



ANATOMY OF A TRAFFIC INCIDENT

Traffic Incident Response is more complex than most people realize.

Most people have no idea why it takes so long to clear a major traffic incident. When major incidents occur, agencies involved in incident response generally face negative publicity.

NTIMC works through its member organizations to educate the public about the complexities of traffic incident management.

- ***Many different responder disciplines are involved in traffic incident response.***
 The more serious the incident, the more disciplines are involved. Each discipline has a vital mission to perform, and their work takes time. For a serious or major crash, response disciplines and their primary TIM missions include:

TIM Responder Discipline	Primary TIM Missions
Emergency Dispatch (911 Center)	Dispatch Emergency Responders upon Notification of Incident
Fire / Rescue	Public Safety at Incident Scene Fire Suppression Rescue Crash Victims
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	Triage, Treatment, and Transport of Crash Victims
HAZMAT	Hazardous Material Cleanup and Disposal
Law Enforcement	Secure the Incident Scene Traffic Control / Road and Lane Closures / Openings Safeguard Property Conduct Crash Investigations
Medical Examiner/Coroner	Investigate Fatal Incidents
Towing & Recovery	Removal of Wrecked or Disabled Vehicles, and Debris
Transportation	Detect and Verify Incidents Activate Diversion Routes Coordinate Vehicle and Spilled Cargo Removal Stabilize and Repair Transportation System Inform Public of Traffic Impacts of Incidents

- ✓ ***Incidents involving fatalities generally take longer to resolve because of the need for crash investigation and for the involvement of the medical examiner.***
 In some localities, TIM partners have worked together to streamline the process of fatal incident investigation so that roadways can be reopened more quickly.
- ✓ ***Incidents involving hazardous materials generally take longer to resolve because HAZMAT cleanup takes time.*** Procedures for prompt notification of HAZMAT crews can reduce the overall incident duration.

- ✓ *Incidents involving commercial vehicles, particularly when spilled cargo is involved, often take longer to resolve.* Procedures for prompt notification of towing and recovery responders can reduce overall incident duration. Towsers need to know the exact type and class of the crashed vehicle in order to arrive on scene quickly with the correct equipment. Procedures and policies that balance the need for restoring traffic flow with the property rights of the commercial vehicle owners also help to resolve incidents that involved spilled cargo more quickly.
- **Traffic incident response involves sequential phases of response action. Delays, misinformation, lack of resources and coordination during any phase will affect total incident duration.** The typical sequence of events in serious incidents is:
 - ✓ Detection that an incident has occurred;
 - ✓ Notification and Verification that the incident has occurred
 - Determine incident location
 - Sufficient information to enable appropriate response;
 - ✓ Responder Dispatch;
 - ✓ Roadway Clearance;
 - ✓ Recovery of normal traffic flow.
- ✓ *Prompt incident detection, notification, verification, and responder dispatch reduce incident duration.*
- ✓ *Improved communication and coordination among traffic incident responders also reduces incident duration.*
- **The Open Roads philosophy means that all responders from all agencies recognize the importance of restoring traffic flow as quickly as possible under the circumstances.** This means
 - ✓ *Safety always comes first--the safety of the responders, and the safety and security of the incident victims and the public;*
 - ✓ *Accurate incident investigation must not be compromised;*
 - ✓ *After these concerns, the top priority is to open the roadway by clearing vehicles, victims and debris from the travel lanes to allow traffic to resume at the maximum possible capacity under the circumstances.*