

1-1 **General Responsibilities**

This chapter provides guidance to reduce the vulnerability of the state transportation system from any emergencies by:

1. Establishing capabilities for protecting the transportation system and employees from the effects of emergencies or disasters,
2. Responding efficiently to emergencies and disasters,
3. Assist in recovering in the aftermath of any emergency or disaster.

[RCW 38.52](#) directs the state to develop and implement a [State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan \(CEMP\)](#). The CEMP designates WSDOT as the Primary Agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 1 – Transportation. ESF1 supports Washington State by assisting State agencies, local, and Tribal governments; and volunteer organizations relying on the state transportation infrastructure during an actual or potential incident. ESF #1 is designed to provide support during incident response. Activities within the scope of ESF #1 functions include:

- Performing damage assessments to state transportation infrastructure as a result of an incident;
- Coordinating alternate transportation routes;
- Coordinating the restoration and recovery of the state transportation infrastructure;
- Performing activities conducted under the direct authority of WSDOT; and
- Coordinating prevention, preparedness, mitigation among transportation infrastructure stakeholders at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels.

This chapter also incorporates some of the day-to-day operational procedures that are used in responding to incidents such as hazardous material spills, snow/ice removal, traffic incidents, disaster response and recovery efforts. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) [Emergency Operations Plan M 54-11.01](#) and the [Funding Manual M 3014](#) defines the details of how the Department responds to these types of incidents.

An emergency is defined as a situation involving natural phenomena, disasters, casualties, national defense or security measures, etc. and includes response activities that must be taken to prevent the imminent loss of human life, property, and the environment.

WSDOT will perform the following functions in emergency situations:

- Determine usable portions of the state highway network. Coordinate and control emergency highway traffic regulations in conjunction with the Washington State Patrol (WSP).
- Comply with Hazardous Materials and Hazardous Waste requirements related to emergency response. This includes (but is not limited to) [29 CFR 1910.120](#) Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response.
- Comply with environmental regulatory requirements related to emergency response. Each WSDOT region is required to develop notification procedures for contacting and informing regulatory agencies before and during an emergency response.
- Meet the conditions of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (HPA) permit if applicable and possible.

1-2 Regional Emergency Response Procedures

Each region shall develop and maintain written day-to-day operational procedures to address routine spills, incidents, etc. Regions will also develop written procedures to address their response capabilities for incidents beyond the normal day-to-day operational capability. Each of these procedures shall clearly define employee roles and responsibilities.

1-3 WSDOT Emergency Operations Plan

1-3.1 *Concepts of Operations*

Governments have the responsibility to make every effort to protect life, property, and the environment during emergencies. When the emergency exceeds the capability of government to respond, assistance will be requested from the next higher level of government.

For example:

- Local government may request state assistance and if unable to fulfill the request, the state government may request federal assistance. However, this plan heavily emphasizes the responsibility and capability of local governments to respond to and accomplish short-term recovery of their infrastructure during emergencies/disasters.
- The WSDOT Emergency Operations Plan recognizes that emergency functions for groups and individuals should be similar to normal day-to-day functions. When this is not possible, managers should attempt to maintain organizational continuity and assign familiar tasks to employees.

1-4 Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

Headquarters and regions have emergency responsibilities in addition to normal duties. To do this they have established procedures for:

- Operations during emergencies.
- Emergency personnel rosters.
- Compliance with WSDOT responsibilities and authorities.

1-5 Administration and Logistics

WSDOT acknowledges that during an emergency, some administrative procedures may be suspended, or relaxed.

Documentation is critical for reimbursement of funds or to support liability issues. WSDOT will document all response actions taken, especially changes to established procedures. This responsibility lies with maintenance lead technicians, maintenance supervisors, and superintendents.

Maintenance office staff are to be provided the documentation and then are tasked with filling out the proper records and forms to be forwarded to the regional maintenance administration.

1-6 Plan Development and Maintenance

The WSDOT Emergency Operations Plan is the principal source of documented department emergency management activities. Regional offices are responsible for developing a process that supports the tasks in the plan. This may require coordination with local, state, and federal agencies. Overall, the WSDOT Emergency Operations Plan development, maintenance, and coordination is the WSDOT Office of Emergency Management's (OEM) responsibility working with the regions.

1-7 Training and Exercises

WSDOT OEM will provide training and conduct exercises to test the WSDOT Emergency Operations Plan that reflect current WSDOT operational practices and readiness.

1-8 Emergency Operating Procedures (Hazardous Materials)

1-8.1 General

There are many situations when WSDOT staff may be exposed to situations requiring emergency action. The most common emergency situations maintenance crews may encounter are vehicle collisions and hazardous material spills.

In accordance with [RCW 70.136](#), Washington State Patrol (WSP) has the responsibility to act as Incident Command during any incident involving hazardous materials; WSP may also act in a Unified Command Structure consisting of response agencies, resources providing agencies, and responsible party. WSDOT staff at the scene of an incident will take emergency actions only as required to protect human life and property until WSP has control of the situation. WSP may request assistance from WSDOT for traffic control and to clear debris.

Hazardous materials are those substances which, when spilled, may make driving on the roadway unsafe, endanger human life, or contaminate the environment. Response Awareness training enables WSDOT Maintenance employees to recognize incidental/common vehicle fluids (e.g. gas, oil, diesel), but not to identify or respond to any other type of hazardous material.

Vehicle collisions, debris, or spillage may not always release hazardous materials, but may cause hazardous conditions, such as fine powders which create visibility problems or damaged roadway which can cause lane closure. Other substances may make the roadway surface slippery, impair visibility, or cause lane and road closures.

If hazardous materials are found or suspected to be present, WSP will lead the clean up by requesting the cleanup support from Department of Ecology and/or the owner of the cargo. Clean up is the responsibility of the owner or shipper of the cargo, if they can be identified. If the owner/generator is unknown, the Department of Ecology will consult with the WSP Incident Commander and WSDOT to determine responsibility of clean up, based on the type, material, and conditions of the hazard. WSDOT staff will not attempt to clean up any hazardous material spills or take possession of abandoned cargo containing hazardous materials; in most cases, WSDOT Maintenance employees do not have training and/or the proper resources to clean up hazardous materials.

1-8.2 *Maintenance Field Personnel*

Maintenance field personnel will take the following actions when encountering known or suspected hazardous materials:

- Advise the area maintenance supervisor or superintendent of the problem. Communicate the possible extent of the problem, and request aid from WSP.
- Take precautionary actions to protect themselves, maintenance crews, and the traveling public from any exposure.
- Provide traffic control, including closure of the highway if appropriate, to ensure that no one comes in contact with the hazardous material.
- If the spilled substance is identified as an incidental/common vehicle fluid and is spreading toward water courses, additional traffic lanes, or likely to come in contact with ground water, take appropriate action to absorb or confine the spill.
- Never take action on an unknown substance or on a known substance that is extremely hazardous to life and property. This means those products that can cause more harm than gas, oil and diesel. If WSDOT staff are not sure what the product is they are to stay clear of the area.
- Some incident scenes include human tissue and blood residues. Avoid contact with these materials. Fire response should wash this residue from the highway or highway feature surfaces. WSP as the Incident Commander should assure that the incident scene is ultimately safe.
- Stay on site to safeguard traffic until proper traffic control devices are installed and/or until relieved by your maintenance supervisor, lead technician, or a WSP trooper.
- Look for stranded travelers in isolated areas when traffic has been controlled and when applicable.

1-8.3 *Maintenance Superintendent or Supervisor:*

- Coordinate personnel and equipment to close a highway or restrain traffic from entering a hazardous area.
- Make a complete report of the closure to the regional maintenance engineer/manager and Traffic Management Center (TMC).
- Make the regional Public Information Office aware of the incident so that they can communicate the closure.

1-9 Abandoned Cargo

- All cargo abandoned on WSDOT property will be removed at the owner's expense if the owner can be identified. A determination that the cargo is a hazardous material will necessitate the procedures outlined earlier. State law ([RCW 4.24.314](#)) dictates that the responsible party has the responsibility for clean-up of hazardous materials.
- For known or suspected hazardous cargo, stay safely back from the cargo, establish traffic control, and call the WSP. WSP who will notify the Department of Ecology Spill Response Team. If the risk assessment determines that there are no life safety issues, and the container does not appear to have a leak or severe damage, it can be removed to the edge of the shoulder to allow traffic flow prior to Ecology's arrival on-scene. Do not take it back to the maintenance facility.
- If identified as non-hazardous and reusable, move the abandoned material to the maintenance facility. If not reclaimed within 30 days it becomes the property of the department and may be used for its intended purpose, if appropriate.

1-10 Clearing the Highway

1-10.1 Open Road Policy

- The WSP/WSDOT "Joint Operating Policy Statement" was developed to stress the importance of the Agencies' responsibility to do what is reasonable to reduce incident associated delays. This Policy's statement states that WSP and WSDOT will work together, to open the roadway as soon as safely possible.
- It is a goal of WSDOT to minimize traffic delays caused by roadway incidents. WSDOT Maintenance personnel assisting at incidents will make every reasonable effort to quickly and safely clear the roadway.
- **First Priority** – Safety. It is the departments' obligation and responsibility to provide a safe environment for its employees and the public.
- **Second Priority** – Minimizing Traffic Delay. Maintenance personnel responding to incidents which involve lane closures will consider every reasonable measure in coordination with WSP, to clear the lane as quickly as possible. At incident scenes involving spilled or damaged cargo, the goal is to minimize traffic delay. Salvage of the cargo is secondary and at the convenience and benefit of transportation movement. Criteria for making "Open Road" decisions include:
 - Crime Scene Investigation
 - Traffic Volume
 - Time of Day
- **Lowest Priority** – The potential salvage of the cargo is the last consideration in decisions related to minimizing traffic delay.

Note: Bridges and other transportation structures closed due to structural damage require approval from the Bridge Preservation Engineer before opening.