

## Practical Traffic Incident Management

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Practical Traffic Incident Management Practices Quite often, a misconception of Traffic Incident Management (TIM) exists among emergency responders. The message that agencies tend to portray is, “Hurry, hurry, hurry—get the road open,” which causes push back from responders. Fire personnel see this “hurry up” attitude as a safety issue for their responders, the victims and the traveling public. Police are concerned that they will not be able to perform an adequate investigation, leaving behind or missing valuable evidence. Wrecker companies are worried about unnecessary damages to vehicles and cargo. The truth about good TIM must be told and the push back eliminated. Why? FHWA estimates that 50% of congestion is due to traffic incidents. Tragically, 18% of traffic fatalities are the result of secondary incidents. A leading cause of death and serious injury to emergency responders is “struck by” on the scene of an incident. Good TIM greatly improves the safety of emergency responders and the traveling public while improving traffic mobility. Good TIM practices involve looking at the entire timeline of a traffic incident. Once an incident occurs, the clock begins ticking. Good TIM starts with early detection and verification, and then moves across the timeline to the proper response. Proper response means having the right equipment and qualified responders on scene as safely and quickly as possible. Teamwork among the right personnel with the right equipment reduces clearance times. This, in turn, puts responders safely back in service faster and allows traffic conditions to return to normal more quickly. While the environment of a traffic incident in a rural area may differ from a congested urban area, the TIM principals still apply to both. Both areas present their own unique challenges, but each challenge can be managed using the same TIM principals. Whether the scene is rural or urban, the traffic incident must be detected and verified, responders must get to the scene, perform their duties and the road must be opened. Teamwork is essential to good TIM. TIM Teams, from a local, regional and national approach, allow responders gain an understanding of each agency’s roles and responsibilities, which increases their operating efficiency. Working as a team, responders can develop a strategic vision that provides a framework to address and overcome common challenges. Knowing all available resources, setting minimum criteria for training and equipment, having performance measures in place, and conducting after incident reviews will help all responders ensure their goals for safe, quick clearance are met. This presentation will remove the misconception of TIM by providing practical principals that can be used to recruit TIM champions from all disciplines. It will provide proven real life examples, not just theory. It will highlight successful programs from a national perspective showing that the point of TIM is not to “hurry, hurry, hurry,” but rather to put responder, victim, and motorist safety first while improving traffic mobility.