



RISC

A Florida "OPEN ROADS" Initiative



Abstract

Florida's Turnpike Enterprise

Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) Program

Florida's Turnpike Enterprise has implemented a highly innovative program to help meet the goal of Florida's "Open Roads Policy" by clearing major highway incidents and truck crashes in 90 minutes or less. Florida's Turnpike, a critical link in the state's transportation system, has seen a 200 percent increase in traffic since 1990 and now logs an average of 1.5 million toll transactions daily.

With this huge increase in traffic came more major incidents and the congestion and secondary incidents they caused. The standard method of clearing truck crashes utilized heavy duty wrecker crews paid by the vehicle owners and working by the hour. This traditional system gave no assurance that competent and motivated operators would respond or that they would have the proper equipment. It was not uncommon for these major incidents to block lanes for four to six hours.

The RISC plan implemented by the Turnpike Enterprise assures that only highly trained certified operators and powerful, modern heavy-recovery equipment is deployed to lane blocking incidents. While the responsible party remains liable for the tow bill, the Turnpike Enterprise pays a cash incentive to the pre-qualified towing and recovery company for both prompt response and quick clearance of the incident scene. However, if the travel portion of the roadway is not re-opened quickly the responding towing and recovery company is assessed a penalty for every minute over the limit.

In 2005, the second year of the program, RISC was activated for 88 major truck crashes and cargo spills. The lane clearance goal was achieved and the incentive was paid to the towing contractor 94% of the time with an impressive average clearance time of 55.2 minutes after notice to proceed.