

Highway Safety/Incident Management Electronic Digest

**Partners Working Together for Improved Safety, Clearance, Communications
and the Efficient Management of Highway Traffic Incidents**

First Digest

Quarterly 2007

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Virginia Department of Transportation

Welcome to the first edition of the Highway Safety and Incident Command Digest. With this medium we hope to facilitate the exchange of information that will have value to all the agencies that play such a vital role in the safe and efficient handling of highway incidents. The ultimate goal will be to form regional committees composed of all of our highway partners to formally exchange goals, objectives and best management practices regarding traffic events.

Effective highway incident management is becoming the fastest growing segment of emergency services delivery. As the partnerships of fire, rescue, law enforcement, towing, VDOT and other agencies evolve, we hope to make this digest the staple for the dissemination of informational and safety practices. This digest welcomes input from all sectors and partners in this endeavor to keep our responders and public safe. Please feel free to submit pictures, ideas, best practices and suggestions to:

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VDOT Northwestern Regional Operations
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Why do we need to improve Traffic Incident Management?

Source: National Traffic Incident Management Coalition

Responder Safety: Responder deaths and injuries are an increasing concern, as "struck by" secondary incidents seem to be on the rise. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, struck-by vehicle incidents accounted for 336 fatalities across all industries in 2003.

Congestion Relief: One-quarter of the traffic congestion in the United States is caused by non-recurring traffic incidents. While we have learned to function around high levels of recurring congestion during regular peak travel periods, unexpected travel delay is especially destructive to the economy. For every minute that an Interstate lane is blocked, four minutes of travel delay result. Clearing the road quickly requires responders to work together efficiently to accomplish the many tasks involved in traffic incident management

Domestic Emergency Preparedness: Good traffic incident management is built on strong operational partnerships between transportation and public safety. When we work together side-by-side every day to manage the routine incidents, we build the strong relationships and cooperative policies we need to manage the transportation impacts of major incidents.

Safety Service Patrols

Source: Virginia Department of Transportation

Innovative Service Assisting Motorists and First Responders



Just in time for Fourth of July holiday traffic, Interstate 81 motorists in the northern Shenandoah Valley area will benefit from a new highway service. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is launching Safety Service Patrols along I-81 in portions of Shenandoah and Frederick counties.

The patrols began operations on July 2 along I-81 from exit 298 (Route 11, Strasburg) to exit 323 (Route 669, Frederick County). Hours of operation will be 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week, 365 days a year.

“Safety Service Patrols provide a vital customer service, quickly responding to disabled vehicles to ensure the safety of stranded motorists and helping emergency responder’s clear incidents,” said VDOT Commissioner David S. Ekern. “These crews help reduce delays experienced by other drivers who are stranded in incident-related congestion and reduce the number of secondary accidents caused as interstate motorists encounter traffic backups.”

Patrol duties will include roadside assistance for motorists who have stopped along the highway shoulder or who call 911 for assistance. Aid includes providing tire services; fuel, road flares, and arranging for tow wrecker service. The white Safety Service Patrol trucks are equipped with arrow boards to help direct traffic around road incidents or hazards.

Safety Service Patrollers frequently are the first responders to traffic incidents and motorists with vehicle problems. Early action by the patrollers and notification of the proper authorities can get stranded travelers back on the road and help clear incidents quicker, thus reducing backups along the interstate.

A recent study by the Virginia Transportation Research Council, a partnership of VDOT and the University of Virginia, shows that 75 percent of Safety Service Patrol-recorded incidents in Northern Virginia are cleared within 15 minutes, and approximately 23 percent are cleared from 15 to 90 minutes. Response by the Safety Service Patrol reduced the average incident duration by approximately 17 percent, saving drivers time and money lost to traffic delays and fuel consumption.

VDOT’s Northwest Regional Operations Center based in VDOT’s Smart Traffic Center in the Staunton district complex will oversee the patrol operations for the area. The patrols can be temporarily deployed to other areas within the region for emergency situations or special events. URS Corp. of Salem will carry out the Safety Service Patrol contract, worth \$262,200.

In summer 2006, VDOT launched Safety Service Patrols in Augusta and Albemarle counties. VDOT also operates safety service patrols in Hampton Roads, Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg and the Roanoke/Salem areas of Virginia.

Northwest Service Area

Frederick/Shenandoah
Hours 09:00am – 07:00pm
I-81 Exit 298 – Exit 323
7 days a week

Augusta
Hours 10:00am – 08:00pm
I-81 Exit 213 – Exit 235
I-64 Exit 87 – Exit 107
7 days a week

Albemarle
Hours 06:00/10:00am – 03:00/0700pm
I-64 Exit 107 – Exit 124
Portions of Rt. 29
Monday - Friday

Training

HIGHWAY INCIDENT SCENE SAFETY COURSE WINCHESTER, FRIDAY AUGUST 3, 2007

Source: repsndersafety.com



The Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemans Association (CVVFA) Emergency Responder Safety Institute presents its Protecting Emergency Responders on the Highway Course on Friday August 3, 2007 at the Winchester Moose Lodge #1283 215 E. Cork St. Winchester VA 22601, the site of the CVVFA 106th Annual Convention.

The course begins at 9:00 AM and is free to all CVVFA Members. The cost to non members is \$5 and includes lunch and membership and dues for one year in the CVVFA. Attendees are invited to take part in all CVVFA Convention events. Full information on the 106th Annual Convention may be found at www.cvvfa.org

From The News

National Campaign Launches Effort Educating Drivers to "Move Over" and Protect Officers on Roadways

Source: Move Over America – website



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 150 U.S. law enforcement officers have been killed since 1997 after being struck by vehicles along America's highways, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. To lower that deadly toll, a new coalition of traffic safety and law enforcement groups is launching a nationwide public awareness campaign to protect emergency personnel along our nation's roadsides.

"**Move Over, America**" is a partnership of the **National Safety Commission**, the **National Sheriffs' Association** and the **National Association of Police Organizations**. The campaign is the first nationally coordinated effort to educate Americans about "Move Over" laws and how they help protect the law enforcement officers who risk their lives protecting the public.

According to a national poll by Mason Dixon Polling & Research, sponsored by the National Safety Commission:

- **71 percent** of Americans have not heard of "Move Over" laws;
- **86 percent** support enacting "Move Over" laws in all 50 states; and
- **90 percent** believe traffic stops and roadside emergencies are dangerous for law enforcement and first responders.

The poll was conducted among 625 registered voters from June 23-25. The margin of error is plus or minus 4 percent. [For inquiries regarding the poll's methodology, please contact Brad Coker of Mason Dixon at 904-261-2444].

Forty states have passed "Move Over" laws, which require motorists to "Move Over" and change lanes to give safe clearance to law enforcement officers on roadsides. If drivers can't change lanes or are driving on a two-lane road, they must slow down at least 20 M.P.H. under the posted speed limit. If drivers do not move over or slow down, officers can and do write citations.

"When America's law enforcement officers pull over a motorist, they put their lives at risk. The last thing they need to be worried about is being struck by a bad driver, but that's one of the gravest dangers they face today," said Ken Underwood, president of the National Safety Commission

"Americans must know that they are required by law to move over and keep our state troopers, police officers and sheriff's deputies safe."

"Move Over, America" has produced a dramatic television public service announcement that will be distributed to broadcast affiliates and cable across the country, calling on drivers to obey state Move Over laws that were passed by states following a series of tragic deaths of officers struck by vehicles. In South Florida on Feb. 15, 2006, Broward County Deputy Sheriff Ryan Seguin was struck and killed by a motorist as he and his partner made traffic stop on Interstate 595. He was 23 years old.

"Ryan was the best son a man could ever ask for: a good man and an exceptional deputy," said **Phil Seguin**, Ryan's father and a former Fort Lauderdale police officer. "Police work is dangerous business and every law enforcement officer knows the risks of the job. But deaths like Ryan's could be prevented if people just pay attention and obey the law. That's the real message here."

The "Move Over, America" television public service announcement can be viewed online at www.MoveOverAmerica.com, as can an interactive state-by-state map listing the laws in all 50 states.

"Too many motorists still do not understand the importance of 'Move Over,' which is the law in Virginia," said Sheriff Charles E. Jett of Stafford County, Va., a member of the Traffic Safety Committee of the National Sheriffs' Association. "Drivers: please help protect the people who protect you, and follow this common-sense law. Slow down or Move Over away from emergency vehicles stopped on the side of the road. The stakes are just too high."

Most "Move Over" laws require drivers to move over or slow down for emergency vehicles with their lights flashing. This includes police cruisers, Sheriff's or Highway Patrol vehicles, fire trucks and ambulances.

"Our nation's law enforcement professionals put their lives on the line to protect our citizens," said **Bill Johnson**, executive director of the National Association of Police Organizations. "Slowing down and changing lanes to give our first responders the space they need to stay safe is the least we can do in return. It's what we must do. Move Over, America. It's the law."

From The News



Howard County, Maryland Officer Dies after Being Hit by a Car

Source: examiner.com

On Monday, June 18 2007, the Howard County Police Department says an officer who was struck by a car while on duty over the weekend has died from his injuries. Police said Officer First Class Scott Wheeler suffered serious head injuries Saturday afternoon when he was struck while working on a speed enforcement detail on Route 32 near U.S. Route One.

Wheeler was in the process of flagging down a car driven by a 24-year-old woman. Investigators believe the woman failed to see Wheeler in the roadway. No charges have been filed, but the investigation is continuing.

ISEA Releases Standard for High Visibility Public Safety Vests - ANSI/ISEA 207

Source: International Safety Equipment Association

The International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) released a standard to help protect emergency responders by providing increased visibility.

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) / ISEA 207-2006 American National Standard for High-Visibility Public Safety Vests establishes design, performance specifications and use criteria for highly visible vests that are used by public safety industries.

High Visibility Vests

For emergency personnel deployed on roadways in response to an accident or other emergency situation, high visibility vests serve as a first line of defense against dangerous highway traffic. The latest standard from the (ISEA) outlines important design and performance criteria for vests worn by police officers, firefighters, emergency medical services (EMS) and other public safety personnel in such instances.

ANSI/ISEA 207-2006, *High Visibility Public Safety Vests*, is specifically designed to increase the safety and visibility of these emergency responders. Particularly critical during low-light conditions and inclement weather, vests that meet ANSI/ISEA 207-2006 combine fluorescent and retro-reflective materials for enhanced visibility under even the most compromised lighting conditions. The standard also includes important design options for break-away features.

Fastened with Velcro rather than zippers, buttons or a sewn seam, break-away vests can be pulled quickly and easily away from a responder's body, should it become caught on a passing vehicle.



ANSI/ISEA 207 also includes features specific to the needs of emergency responders, such as a cut-out side for police officer's weapons or EMS belt-mounted equipment. The standard also specifies garment dimensions such that the vest can be sufficiently large enough to be worn over a firefighter's coat. Finally, to clearly and visibly differentiate between different types of emergency personnel, ANSI/ISEA 207 also allows for color-specific markings on the vest panel or trim to distinguish between police, fire and EMS responders.



Representing the Counties of; Albemarle, Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Clarke, Frederick, Fluvanna, Greene, Highland, Louisa, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Warren and the cities of Charlottesville, Covington, Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro and Winchester.