

WSDOT INCIDENT RESPONSE PROGRAM

Strategic Plan for Traffic Incident Management



July 2008



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

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Our mission is to keep people and business moving by operating and improving the state's transportation systems vital to our taxpayers and communities

WSDOT's Mission Statement

OVERVIEW

The top three transportation priorities of the Washington Department of Transportation are preserving the road system, making safer roadways, and reducing traffic congestion. The Incident Response Program plays a vital role in the success of meeting these priorities.

Incident Response or Traffic Incident Management is the marshalling of agencies, vendors, and other resources to respond to, investigate, and clean up traffic incidents. Four

to ten minutes of traffic congestion (depending on traffic volume) can result from every minute a lane remains blocked, so incidents must be detected and cleared as rapidly as possible to minimize the impact on congestion, especially during peak periods.

The Incident Response Program compliments other agency programs and helps maximize the agency's ability to efficiently operate the states transportation systems by deploying specially trained roving Incident Response Technicians in congested areas to manage traffic incidents and minimize their impact on traffic flow.

Whether clearing minor incidents such as stalled vehicles quickly, or providing emergency and work zone traffic control at major incidents, life safety is the #1 goal: safety of motorists involved, safety of responders, and safety of motorists approaching the incident. Fortunately, traffic incident management practices that improve responder safety also enhance motorist safety, and vice versa.

The program's motto is "Clearing Roads - Helping Drivers," and its mission is to minimize traffic congestion caused by traffic incidents, through early detection and response, to clear them quickly in order to prevent secondary collisions, keep traffic moving, and reduce congestion.

With 55 roving Incident Response vehicles statewide, escalating costs and staffing limitations are a major threat to program sustainability. The purpose of this plan is to identify service delivery and funding strategies that will enable to program to keep up with the increasing service demands of detecting, responding, and clearing traffic incidents to make our highways safer everyone.





Incident Response Roving Zones

BACKGROUND

INCIDENT RESPONSE PROGRAM

WSDOT's Incident Response Program originated in 1963 when four trucks were deployed on the floating bridges. The program grew incrementally over the years in response to growth along the Interstate 5 corridor.

In 2002, the program was expanded to include roving patrols during peak traffic periods in congested areas and on Stevens, Bluett and Snoqualmie passes. Weekend roving coverage is provided in some areas, but the program is not currently staffed to provide 24/7 roving coverage. However, Incident Response Technicians are available for emergency call-out at all times.



Assisting with a spin-out on Snoqualmie Pass

The designated Incident Response roving zones are:

- Bellevue - I-405
- Bellingham - I-5
- Bothell - I-405
- Chehalis/Centralia – I-5
- Everett - I-5 & US-2
- Evergreen Pt. Floating Bridge - SR520
- Federal Way/ SeaTac/Tukwila - I-5
- Fort Lewis vicinity - I-5
- Kent/Auburn - SR167
- Lynnwood - I-5
- Mercer Island Floating Bridge/Tunnels - I-90
- Mount Vernon - I-5
- Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater -I-5 & US-101
- Parkland/So. Tacoma - SR512 & SR167
- Port Orchard/Bremerton/Gig Harbor - SR16 & SR3
- Renton/Tukwila - I-405
- Seattle Express Lanes - I-5
- Seattle (downtown) - I-5
- Seattle (north end) - I-5
- Snoqualmie Pass - I-90
- Stevens Pass – US-2
- Spokane - I-90
- Tacoma (downtown) - I-5
- Tacoma Narrows Bridge vicinity - SR16

- Totem Lake - I-405
- So. Thurston Co. – I-5
- Vancouver - I-5, I-205, SR14, & SR500

WSDOT Incident Response Technicians:

- Patrol congested roadways during peak traffic periods and provide assistance to motorists such as changing flat tires, jump-starting, and other temporary repairs to get them safely on their way.
- Are equipped with Washington State Patrol radios and are dispatched by the regional WSP Communication centers.
- Respond to collisions to assist WSP troopers with short term and/or long term traffic control to reduce the likelihood of secondary collisions.
- Are equipped with WSDOT radios and regularly communicate with the WSDOT Regional Traffic Management Centers to provide on scene traffic and weather updates that are then distributed through the various traveler information systems.
- Communicate requests for maintenance resources through WSDOT Traffic Management Centers and coordinate response of those resources with WSP Communications Centers.
- Assist the incident commander at major traffic incidents with scene management and clearance issues such as coordinating the response of specialized maintenance equipment such as loaders, sand trucks, etc.
- Coordinate emergency infrastructure repairs when necessary to expedite re-opening of lane closures.
- Coordinate the mitigation of incidental fluid spills at collision scenes in consultation with the Washington State Patrol and towing/recovery personnel.
- Serve as the WSDOT command post representative at major incidents and/or emergencies under the National Incident Command System, and communicate situation status updates to WSDOT Traffic Management Centers and or Emergency Operations Centers.



Incident Response truck pumps diesel from a damaged fuel tank to prevent spillage during recovery.

Traffic incidents cause congestion resulting in travel delays, secondary collisions, increased fuel consumption and air pollution, and increased travel and shipping costs. It is well accepted that up to 50 to 60 percent of urban traffic congestion is caused by non-recurring incidents.

The problem with traffic congestion is that it reduces highway capacity when it is needed most, and incident related congestion increases the likelihood of

additional collisions occurring, which can cause even more congestion. These “secondary crashes,” following incidents that have not been cleared cause additional property damage, injuries, and fatalities and require additional response resources.

A traffic incident is defined as anything that affects the flow of traffic. Stalled and disabled vehicles are by far the most commonly occurring traffic incidents. Before WSDOT created its Incident Response Program, Washington State Patrol troopers were the only public agency responders to these minor incidents. Since most disabled vehicles are non-blocking and don't involve property damage or injuries, these minor incidents are a lower law enforcement priority than calls such as a reports of a drunk driver or an injury collision. This does not mean that these minor incidents were or are unimportant to the Patrol, it simply recognizes that when there are more calls than officers, they have to prioritize when lives are at stake.



A helicopter makes an emergency landing on Interstate 90 during blizzard conditions.

This is where the WSDOT's Incident Response Program compliments the patrol and fills the gap. Incident Response Technicians do not have law enforcement responsibilities, so they are primarily focused on detecting and clearing minor incidents which represent a large percentage of traffic incidents.

It is well documented that early detection and clearance of these minor incidents helps preserve roadway capacity, prevent secondary collisions, and reduce congestion, so by fulfilling this mission, Incident Response Technicians free-up troopers to focus on their law enforcement responsibilities while ensuring that stalled motorists are quickly tended to. When collisions do occur, WSDOT Incident Response Technicians are dispatched by the Washington State Patrol to assist with traffic control, scene management, and other clearance issues to prevent secondary collisions and reduce incident related congestion.

Multi-vehicle collisions involving serious injuries and death represent the most complex type of traffic incidents and frequently require responders from several agencies, organizations and disciplines to safely clear. They are the highest priority incidents and frequently require complex investigations which take considerable time. When heavy vehicles are involved, spilled loads, vehicle weights, and potential release of hazardous materials complicates the recovery

and clearance process. Weather conditions, traffic volumes, and other factors can create conditions that complicate managing traffic incidents, and every major traffic incident creates its own unique challenges.



A semi-truck fire blocks the southbound lanes of Interstate 5 near the Tacoma Mall.

An African proverb states that “It takes a village to raise a child.” Similarly, it takes a village to clean up a major traffic incident because there is no single agency, community, or entity with all the necessary expertise and equipment to handle the wide variety of issues and hazards encountered at major incidents. The hazards range from broken glass and sharp twisted metal, to bio-hazards, and the release of potentially large amounts of an almost infinite number of hazardous chemicals or materials transported on Washington state highways.

For these reasons, efficient and effective Traffic Incident Management at the state level requires creating and sustaining multi-agency and multi-community partnerships with hundreds of agencies and entities such as: law enforcement, fire/EMS, towing and recovery, transportation, environmental regulatory agencies and hazardous material cleanup contractors. Getting all these agencies to work smoothly together during traffic emergencies requires communication, coordination and cooperation. This requires building and maintaining partnerships through outreach, training, and personal contact.



A collision blocks Interstate 5 near Lakewood.

Building and maintaining the partnerships necessary for effective statewide Traffic Incident Management program includes maintaining individual agency operational readiness to respond to and expedite the safe clearance of traffic incidents in cooperation and coordination with other responding entities under the Incident Command System (ICS). This requires ICS training and multi-disciplinary training that teaches responders to understand and appreciate the roles that each discipline performs.

This strategic plan for Traffic Incident Management was developed in partnership with the Washington State Patrol to improve communication, cooperation, coordination, and response to traffic incidents. The strategies in this plan are intended to promote multi-agency communication, cooperation, and coordination in response to and clearance of traffic incidents throughout Washington.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Effective Traffic Incident Management directly supports WSDOT's Top Three Transportation Priorities:

Preserving Road Systems – Preserving Transportation Infrastructure

The Incident Response Program helps keep traffic moving, maximizing the safety of motorists and the safety of employees who build and maintain the system. When the infrastructure is damaged by traffic incidents, Incident Response Technicians work to minimize damage and expedite repairs necessary to restore the safe flow of traffic.

Making Safer Roadways - Ensuring Safe Travel

Incident Response Technicians:

- Detect and clear stalled vehicles quickly
- Provide traffic control to prevent secondary collisions and improve safety of responders and victims of traffic incidents
- Work closely with WSP troopers to clear collisions quickly.
- Are the first line of defense during severe storms and natural disasters to assess damage to the transportation infrastructure, identify hazards, and take appropriate action to protect motorists and keep traffic moving.

Reducing Traffic Congestion: “Moving Washington”

Capacity - Add Capacity Strategically

Incident Response Technicians rove construction and work zones to detect and quickly clear stalled vehicles to improve construction worker and motorist safety and keep traffic moving.

Efficiency - Operate Efficiently

Incident Response Technicians:

- Quickly detect and remove *thousands* of stalled and disabled vehicles to prevent incident related congestion
- Assist with emergency response coordination at major incidents to restore the flow of traffic quickly
- Rove High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes to keep traffic flowing
- Assist with special event planning and operations to minimize traffic disruptions
- Report malfunction or damage to the transportation infrastructure solutions.
- Keep regional Traffic Management Centers informed of traffic impacts which are fed to traveler information systems
- Have direct radio communications with the Washington State Patrol to help coordinate response of both agencies to emergency situations
- Provide assistance to the Washington State Patrol in ice and snow emergencies and provide regular pass condition updates to Traffic Management Centers

Demand - Manage Demand by Providing Informed Choices

Incident Response Technicians provide:

- Regular road, weather, and incident status updates to Traffic Management Centers to feed traveler information systems such as: website, Media, VMS, HAR, 511

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The key objective of our traffic operations is to facilitate the safe movement of persons and goods, with minimum delay, throughout the state. In order to perform this objective, the Incident Response Program is focused on the following:

Responder Safety and motorist safety

Responders who are killed or injured in the line of duty are unable to perform their duties and add another major incident that now has to be managed and cleared by other responders. For these reasons, responder safety is the #1 priority. It should be noted that steps taken to improve responder safety also improve motorist safety, and vice versa.

Safe, Quick Clearance

Whether a blocking disabled vehicle, or a serious blocking collision, the sooner an incident response technician arrives on scene and deploys emergency traffic control measures to warn oncoming motorists, the safer are those involved in the incident, the responders, and motorists approaching the scene. If a blocking incident is expected to extend beyond sixty minutes, WSDOT maintenance resources are called to set up a MUTCD compliant work zone to provide oncoming motorists ample notification of a lane blockage or closure ahead.

Clearing incidents quickly also enhances responder and motorist safety by reducing their exposure time to the hazards that incidents present.

Maximize Capacity of the Roadway System

A traffic incident is defined as anything that affects the flow of traffic. Stalled and disabled vehicles are by far the most commonly occurring traffic incidents and they can cause a capacity decrease of up to 20 percent, even when on the shoulder. Incident Response Technicians rove in congested areas to quickly detect and clear stalled vehicles to preserve capacity when it is needed most.

Strategically Manage Demand

Early detection and clearance of traffic incidents prevents additional secondary incidents from occurring, which further helps minimize incident related congestion and keep traffic flowing. This maximizes travel options for motorists and also helps to reduce air pollution and conserve fuel.

Minimize the Impact of Roadway Incidents on Delay and Safety

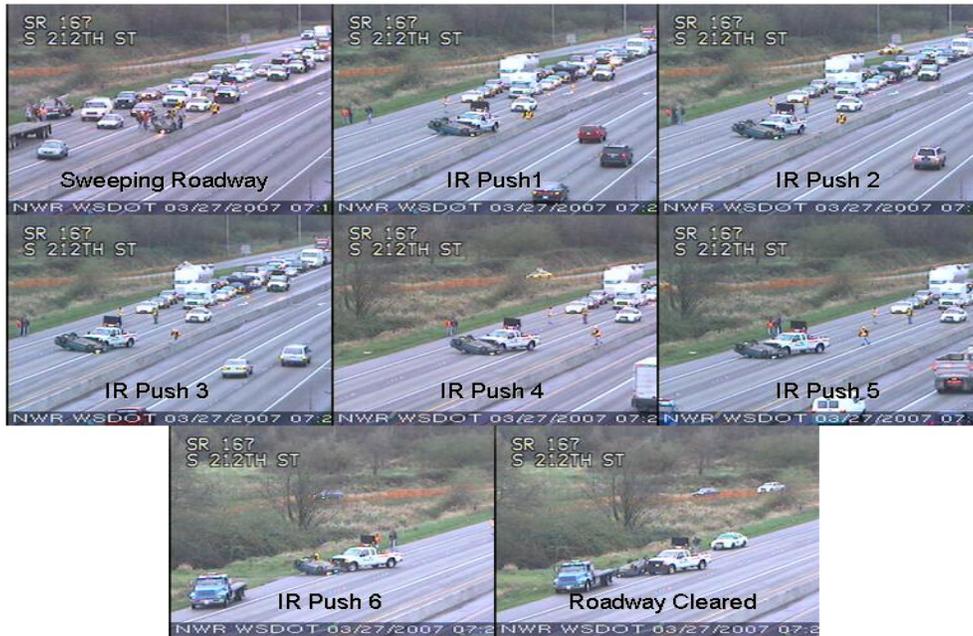
However, it is well documented that early detection and clearance of minor incidents such as disabled vehicles helps keep traffic moving by preventing them from becoming involved in collisions and more serious incidents that that can result in property damage, injuries, death, and increased congestion. Therefore, the Incident Response program's roving service patrols play an important role in preventing secondary collisions and related congestion.

When collisions do occur, Incident Response Technicians provide traffic control to help prevent secondary collisions from occurring. When the roadway infrastructure is damaged, they are often able to make emergency repairs to get traffic moving. They also assist WSP and other responders with clean-up and clearance issues, sometimes facilitating the use of specialized equipment such as sweepers, sanders, and loaders or simply pushing the damaged vehicles from the roadway.

Incident Response Technicians serve as the on-scene eyes and ears for the regional traffic management centers. They provide ongoing traveler information alerts and status reports to WSDOT Traffic Management Centers so motorists have the option of taking an alternate route or delaying their travel; thus helping to reduce incident related congestion and improve travel time reliability.

WSDOT's Incident Response Technicians are trained and equipped to handle all types of traffic incidents or hazards such as: flat tires, serious collisions, snowstorms, windstorms, floods, and earthquakes. There are several efficiency benefits to this "all hazard" response philosophy.

SR 167 Rollover 3-27-07



During transportation emergencies, Incident Response Technicians can quickly serve as the first line of defense during severe storms and natural disasters to assess damage to the transportation infrastructure, identify hazards, and take appropriate action to protect motorists and keep traffic moving. Because they are equipped with WSP radios and are dispatched by through WSP communication centers, they are able to provide immediate assistance to the patrol during emergency situations when there are not enough officers to handle all calls for assistance.

Facilitate Partnerships with WSP and Other Responding Partners

Traffic Incident Management is a key component in the Joint Operations Policy Statement (JOPS) agreement between WSDOT and the Washington State Patrol. Originated In 2002, the JOPS agreement formalized the longstanding partnership between the two agencies. This document is renewed annually and presents a clear, mutually shared vision of cooperation covering data sharing, traffic management, work zone safety, commercial vehicle operations, joint facilities and several other joint operations.

Under the JOPS agreement, WSDOT and WSP have established a mutual goal of safely clearing highway traffic incidents within 90 minutes. Achieving this goal requires additional partnerships with local fire and EMS services, the tow industry, the media, the insurance industry, and the motoring public. The purpose of establishing quick-clearance goals is to enhance motorist and responder safety and minimize incident related congestion.

Our Traffic Incident Management Mission:

Protect life and property and minimize traffic congestion caused by traffic incidents, through early detection, response and quick clearance of traffic incidents.

REGIONAL STAFFING AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS

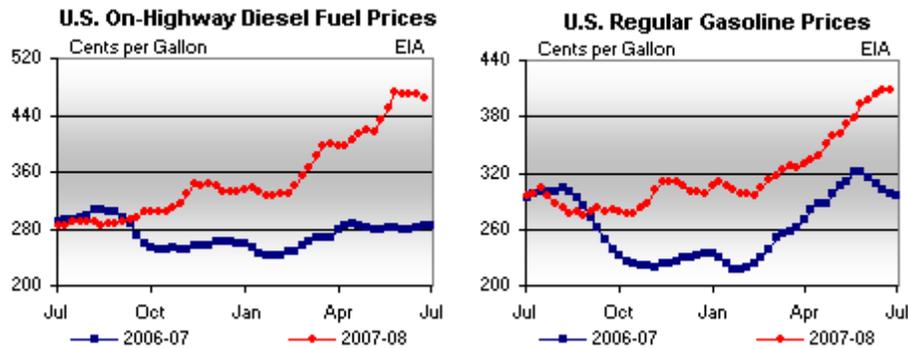
The concept of incident response operations originated in the densely populated Puget Sound region in response to congestion, and while most of our incident response resources remain deployed in that area, there is a growing need for incident response services statewide.

All areas of the state can benefit from the capacity preserving benefits of rapid detection and clearance of traffic incidents, because roadway capacity is usually proportional to the area's historical traffic volume. Traffic volumes in smaller communities are lower, but so is the available roadway capacity. This makes the impact of traffic incidents relative. From the motorist's perspective, the impact of a blocking incident is the same in Wenatchee, Pasco, or Spokane as it is in the Seattle area, so all areas can benefit from minimizing the loss of roadway capacity caused by traffic incidents.

Additional resources are needed to maintain the current level of service within the densely populated regions and to expand incident response coverage areas, hours of service and weekend coverage in many areas. More roving patrols translate into more incidents being detected and cleared quickly. It will also enhance responder and motorist safety through improved traffic control and better queue management at collisions.

Queue management means having an Incident Response vehicle stationed on the shoulder with a message board warning motorists that they are approaching a traffic stoppage ahead. Since the queue of stopped vehicles continually grows backward from the incident as long as the roadway is blocked, the back of the queue can be miles from the incident. In areas with only one Incident Response Technician, they have to choose between assisting at the scene, or managing the queue. If a second Incident Response Technician is available, they can cover both bases.

Rising fuel costs present immediate and long term threats to the program. In the short term, skyrocketing fuel prices are causing budget deficits that will require temporary service level reductions if an immediate funding solution is not found. The following charts from the Energy Information Administration document the price increases that have occurred for gasoline and diesel fuel in the past year.



The long term threat could require substantial and permanent reductions to current service levels.

TWO YEAR NEEDS

The immediate staffing and vehicle needs are listed by region below.

Northwest Region

In Seattle, more FTEs are needed to meet the current and future service demands of continued growth along the Interstate 5 corridor between Seattle and the Canadian border. There are gaps in I-5 coverage through Lynnwood, Marysville, South Skagit County, and South Whatcom County. Additional staff would also improve services on the congested Canadian border crossing routes such as SR 539, SR 543, and SR 9. Increased staffing levels would better help meet the increased traffic associated with annual special community events such as the Tulip Festival, SeaFair, Oyster Run, etc. Other special events such as the 2009 World Fire and Police Games and the 2101 Olympics in Vancouver, BC are examples of one-time events that have relatively short term, but significant impact on traffic volume.

Staffing: 12 FTEs
Vehicles: 12 IRL Trucks

Olympic Region

The Olympic region is currently only staffed to cover the morning and afternoon traffic peak hours in its Tacoma, Olympia, and Bremerton coverage areas. Budget limitations have reduced service levels and stretched coverage areas considerably leaving significant mid-day gaps in the south Puget Sound area. The next several biennia bring major highway system expansion and growth to the area adding future capacity while potentially compounding the congestion issue during construction. As traffic volumes continue to increase, future service demands will also increase the need for maintaining optimal traffic flow with the help of Incident Response personnel. With fuel price and equipment costs climbing, funding to bring existing staff levels current and additional staff to cover more of the system is necessary to keep pace. Additional FTE's will assist with maintaining reasonable coverage areas for longer durations of the day.

Staffing: 7.75 FTEs
Vehicles: 6 IRL Trucks (with initial costs for upgrade to medium)

Southwest Region

The Southwest Region needs additional IR FTEs to provide expanded supervision and IR coverage on I-5 in the Chehalis and Kelso, and Vancouver areas.

Staffing: 2FTEs
Vehicles: 2 IRL Trucks

North Central Region

The North Central Region proposes to expand seasonal coverage on Stevens and Blewett passes with an additional FTE that would be deployed to work recreational traffic peaks. The added resources will also cover scheduled construction projects with high traffic impacts in the Wenatchee area and throughout North Central Washington.

Staffing: .5 FTEs
Vehicles: 1 IRL Trucks

South Central Region

The South Central Region will add another FTE to provide backup coverage on Snoqualmie pass, and the Ellensburg to Vantage area on I-90 and Interstate 82 from Ellensburg to Yakima.

Staffing: 1 FTEs
Vehicles: 1 IRL Trucks

Eastern Region

The Eastern Region needs expanded IR coverage for expansion of the I-90 service area east from Sullivan Rd to the Idaho border and the Medical Lake interchange to US-2 for AM & PM Peak flows.

Staffing: 1 FTEs
Vehicles: 1 IRL Trucks

TEN YEAR SUMMARY TABLE

The immediate and long term program staffing and equipment needs are summarized in the following chart:

Region	Existing		2 Year Need		10 Year Need	
	FTE	Trucks	FTE	Trucks	FTE	Trucks
	Northwest	37.9	40	12	12	7.1
Olympic	8	8	7.75	6	18	16
Southwest	4	5	2	2	2	2
North Central	1	1	0.5	1	1	1
South Central	1	1	1	1	2	2
Eastern	2.5	3	1	1	2	2
Total	54.4	58	24.25	23	32.1	31

As of July 2008

OUTREACH, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PROGRAMS

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION SHARING

The challenges of effectively managing traffic incidents in Washington are very similar to those faced in other states and countries. When other states or countries develop “best practices” or programs that work to improve their traffic incident management operations, the obvious question is “What can we learn and can we apply it in Washington?” Some “best practices” may not be directly transferrable because of cultural differences and variations in regulatory structure, but they can often serve as a framework that can be modified to improve our own practices and procedures. In some cases they provide an entire new paradigm for future innovation.

For these reasons, WSDOT actively monitors and participates in national and international information exchanges. We also welcome in-state opportunities to exchange information and ideas with stakeholders and communities to ensure our incident management practices and programs are as effective and as possible.

Examples of recent exchanges include:

European Incident Management Summit – September 2008

Portland Oregon Traffic Management Center / Incident Response Tour – June 2008

Washington State Fire Fighters Association Annual Conference – June 2008

I-95 Coalition Highway Operations Group Annual Meeting – May 2008
 Towing and Recovery Association of America Annual Conference – May 2008
 I-95 Coalition Towing Summit – March 2008
 Northwest Passage Data Partnership – March 2008
 Nevada Streets and Roads Conference - April 2008
 Lifesavers Conference – April 2008
 Washington State Patrol/Towing and Recovery Association of Washington
 Towing Roundtable – April 2008
 Oregon Northwest Transportation Conference - February 2008
 Washington Trucking Association Safety Council – February 2008
 Washington Transportation Safety & Security Roundtable – February 2008
 Washington Traffic Incident Management Coalition Meeting – January 2008
 Indiana Quick Clearance Working Group – December 2007
 National Unified Goal Practices and Procedures Task Force – November 2007
 Wisconsin Traffic Incident Management Conference – October 2007
 National Academy of Sciences, Transportation Research Board, SHRP 2
 Reliability Expert Task Group on Improving Traffic Incident Scene Management -
 July 2007, October 2007
 FHWA Traffic Incident Management Presentation – October 2007
 Tennessee DOT Scanning Tour – September 2007
 Portland Oregon Traffic Incident Management Workshop – September 2007
 Washington State Traffic Incident Management Conference – September 2007
 Towing and Recovery Association of Washington Trade Show – August 2007
 Utah Highway Patrol/DELCAN Photogrammetry Demonstration – May 2007
 National Unified Goal Workshop – November 2006
 Traffic Incident Management & Planned Special Events Conference – November
 2006
 Netherlands Scanning Tour – September 2006

WASHINGTON TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT COALITION (WATIMCo)



Logo courtesy of
AAA Washington

WSDOT, WSP, Fire, Towing, and other incident responder representatives and stakeholders are partners in the new Washington Traffic Incident Management Coalition (WaTIMCo) which will oversee implementation of the National Unified Goal (NUG). The first formal coalition meeting was held in September 2007 in conjunction with the first statewide Traffic Incident Management Conference in Seattle. The coalition endorsed the NUG at this meeting, elected officers, and adopted operating guidelines. The coalition will act as our statewide policy advisory group to oversee our state's implementation of the NUG.

STATEWIDE TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

WSDOT and WSP sponsored the first statewide traffic incident management conference in September 2007. Over 100 responders from the various disciplines attended this training conference to learn about traffic incident

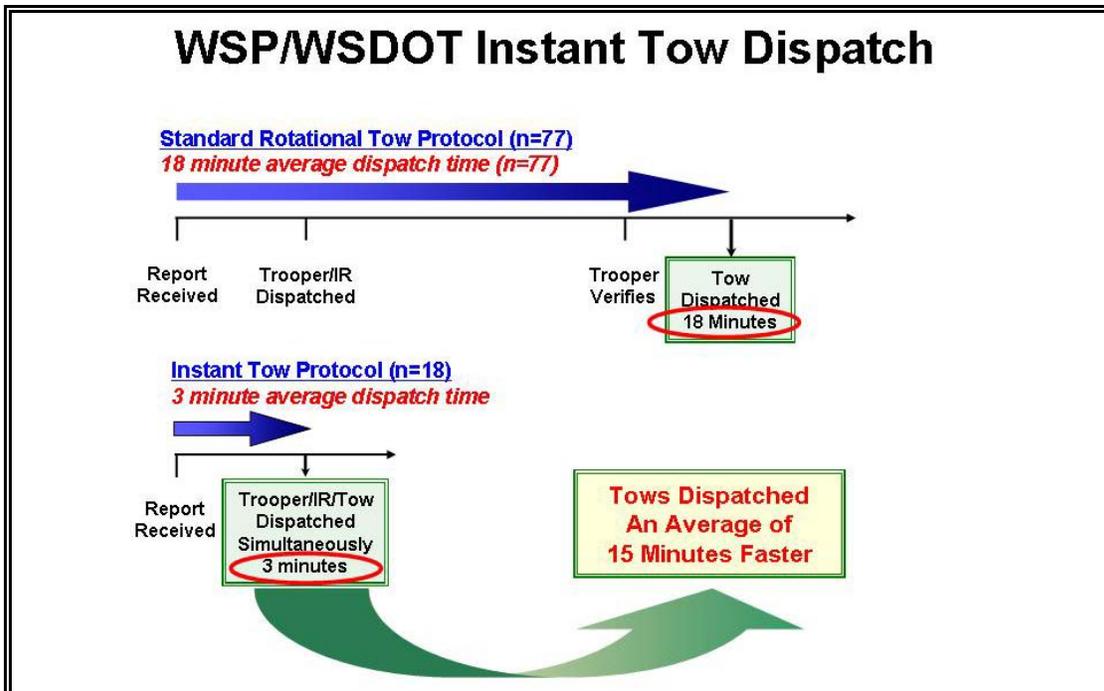
management practices nationwide. The 2008 conference is scheduled for September 16-17, 2008 at the Lacey Community Center in Lacey.



INSTANT TOW DISPATCH PROTOCOL

This new program in partnership with WSP and the towing industry was implemented in August 2006 to expedite dispatch and removal of blocking stalled vehicles in the Seattle and Tacoma areas. Under this dispatch protocol, a tow, trooper, and incident response technician are dispatched immediately, eliminating the traditional verification process (waiting until a trooper drives to the scene). This saves an average of 15 minutes of lane blocking congestion each time it is used, and improves safety by helping prevent secondary collisions.

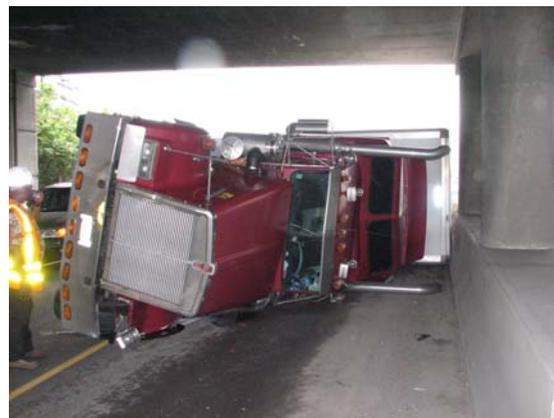
WSDOT traffic engineers have calculated the societal cost savings for each Instant Tow deployment to be approximately \$20,000 to 35,000, depending on the location and traffic conditions. Eliminating verification inevitably results in “Dry Runs” for tow companies which can negatively affect participation. To resolve this issue, WSDOT implemented a dry-run reimbursement fee.



In July 2007, the program was expanded to cover all state and interstate highways in King County (Seattle). In January 2008, the program was initiated in Spokane on the Interstate 90 corridor, and in July 2008, the program was expanded to Fort Lewis on Interstate 5 and to SR 512 and 167 in Pierce County.

BLOK-BUSTER MAJOR INCIDENT TOW PROGRAM:

WSDOT received legislative funding and partnered with the Washington State Patrol to implement the Blockage Buster Tow Incentive Program to expedite the removal of heavy truck collisions on July 1, 2007. Based upon a similar program in Florida, program eligibility requirements include improved training, equipment, and response requirements. Heavy tows who meet quick clearance goals under this program are eligible for



Blok-Buster was activated to clear this semi rollover blocking the Interstate 5 and SR 512 interchange in 37 minutes.

incentive payments. The initial pilot program is funded for the 2008-09 biennium in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties in the Puget Sound corridor.

Participating towers are eligible for up to \$2,500 bonus compensation if they meet our quick-clearance requirements at major incidents. As of this date, there

have been 13 activations of the program and 81 percent have met the quick clearance requirements.

TOWING/RECOVERY LIABILITY ISSUES

Collisions involving heavy trucks frequently result in damaged and/or spilled loads that cause lengthy road closures and require specialized heavy duty tow trucks and other recovery equipment. Overturned and/or spilled loads may or may not be salvageable.

The state's primary interests are to restore the flow of traffic as quickly as possible to reduce the public safety risks of secondary collisions; and to reduce the economic impact of these prolonged roadway closures. Efforts to recover and/or salvage the value of these damaged loads is secondary to the state's public safety and commerce interests and must be balanced against the public safety risks and the societal costs and inconvenience to motorists caught in the backup.



Clearing a two-semi truck collision on SR 7.

Towing and Recovery vendors are concerned they may be held liable for damage to vehicles or cargo when directed clear the roadway quickly. RCW 46.52.020 provides liability protection for law enforcement officers and DOT representatives when it comes

to using reasonable means to remove vehicles, cargo, and

debris from the roadway. This liability protection also extends to anyone acting under the direction of the officer or the department of transportation representative, however it does not specifically extend to towing vendors who feel they need some sort of recognized liability protection. This is a towing concern that can present an obstacle to quick clearance.

A new law (HB231 amending Ga. Code 32-6-2) in Georgia adds liability protection to the towing and recovery industry, and provides that neither the wrecker operator nor the wrecking company can be held liable for any damages except gross negligence. When instructed by the Police, Fire or the Georgia Department of Transportation to remove any obstacle determined to be "a threat to public health or safety or to mitigate traffic congestion," the wrecker operator can do his work as a fully empowered member of the incident management team. Towers feel that similar legislation is needed in Washington.

EXPANDING THE USE OF TOW AWAY ZONES IN CONGESTED AREAS

Abandoned vehicles are traffic hazards that result in approximately 500 collisions a year statewide. In 2005, collisions with abandoned vehicles resulted in 8

fatality, 164 injury, and 359 property damage collisions statewide. About 20 percent or 100 of these collisions a year have occurred on Interstate 5, our major north-south corridor.

Besides the risk of being hit by other motorists, abandoned vehicles reduce the throughput capacity of the roadway between 5 and 20 percent. Unfortunately, the reduction in capacity is usually greatest during times of peak traffic volumes. This occurs when motorists naturally slow down when they observe a vehicle stopped on the shoulder. This reduction in speed reduces roadway capacity. Any capacity reduction during traffic peaks can cause unexpected traffic slow-downs, which increase the likelihood of secondary collisions occurring.



Disabled vehicles on the shoulder in congested areas reduce roadway capacity.

When the tow-away zone on Interstate 5 between Boeing Access Road and Northgate was created in November 1999, collisions with parked vehicles decreased 23 percent, and there was a 16 percent drop in total collisions in the new tow-away zone. An even more impressive collision reduction of 67 percent occurred on Interstate 405 in 2002 when a tow-away zone was implemented between I-5 and SR 169.

In addition to the aforementioned hazards, vehicles left on the shoulder can prevent emergency responders from getting to the scene by blocking the only path that emergency vehicles have to respond to blocking traffic incidents. This can result in delay EMS treatment for injured persons and cause longer blockages that increase the risks of secondary collisions and the societal costs of congestion.

No one likes the thought of having their stalled or disabled vehicle towed, but stalled and abandoned vehicles left on the shoulder of the roadway in congested areas reduce roadway capacity and frequently cause congestion that increases the risk of secondary collisions. For these reasons, creating and expanding tow-away zones in congested areas helps is a relatively low cost countermeasure that preserves roadway capacity, helps reduce congestion, and prevents collisions.

WSDOT MAINTENANCE SUPPORT

WSDOT's Incident Response program is supplemented by WSDOT's Maintenance program to provide long term traffic control and other equipment when needed.

MOTORIST ASSISTANCE VAN AND TRAFFIC REPORTS

In addition to WSDOT's roving incident response trucks, we have used contracted service patrol tow trucks, roving state patrol cadets, and sponsorship of private motorist assistance vans such as the MIXX 96 Freeway Hero program.

WSDOT/WSP GMAP DATA PARTNERSHIP

WSDOT and WSP now have a common measure of success in addition to their own agency performance measures when it comes to measuring our quick-clearance goals. Both agencies are now using "All Lanes Open" for reporting performance with the 90 minute goal. Even more significant is the shared use and analysis of WSP CAD data as the primary source of this performance measurement effort.

Prior to the establishment of the data partnership, WSDOT was using WITS data and using "Last Responder Leaves the Scene" as its measure of success while the patrol was using CAD data for their "All Lanes Open" measure. Since WSP's CAD system is the only source of statewide data for all traffic incidents, this data sharing and analysis partnership has improved the accuracy of performance measurement reporting in both agencies. By agreeing to use "All Lanes Open" for GMAP reporting, incident responders in both agencies now share a common performance measure in addition to agency specific measures.

The use of "All Lanes Open" and "Last Responder Leaves the Scene" as performance measures is consistent with the Federal Highway Administration's Focus States Initiative to develop national quick-clearance performance measures.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

The purpose of this initiative is to deliver high quality multi-disciplinary training to responders in the regions where they live and work. Each region currently conducts two TIM training sessions a year but there is no designated budget or staff support for these training sessions, and participation of external responders is generally inconsistent. This outreach methodology is inadequate to reach the thousands of responders necessary to achieve our quick clearance goals.



A well intentioned responder has placed traffic cones improperly at this collision on Interstate 5.

This initiative will provide classes in traffic incident management at times and locations necessary to reach more responders, including on weekends and evenings to accommodate volunteer fire fighters and towers who are unable to

attend during normal business hours. The training also stresses the importance of after action reviews of traffic incidents in order to identify lessons learned and improve performance at future incidents.

STEER IT – CLEAR IT NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL

Washington’s Steer it, Clear it law (RCW 46.52.020 (2)) states that the drivers of vehicles involved in property damage only collisions: “Must move the vehicle as soon as possible off the roadway or freeway main lanes, shoulders, medians, and adjacent areas to a location on an exit ramp shoulder, the frontage road, the nearest suitable cross street, or other suitable location.” The law took effect in 1980 and its purpose is to prevent secondary collisions, reduce congestion, and restore the flow of traffic as soon as possible.



An example of a two car non-injury collision unnecessarily blocking SR 520.

The problem is that motorists who obtained their drivers license before 1980 were taught to not move their vehicles until a law enforcement officer arrived after being involved in any collision, including property damage only collisions. Therefore, they are often reluctant to move their vehicles when involved in a minor non-injury collision, unnecessarily jeopardizing their safety and the safety of other motorists approaching the collision. This also causes congestion that could be prevented if they simply complied with the law.

When a collision is reported to the Washington State Patrol, determining if aid is needed is one of the primary duties of the communications officer or call taker. If there are no injuries and the reporting party was involved in the collision, this presents an opportunity to inform the motorist that they are required to move the vehicles off of the roadway as required by Steer-it, Clear-it law.

Therefore, WSP communications centers have implemented a notification protocol for non-injury collisions to ensure that motorists are advised of the requirement to move their vehicles off of the roadway if the vehicles drivable.

REGIONAL TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS (TIM TEAMS)

Eight regional TIM teams are envisioned to cover the following urban areas: Tacoma, Bellevue, Marysville, Vancouver, Bremerton, Yakima, Spokane, and Wenatchee. The goal is to create multi-agency Regional Traffic Incident Management teams to promote adoption of the National Unified Goal (NUG) for Traffic Incident Management and support for our Traffic Incident Management program in all major metropolitan areas of the state.

Once organized and trained, these multi-agency regional TIM teams would meet quarterly to build relationships and inter-jurisdictional TIM partnerships that will strengthen interagency communication, cooperation, and coordination at major traffic incidents and other emergency situations.

CORONER/MEDICAL EXAMINER AGREEMENTS:

In 2006, WSDOT partnered with WSP and county coroners/medical examiners to develop protocols to expedite the removal of deceased remains from traffic incidents. At this time we have signed quick clearance agreements with 14 counties, including King, Pierce, Thurston, Lewis, Cowlitz, and Skagit counties on the interstate 5 corridor. These agreements help clear the road faster, increase safety for emergency responders, and provide more dignity for the deceased and the deceased's family. The agreements are available online:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Operations/IncidentResponse/coroneragreements.htm>

INCIDENTAL SPILLS OF MOTOR VEHICLE FLUIDS (NON-CARGO) AT TRAFFIC INCIDENTS:

The accidental discharge of motor vehicle fluids is a common occurrence at traffic collisions. These spilled fluids are generally petroleum products such as motor oil or diesel fuel, but they also may include anti-freeze, transmission, hydraulic and other fluids. Proper cleanup and disposal of these minor spills is subject to complex state and federal environmental protection laws that can delay reopening roadways quickly to reduce congestion and prevent secondary traffic collisions.



IR Technician applying absorbent materials to mitigate spilled diesel fuel.

The Washington Traffic Incident Management Coalition has been tasked to work with the Department of Ecology, WSP, WSDOT, the towing industry and hazmat contractors to explore initiatives to reopen roadways quickly in compliance with state and federal environmental requirements.

TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

Photogrammetry is probably the most promising new technology to expedite investigations and speed up clearance times. Other states are reporting 30 to 50 percent reductions in investigation times with photogrammetry. Utah has trained all their troopers in the use of photogrammetry and are also using unmanned aerial devices to photograph and map traffic incidents using photogrammetry. WSDOT is working with WSP to utilize technology improvements to expedite investigation of major traffic incidents.

HIGH-TENSION CABLE SAFETY SYSTEM: CUTTING DEMONSTRATION AND TRAINING PROP

WSDOT has been installing high-tension cable median barriers throughout the state to prevent cross-over collisions. Several cable strike incidents raised concerns about the proper handling of these cables in emergency situations, including whether or not the cables could be safely cut.

While these cable barriers can withstand multiple vehicle strikes and still provide crossover protection, when they are cut, at least 1,000 feet of barrier is placed



The high-tension cable barrier prevents a crossover collision on SR512.

out-of-service until it can be repaired. For these reasons, WSDOT wants emergency responders to avoid cutting the cable whenever possible. However, in life threatening situations, the cable can be safely cut and WSDOT wanted to provide instructions to ensure the safety of responders and bystanders.

With the assistance of Don Gripne of Trinity Industries, Peterson Brothers (contractor), and McLane Fire and Life Safety, WSDOT conducted a cable cutting demonstration in January, 2007. Several demonstrations to simulate real world cable strike situations were videotaped for training purposes and distributed to fire, EMS, and towing responders statewide. Trinity Industries also donated and installed a cable barrier training prop at the Washington State Fire Training Academy.

Performance Measures

THE GRAY NOTEBOOK

Agency wide performance reporting is a high priority at WSDOT and The Gray Notebook (GNB) is the agency's main performance assessment, reporting, and communication tool. Performance data for the Incident Response Program is published quarterly in The Gray Notebook.

Early detection and quick-clearance of traffic incidents helps reduce congestion and prevent secondary collisions. The Washington Incident Tracking System (WITS) was developed as a tool to capture response times, clearance times and other work performed by the Incident Response Program. The WITS database was upgraded in 2008 to improve data quality and analysis capabilities through automatic entry and improved error detection.

The Gray Notebook for the first quarter of 2008 begins can be found online here: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/BFF201B6-F6BD-406E-BEB7-71F0C4E7D92A/0/GrayNotebookMar08.pdf> The Incident Response section begins on page 75.

GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

Governor Gregoire's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) program is based upon the philosophy that every agency, every program, and every employee is accountable for performance. To accomplish this, the Governor meets regularly with agency directors to look at the results their agencies are delivering for the residents of Washington. These sessions provide an opportunity for a candid, public conversation about what is working, what is not, and how to improve results. When performance is not meeting expectations, the Governor and her leadership team work with agency leaders to make changes and eliminate obstacles to success.

During 2007, WSDOT and the Washington State Patrol shared a GMAP goal to reduce the average duration of incidents that required more than 90 minutes to clear on nine key highways. This partnership reduced the average duration of these incidents from 174 minutes to 1161 minutes. The analysis for this goal can be found on page 78 of the first quarter 2008 Gray Notebook report here: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/BFF201B6-F6BD-406E-BEB7-71F0C4E7D92A/0/GrayNotebookMar08.pdf>

Appendix A: Incident Response Coverage Map



APPENDIX B: 2008 JOPS Agreement, Section 4

Traffic Incident Management

Background: Traffic incidents cause congestion resulting in travel delays, secondary collisions, increased fuel consumption, air pollution, and travel and shipping costs. For every minute a freeway travel lane is blocked by an incident during a peak travel period, four minutes of travel delay result after the incident is cleared. Safer, more efficient Traffic Incident Management will reduce congestion and improve responder and motorist safety by reducing incident duration and the likelihood of secondary incidents.

Highway congestion is caused when traffic demand approaches or exceeds the available physical capacity of the highway system, or when available highway capacity is reduced by incidents (e.g. crashes and disabled vehicles), work zones, adverse weather, special events and other causes. Traffic incidents account for about one-quarter of all congestion on U.S. roadways.

Traffic Incident Management is the marshalling of emergency response agencies and resources including towing, cleanup contractors and others that respond to, investigate, and clean-up traffic incidents. Work is performed as safely and as quickly as possible to reduce congestion and improve responder and motorist safety. Efficient Traffic Incident Management requires developing and maintaining effective partnerships with a variety of responding agencies, organizations, and vendors.

Rapid detection and clearance of minor incidents such as stalled and disabled vehicles prevents congestion by minimizing lane blockage time which in turn helps prevent collisions from occurring. Rapid clearance also preserves highway capacity through prompt removal of disabled or abandoned vehicles that can distract or slow down drivers resulting in loss of throughput capacity. WSP Communication Centers dispatch and coordinate the response of WSP troopers and WSDOT Incident Response service patrols to quickly clear minor traffic incidents in congested areas.

When major incidents occur, the initial focus of incident responders becomes preservation of life and property. Securing the scene to protect crash victims and incident responders, and warning oncoming motorists of the hazards are all critically important functions. Responders will not be able to assist others if their safety is compromised, so responder safety is the first priority. Safe responders provide aid to crash victims and enhance the safety of motorists by providing emergency traffic control.

Major criminal incidents frequently require complex investigations as well as the need for specialized equipment and personnel deploying from several different responding agencies. This makes criminal incidents extra challenging to clear quickly. WSDOT's regional maintenance support personnel are a key component of managing traffic incidents that require closures or restrictions extending beyond 60 minutes. Maintenance resources are available 24/7 to provide temporary traffic control zones in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)¹ MUTCD traffic control zones factor in speed and roadway characteristics to provide motorists with ample prior warning

¹ The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices defines a traffic control zone as the entire section of roadway between the first advance warning sign through the last traffic control device where traffic returns to its normal path and conditions. There are four separate areas of the traffic control zone: 1. Advance Warning Area; 2. Transition area; 3. Activity area; and 4. Termination area. Each area serves a specific function in the channelization of vehicles around a work (incident) site. Traffic Control Flagger Certification Handbook, Fourth Edition, Evergreen Safety Council, Seattle, WA, 2002, p. 6-1.

of road closures or restrictions, improving the safety of both on-scene responders and approaching motorists.

At the national level, the National Traffic Incident Management Coalition ² launched the National Unified Goal (NUG) for Traffic Incident Management to reduce traffic congestion and increase responder safety. The three primary initiatives of the NUG are: 1. responder safety, 2. safe, quick clearance, and 3. prompt, reliable, interoperable communications.

Washington State created the Washington Traffic Incident Management Coalition (WATIMCo) in 2007 as a policy group to oversee statewide implementation of the NUG. WSDOT, WSP, Fire, Towing, and other incident responders are partners in the new coalition with WSP and WSDOT providing administrative support. The coalition formally endorsed the NUG and co-sponsored the first statewide Traffic Incident Management Conference in 2007. The 2008 TIM conference is scheduled for September 15 -16, 2008 in Lacey, Washington

As state agencies tasked with fulfilling their respective missions statewide, the WSP and WSDOT are jointly responsible for reporting progress toward the 90 minute clearance goal to Governor Gregoire on a quarterly basis, so each agency takes a leadership role in Traffic Incident Management as it relates to their respective missions.

A. Responder Safety

Background: Emergency responders must be able to safely respond to, and return from traffic incidents and other emergencies in order to fulfill their missions. If responders become involved in a traffic collision during an emergency response, not only are they unable to render aid to the emergency they were called to, but they have also exposed themselves and other motorists to unnecessary risk and placed an unnecessary burden on other emergency responders.

Once on-scene, being struck (by a vehicle) is a leading cause of death and injury for emergency responders working alongside the highway. This makes responder safety the highest priority. Keeping responders safe requires implementing well designed traffic control procedures:

- Getting enough resources to the scene;
- Using proper apparel to maximize visibility;
- Utilizing proper tools;
- Strategically placing safety equipment;
- Improving cooperation and coordination between responding agencies.

Objective: Everyone goes home safely.

Policy: WSP and WSDOT will work with the WATIMCo to identify multi-discipline best practices to enhance the safety of all emergency responders.

² The National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC) is a unique forum where national organizations representing major stakeholders involved in traffic incident response work together. Its members represent the Emergency Medical Services, Fire, Law Enforcement, Public Safety Communications, Towing and Recovery, and Transportation communities. NTIMC promotes multidisciplinary, multi-jurisdictional Traffic Incident Management (TIM) programs to achieve enhanced responder safety; safe, quick traffic incident clearance; and more prompt, reliable, interoperable communications.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: Provide administrative and staff support to the coalition.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: Provide administrative and staff support to the coalition.

WSP Lead: Field Operations Bureau/Captain William Hilton

Joint Agency Responsibilities: WSP and WSDOT will work collaboratively with the Coalition to improve responder safety at traffic incidents.

Action: WSDOT and WSP will collaborate to include Coalition recommended best practices for responder safety in future TIM training sessions.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: Document all revisions to the TIM training curriculum.

Time Line: This policy will be in place when JOPS receives final approval by both agencies.

Reference: WSDOT Safety Procedures and Guidelines Manual M75-01.04; WSDOT Incident Response Standard Operating Guidelines, Revised 2007; WSP Regulation Manual; National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC) National Unified Goal Technical Brief on Responder Safety, 2006, available online:

<http://www.transportation.org/sites/ntimc/docs/ResponderSafety3xFinal.pdf> .

B. Safe, Quick-Clearance

Background: Safe, quick clearance of traffic incidents increases responder safety by reducing their exposure time to traffic. Similarly, shorter incident duration and improved traffic control enhance motorist safety by reducing the length of lane blockages and road closures which reduces exposure and helps reduce secondary collisions. Quick clearance also reduces the societal costs of congestion such as lost time and extra fuel costs incurred when motorists and truck drivers are caught in traffic congestion.

The benefits of safe, quick clearance of incidents, although well documented, are not widely understood by all incident responders. In fact many responders don't have a good understanding or appreciation of the roles that other responders perform at incidents. In addition, some responders mistakenly assume that safety and quick clearance policies must be in conflict, and that is clearly not the case. For these reasons, WSP, WSDOT, and Fire agencies have been partnering to present multi-disciplinary training sessions to provide responders with a better understanding of our Traffic Incident Management Program and the roles that various responders perform. These training sessions are a valuable tool to help improve on-scene communication, cooperation, and coordination.

Objective: To clear all traffic incidents from roads as safely and as quickly as possible.

Policy: The WSP, WSDOT will collaborate to safely clear highway incidents within our mutual goal of 90 minutes.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: Will operate its IR program with a clear objective to clear traffic incidents within 90 minutes whenever safely possible.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: Will target incident response and investigation to meet the 90 minute clearance target whenever safely possible.

WSP Lead: Field Operations Bureau/Captain William Hilton

Joint Agency Responsibilities: WSP and WSDOT will effectively and efficiently manage resources in: responding to, mitigating, investigating, and clearing highway lanes and ferry routes in order to minimize traffic disruption.

Action: WSDOT and WSP will continue to collaborate and explore ways to reduce highway incident blockage time. The WSP District Commander and WSDOT's Regional Transportation Incident Management (RTIM) coordinator will jointly conduct at least one TIM training session semi-annually and include local fire agencies. At each annual JOPS meeting, each District Commander and Region Administrator shall report the number of TIM sessions and attendees at those training sessions for their joint geographic areas of responsibility. At each annual JOPS meeting, each District Commander and Region Administrator shall jointly report the number of "Over 90 Minute" incident debriefs conducted during the previous year and identify the 2 or 3 key "lessons learned."

A daily summary of all over 90 minute incidents statewide will be compiled by WSP and provided to WSDOT.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: Daily over 90 minute reports, quarterly summaries as part of GMAP and WSDOT's GNB.

Time Line: Ongoing.

Reference: Quarterly reports of Governor's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) program: <http://www.accountability.wa.gov/default.asp>; WSDOT Gray Notebook

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Accountability/GrayNotebook/gnb_archives.htm; National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC) National Unified Goal Technical Brief on Safe, Quick Clearance, 2006, available online: <http://www.transportation.org/sites/ntimc/docs/Quick%20Clearance11-07-06v2.pdf>

C. Incident Response Team (IRT) Program

Background: The mission of WSDOT's Incident Response Program includes maintaining operational readiness to respond to and expedite the safe clearance of traffic incidents in cooperation and coordination with WSP and other responding entities under the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Developing and maintaining inter-agency partnerships and mutual understandings of each other's roles is crucial in fulfilling this mission.

Roving service patrols are the most visible component of WSDOT's Incident Response Program. These IR patrols rove congested roadways during peak traffic periods to detect and assist clearing minor traffic incidents such as disabled and stranded motorists and quickly get them on their way. Rapid detection and clearance of minor traffic incidents minimizes incident-related congestion and helps prevent secondary incidents (collisions that occur in the backup) from occurring.

In addition, WSDOT IR Technicians are trained and equipped to respond to and assist WSP with collisions and other serious traffic incidents. IR Technicians are also available for call-out 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for traffic incidents or other emergencies that occur on state roadways. In addition, WSDOT maintenance technicians are also available statewide 24/7 when long term traffic control or other specialized WSDOT equipment is needed at traffic incidents.

Objective: During major incidents, WSDOT's primary Incident Response role is to coordinate with and support WSP and other emergency responders as needed, primarily by providing traffic control to improve safety of on-scene responders and motorists approaching the incident, and by providing periodic incident and traffic updates to the appropriate TMC for dissemination through established traveler information systems.

Policy: The WSDOT will deploy scheduled roving incident response patrols in coordination with WSP in congested areas and maintain 24/7 call out availability.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: Provide roving service patrols to quickly detect and clear minor incidents and assist WSP with all traffic incidents and hazards as needed, and maintain 24/7 call out availability to assist WSP.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: Will work in partnership with WSDOT's incident response operators during incidents.

WSP Lead: Field Operations Bureau/Captain William Hilton

Joint Agency Responsibilities WSDOT and WSP will continue to advocate funding for specialized resources which enable the 90 minute goal to be achieved.

Action: WSDOT, with WSP input, will regularly review "incident response" asset deployment for efficient and effective incident response performance. Both agencies will jointly support funding proposals to implement needed resources. WSP and WSDOT will work together to develop a method to measure incident response impacts on secondary collisions.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: Quarterly reporting of incident response program activity including number of incidents by geographical area and average response and clearance times.

Time Line: Ongoing.

Reference: WSDOT Gray Notebook Quarterly Reports available online:

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Accountability/GrayNotebook/gnb_archives.htm; Incident Response Standard Operating Guidelines, Revised 2007; WSDOT's WITS (Washington Incident Tracking System); National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC) National Unified Goal Technical Brief on Benefits of Traffic Incident Management, 2006, available online: <http://www.transportation.org/sites/ntimc/docs/Benefits11-07-06.pdf> .

D. Contracted Service Patrols and Motorists Assistance Vans (MAVs)

Background: When funding is available, contract partnerships with other agencies and third parties can augment incident response and traffic information services by providing additional roving motorist assistance and real-time traffic reports to WSDOT Traffic Management Centers and public media outlets.

Objective: Minimize the impact of minor incidents such as stalled and disabled vehicles on highway capacity.

Policy: When possible, use contracts to deploy additional resources such as roving MAVs, WSP Cadets, and Registered Tow Truck Operators to detect and clear minor traffic incidents.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: WSDOT Region IRT supervisors and traffic managers will administer day-to-day management of the WSP Agreements, and RTTO contracts for these Service Patrols, and the MAV contract services.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: Support WSDOT's efforts to deploy and operate MAV programs.

WSP Lead: Field Operations Bureau/Captain William Hilton

Action: WSDOT and WSP will review annually the deployment and operations of the WSP Cadet Service Patrols, the contracted RTTOs, and the Motorist Assistance Vans and make recommendations on program improvements. These discussions will include members of the towing industry.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: Quarterly reporting of MAV activities.

Time Line: This policy will be in place when JOPS receives final approval by both agencies.

Reference: GA Contract #15404, Motorist Assistance Van (MAV) Services with Media Coverage, Awarded 1/19/05, revised 7/5/07, expires 1/31/09, available online:

<http://www.ga.wa.gov/pca/contract/15404c.doc>

National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC) National Unified Goal, Strategy 18, Partnerships with News Media and Information Providers, 2007, available online:

http://www.transportation.org/sites/ntimc/docs/NUG-4pp_11-14-07.pdf

E. Instant Tow Dispatch

Background: Clearing traffic incidents safely and quickly often requires a tow truck. Safe, quick-clearance depends on having qualified tow operators respond promptly with the right tow equipment for the type of vehicle needing to be towed. WSP regulates towing in Washington and has established a rotational call-out system based upon geographical tow zones throughout the state. The patrol's rotational system is used for clearing collisions, impounding vehicles, and other routine towing calls. The use of the rotational list is dependent on verification by a trooper before a tow is dispatched. This means that before a rotational tow is dispatched to a blocking vehicle, a trooper is dispatched first and the tow is only dispatched when the trooper arrives and confirms the need for the tow. This works in non-congested areas, but can unnecessarily delay removal of blocking vehicles in congested areas.

The concept of "Instant Tow Dispatch" to reduce congestion caused by stalled vehicles has been tested several times in the past. The most recent documented experience occurred in the Tacoma area in 2002 and the results were reported in a TRAC report by Jennifer Nee and Mark Hallenbeck published in April 2003. The study could not conclusively evaluate the program's effectiveness because of data limitations, but the author's did conclude that tows dispatched under the Instant Tow Dispatch program were dispatched an average of 15 minutes faster than routine rotational tows, because verification step was eliminated. Elimination of the verification process does increase the possibility of "dry runs," so in April 2007, WSDOT began paying a flat rate for dry runs. Besides being dispatched 15 minutes faster, this program further reduces tow truck response times because faster dispatch means the tow driver does not have to negotiate the increased congestion caused by every minute the roadway is blocked.

Objective: It is the goal of both agencies that blocking vehicles be cleared from the roadway safely and as quickly as possible.

Policy: Jointly implement the Instant Tow Program in congested areas.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: WSDOT, working with WSP and the tow industry, is encouraged to execute local (WSP District/WSDOT Region) agreements/memos of understanding, to ensure tow truck usage arrangements are in place for the most major of incidents which require the largest tow equipment.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: WSP will initiate any changes necessary to their existing tow truck usage arrangements with the tow industry to ensure effective tow assistance.

WSP Lead: Field Operations Bureau/Captain William Hilton

Joint Agency Responsibilities: WSDOT/WSP will work together to address policy issues surrounding incident clearance which require the deployment of tow trucks. Issues that will be addressed in WSP's "tow truck rotation contract" discussion with the tow industry are:

- Performance measurement and customer satisfaction.
- Feasibility of instant tow dispatch based on the information available through the WSDOT video monitoring.
- Tow company compliance with state RCW and WACs.

Action: WSDOT's Regional Administrators and WSP's District Commanders may request deployment of the Instant Tow Dispatch program to reduce incident related congestion. In all but rare exceptions, the WSP tow truck rotation list will be used. WSDOT Regions and WSP Districts will evaluate the need to expand tow-away zones in key areas.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: WSP Communications will provide monthly and quarterly instant towing reports to track the volume of Instant Tow deployments in each area of deployment.

Time Line: This policy will be in place when JOPS receives final approval by both agencies.

Reference: WSP Rotational Tow List Contract, Part 1 – Instant Tow, January 15, 2007; WSDOT White Paper on Instant Tow Dispatch, Rick Phillips, February 8, 2007; Evaluation of the Instant Tow Dispatch Pilot Program in the Tacoma Area, Jennifer Nee and Mark E. Hallenbeck, University of Washington, Washington State Transportation Center, Research Project T1803, Task 37, April 2003, available online: <http://depts.washington.edu/trac/bulkdisk/pdf/518.2.pdf> .

F. Blok-Buster Major Incident Tow Program

Background: WSP and WSDOT formally established the 90 minute clearance goal in 2002. In spite of the efforts of both agencies, the average clearance time for a heavy truck involved fatality collision in FY 06 was 349 minutes, or 5.8 hours. In order to expedite clearance of major incidents involving heavy trucks, WSDOT requested and received legislative funding to implement the Blok-Buster Major Incident Tow program to expedite the removal of heavy truck collisions on July 1, 2007. Based upon a similar program in Florida, the Blok-Buster program raises minimum training and equipment requirements and provides a \$2,500 incentive payment when quick-clearance goals are met. The initial pilot program is funded for the 2008-09 biennium in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties in the Puget Sound corridor.

Objective: Reduce congestion by clearing heavy truck involved incidents within 90 minutes or less.

Policy: WSP and WSDOT will jointly implement the Blok-Buster Major Incident Tow program in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: WSDOT, working with WSP and the tow industry, will administer the Blok-Buster Major Incident Tow Program including processing incentive payments and tracking activations, clearance times, and success rate.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: WSP will initiate any changes necessary to their existing tow truck usage arrangements with the tow industry to ensure effective tow assistance.

WSP Lead: Field Operations Bureau/Captain William Hilton

Joint Agency Responsibilities: WSDOT/WSP will work together to address policy issues surrounding incident clearance which require the deployment of heavy tow trucks. Issues that will be addressed in WSP's "tow truck rotation contract" discussion with the tow industry are:

- Performance measurement and customer satisfaction.
- Tow company compliance with state RCW and WACs.

Action: WSP and WSDOT will evaluate the need for future expansion of the Blok-Buster Major Incident Tow Program based up the volume of heavy truck involved collisions in congested areas.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: Quarterly reports of Blok-Buster activations, clearance times, and analysis of success rate in meeting the 90 minute clearance requirement.

Time Line: This policy was enacted by interagency agreement on July 15, 2007.

Reference: WSP/WSDOT Interagency agreement #C080213GSC: Tow Incentive Program for Heavy Truck Collisions effective July 15, 2007. WSP Rotational Tow Contract: Part 1- Letter of Appointment, Major Incident Tow Pilot Project, July 15, 2007.

G. Using Technology and Education to Expedite Investigations

Background: Every effort will be made, in a coordinated fashion, to achieve all responders' objectives at incident scenes and to have roadways open and/or ferries operating in less than 90 minutes.

Objective: Technology and Education that reduces the scene investigation time will be part of achieving this goal. Therefore, WSP and WSDOT will aggressively pursue new technologies and support Traffic Incident Management (TIM) participation and training.

Policy: Ensure all WSP and WSDOT responders are trained in TIMS and NUG.

Roles and Responsibilities:

WSDOT Responsibilities: The WSDOT Design Office Computer Aided Engineering Branch provides training and some support to the State Patrol for "total stations" and other survey technologies that they use to collect data at collision and crime scenes.

WSDOT Lead: Incident Response Program Manager/Rick Phillips

WSP Responsibilities: WSP, with assistance from WSDOT (traffic control, equipment, survey technologies, etc.) will take the lead in evaluating candidate technologies.

WSP Lead: Criminal Investigation Division Commander / Steve Davis

Action: As part of the "Over 90 Minute" incident debrief, the use of technology shall be discussed. If it is determined that technology issues are consistently impacting the ability of both agencies to meet the 90 minute clearance time, those issues should be identified at the annual JOPS and an appropriate course of action determined.

Measures of Performance/Reporting: WSDOT and WSP will focus on the identified nine major GMAP routes and will review extended closures for lessons learned. Performance and suggested improvements will be shared with agency responders.

Time Line: This policy will be in place when JOBS receives final approval by both agencies.