

Recent statistics paint a sobering picture of the negative impacts of congestion and crashes on the Nation's highways. In a 2011 report, for example, AAA estimates that congestion cost the United States \$97.7 billion in 2009 (the most recent data available at the time). The study also reported that the cost of traffic crashes, excluding the cost of deaths and injuries to motorists and responders, rose to nearly \$300 billion in 2009.

In addition, many first responders are killed or suffer serious injuries while addressing traffic incidents. In 2012, more than 200 public safety professionals and more than 30 tow operators lost their lives in the line of duty, with an estimated 13 percent of those deaths occurring during incident response.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is addressing these safety and congestion concerns by leading the way in the field of traffic incident management (TIM). For more than a decade, FHWA has built partnerships with law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency medical services, public works, towing and recovery, safety/service patrols, and other groups that respond to incidents on Federal, State, local, and tribal roadways.

Beginning with this issue of Public Roads, a series of articles will focus on the nationwide effort to improve responses to traffic incidents, with the two goals of protecting the traveling public and responders and reducing congestion. Each article will highlight different aspects of the work by FHWA and its partners to enhance incident response and further develop this evolving public safety discipline.

The first article in the series, "Successfully Managing Traffic Incidents Is No Accident," on page 32 of this issue provides an overview of the need for traffic incident management. The article also describes how FHWA brought together its division offices and State departments of transportation to form a first-of-its-kind partnership of multidisciplinary players in incident management. The partnership establishes transportation agencies as public safety entities along with other first responder organizations.



A future article will describe a national initiative to train incident responders through a course developed by the second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2). FHWA aims to train millions of first responders, the goals being to standardize terminology, introduce a unified process for handling traffic incidents, and produce other needed outcomes.

Additional topics covered in the Public Roads series will include the contributions of various disciplines, such as firefighting, law enforcement, towing, and public works, to traffic incident management, as well as best practices and the collection and analysis of performance metrics.

FHWA is honored to lead the Nation in building a robust program of traffic incident management by providing the tools and knowledge to help professionals improve the safety, timeliness, and effectiveness of their responses. Ultimately, this coordinated work with all partners will open lanes more quickly, thereby reducing congestion, safeguarding motorists and responders, and saving lives.

Stay tuned over the coming year to learn more about the dynamic work that FHWA and its partners are doing in this emerging area. To learn more about the program or to become involved in improving traffic incident management, contact the Traffic Incident and Events Management Team in FHWA's Office of Operations at TI&EM@dot.gov.

Jeffrey Lindley
Associate Administrator
Office of Operations
Federal Highway Administration

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Technical Issues: TFHRC.WebMaster@dot.gov

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