



BACK STEP TALKS

Highway Safety

NOVEMBER 2021

I became well acquainted with the Cumberland Valley Volunteer Fireman's Association 10 Cones of Highway Safety nearly a decade ago, when I found myself teaching basic highway safety to brand new volunteers in Montgomery County. The message was poignant, the story—horrific, and yet I always viewed it as a horrible accident that had happened to someone else, somewhere else. It was something that wouldn't happen to me.

On February 15, 2015, a drunk driver lost control of his vehicle on I495 in the DC area during an ice storm. The pickup truck spun across 5 lanes of traffic and struck a disabled vehicle on the shoulder before coming to rest against the back of Glen Echo's

This is My Story

Ambulance 711. Two members of the crew—both EMTs who had been with the department for about a year—were seriously injured by the collision. The crew followed all of the safety policies in place—using flares, wearing traffic vests, limiting their time on scene, and working away from traffic—and yet this still happened.

I was the driver on Ambulance 711 that night. I cared for my friends and colleagues on the side of the beltway while we waited for additional units to arrive. It felt like a lifetime. In reality it was only a minute or two.

Experiencing a secondary collision, a near miss, is not an experience I would wish on anyone. And as my experience shows, even when we follow all of training and policies and procedures, bad things can still happen. Take this not as a reason to shrug off adherence to policies, but to think about how much worse it could have been if they had not been in place. I know that for everyone else reading this, my experience is someone else's, and it's easy to write off an experience that is not your own, but this brings it a little closer to home, and shows that it can happen here. It can happen to us. It happened to me.

Lt. Meghan Quinn

Glen Echo Fire Dept.

Firefighters and TIM

Traffic Incident Management (TIM) is a system of planned and coordinated actions to detect, respond to, and clear traffic incidents and restore traffic flow as safely and quickly as possible. TIM is a multidisciplinary process that includes fire, EMS, law enforcement, public works, tow operators, and any other personnel who may be working along the nation's roadways. TIM is a critical element of the National Unified Goal (NUG), set by the U.S.

Department of Transportation that set as its objectives: responder safety; safe, quick clearance; and prompt, reliable, and interoperable communications.

Why is TIM important to fire and EMS responders? In 2020, vehicles struck and killed forty-six emergency responders (fire, EMS, and law enforcement) who were working various types of roadway incidents. We all respond to incidents on the highway, why not train our personnel to handle the traffic around us?

The Traffic Incident Management class (FIRE-132) hosted by MFRI is arguably the most important class and yet the least requested class in regard to

our safety on the highway. The Traffic Incident Management class is to instruct personnel how to increase safety and reduce incident clearance rates at motor vehicle incidents. The emphasis of the course will be to combine the knowledge, abilities, and resources of all responders, making full use of available technology and addressing responsibilities of the wide variety of agencies that may be encountered on a roadway emergency including police, fire, EMS, HAZMAT, DOT, DOE, FEMA, media, and tow operators.

Want to know more? Ask your MFRI Regional Office to schedule a TIM class in your area. Your life and the life of other first responders may depend upon it.

113

The number of fallen firefighters through October 2021. Please don't be a statistic.

Courtesy: US Fire Administration

Roadside PPE—Protection and Visibility

Working on the State's highways and roads is very dangerous, especially when traffic continues to move next to the incident scene. Depending on the incident, the level of personal protective equipment (PPE) can vary, from bunker gear for vehicle fires to station boots for patient evaluation. Whatever the incident type, the appropriate PPE needs to be worn to reduce the possibility of injury.

The motoring public is curious about what is going on at an accident scene and their attention will be drawn away from safely operating their vehicle. They tend to get tunnel vision and only see what is happening with the injured and may not see first responders directing traffic, getting equipment, or conducting investigations. Times of reduced visibility, such as nighttime or

extreme weather conditions, can only add to the driver's distraction. To reduce the likelihood of fatalities or injuries caused by motor vehicles, the Federal Government enacted Title 23 CFR Part 634: Worker Visibility. This regulation requires anyone working within the right-of-way on federally funded highways must wear high visibility safety apparel. This apparel must meet the requirements of Performance Class 2 or 3 described in ANSI/ISEA 107 publication: American National Standard for High-Visibility Safety Apparel and Headwear. This regulation not only applies to highway workers, but firefighters, EMS personnel, law enforcement officers, and wrecker operators. The only exclusion is when personnel are actively involved in fire suppression and/or hazardous material activities. Only then may these first responders wear retroreflective turn-out gear

meeting the requirements of other organizations such as NFPA. The reflective striping on turn-out gear does NOT meet ANSI/ISA 107 requirements.

There is one other topic that will reduce distraction and increase our visibility to the motoring public that is scene lighting. Scene lighting includes apparatus emergency & scene lights, portable lights, and light towers. The goal is to reduce the chance of blinding the drivers of oncoming traffic. Many new apparatus will turn off front facing white lights when placed in park. Make sure portable lighting and light towers do not face oncoming traffic.

Take away – Wear the appropriate PPE, increase your visibility to the motoring public, and watch out for each other.

By the Numbers

46

The number of emergency responders struck and killed operating at traffic incidents

in 2020 including police, fire, EMS, tow operators and road workers

Traffic Management Resources

Responder Safety: www.respondersafety.com

US Fire Administration “Traffic Incident Management Systems”: www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_330.pdf

US Fire Administration “Emergency Vehicle and Roadway Operations Safety”: www.usfa.fema.gov/operations/ops_vehicle.html

Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute: www.mfri.org

National Highway Institute: www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov

Contact Us!

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Remember These Points!

First, by the very nature of fire/rescue and EMS work, additional space to work is typically required. Secondly, lane +1 blocking occurs when responders block the involved lane(s) plus one additional lane to provide a protected lateral space for safety. Also, take only as many lanes as you need for as long as you need them – as the incident is cleared, lanes can be progressively opened. Remember to turn your front wheels of vehicles away from the incident space

Crash Responder Safety Week

In 2021, the Federal Highway Administration set out to reduce the number of incidents related to responders operating on the highway forming an Executive Leadership Group to examine and make recommendations to curb the number of incidents. One of the goals was to develop a recognition week for responders. This was first tackled in 2015. This year, the Crash Responder Safety Week will be recognized on November 8th through the 14th with each day having its own specific theme. Those themes are captured in the box to the right. Departments are encouraged to take a look at the FREE training that is available at the National Highway Institute and ResponderSafety.com. Offering both train the trainer and TIM training courses. Additionally, take some time to review your agency policies for roadway responses.

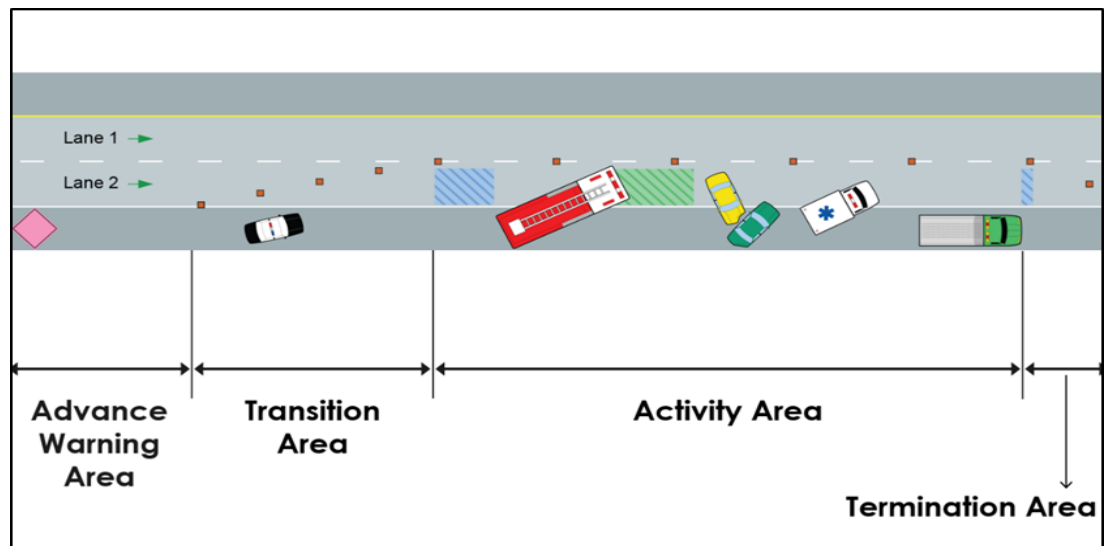
November 8-14, 2021

- Monday** Leadership messaging to bring awareness of the issue
- Tuesday** Slow Down, Move Over Laws with messages to the public
- Wednesday** Highlighting the free TIMS training that is available
- Thursday** Recognizes and honors our Nation's veterans who many are first responders.
- Friday** Recognition to all responders to traffic incidents.
- Saturday** Education for public on traffic incidents and to remain alert when approaching highway incidents.
- Sunday** Focuses on driver education programs teaching Move Over laws to students.

TIMS Apparatus Positioning

Blocking

- **Linear Block** – occurs when a responder positions their vehicle to block a single lane or the shoulder
- **Multi-Lane Block** – occurs when the first responder positions their vehicle to block multiple involved lanes



The position emergency vehicles at an incident in a manner that attempts to:

- Protect the responders performing their duties
- Protect road users traveling through the incident scene
- Minimize, to the extent practical, disruption of the adjacent traffic flow

Considerations for determining to position angled or parallel (straight) vehicle include:

- Current conditions, such as roadway geometry, sight distance, weather, etc.
- Safety of other responders, crash victims, and passing motorists
- Impact to vehicle visibility, including vehicle markings and emergency vehicle lighting