

I-95 Corridor Coalition – New England HOGs Vermont Towing and Quick Clearance Response State/Regional Information Exchange

Meeting Summary Report

December 4, 2019

Vermont Agency of Transportation Dill Building



I-95 Corridor Coalition



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Executive Summary

As a result of an I-95 Executive Board Strategic Planning briefing, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), under the umbrella of the New England Highway Operations Group (HOGs), expressed interest in having the I 95 Corridor Coalition (I-95CC) conduct an Information Exchange workshop on the subject of Heavy Towing. The meeting brought together incident responders from agencies in New York, Connecticut, Vermont and the Ministry of Quebec in an effort to discuss how they could improve TIM operations in the respective regions.

The exchange identified a list challenges as well as listing potential action items for future consideration. Most of the action items focused on communication and coordination.

- The Vermont DMV Police investigation division has very limited manpower which at times can lead to a less than desired response time.
- Canadian commercial vehicles which need to be towed back to Canada can only be towed by a Canadian tow company, which emphasizes the need for border states to work closely with their Canadian partners.
- There are issues with trucks using navigation tools such as WAZE, Google Maps and others that do not supply truck specific routing information. As a result, commercial vehicles will reroute, to avoid delays, to other routes that trucks are prohibited from using.
- The requirements to be on the heavy-duty towing rotation list may need to be revised as some companies who can meet the current requirements do not have the equipment to handle some of the crashes.
- Improve ways that responding agencies can get direct communications to the other agencies at the scene of an incident
- Towing companies would like to improve communications with Vermont State Police and DMV
- Consider looking for a way to send pictures or video from the scene to responding tow companies to help the tow company to better understand what is involved and what is the appropriate equipment response.
- Find ways to have dispatchers and responders be familiar with each other and their roles, as well as the diverse geography of regions to enhance event management.
- Have the towing association along with non-association tow companies meet and develop a checklist for Public Safety Dispatchers of key information they need to properly respond to crashes. This would help the dispatchers to know what questions to ask the on-scene commander when an event occurs and puts the onus on the tow operator to work together to develop the criteria before coming back to the table to discuss with state police.
- Have Tow companies provide a better description or justification of charges that make up the tow bill.
- Review the revised crash reporting forms from Vermont Agency of Transportation to better understand incidents and response.
- Annually or semi-annually, convene a meeting to include TMC personnel, Public Safety Dispatchers, VSP and DMV Police to discuss any issues and possible solutions.



- Establish a meeting to include the tow companies, truck/bus companies and insurance companies in order to begin a dialog to improve upon current communications and coordination for each entity to better understand the needs of the other.
- Holding joint classes between DMV CV Investigators and VSP for training young troopers relative to information that is needed to assess an event.
- Research and collect best practice information from other states regarding tow rate schedules, certification, and equipment requirements to help in developing new procedures for Vermont.
- Bring all public agency stakeholders together to develop and agree to a plan to bring the towing response in Vermont to the next level. Simplify the plan and present it to the Executive Team as a multi-agency approach for possible legislative action.

Overall the information exchange seemed to be very well received by all. The representatives from the Vermont agencies, the Connecticut State Police, New York State Police, New York DOT, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and the towing association from Quebec Canada provided a good overview of their TIM operations as well as lessons learned in their attempts to enhance their TIM programs.

Continued meetings between VTrans, VSP, DMV Police and other response agencies should continue on a regular basis to continually refine their inter-agency communications and coordination efforts. Training of responders, of which Vermont leads the country on percentage of responders trained, should also remain a high priority.

The Vermont agencies – VTrans, Vermont DMV and Vermont SP – agreed that a next step would be to meet together in follow up. Such a meeting could provide an opportunity for the agencies to identify which action items to advance and a timeline for them, as well as determining agencies/staff for leadership and/or collaboration to move them forward.



Introduction and Purpose

As a result of an I-95 Executive Board Strategic Planning briefing, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), under the umbrella of the New England Highway Operations Group (HOGs), expressed interest in having the I 95 Corridor Coalition (I-95CC) conduct an Information Exchange workshop on the subject of Heavy Towing. The reason for the VTrans request was to bring together the entities who respond to incidents along Vermont's roadways in an effort to bolster their Traffic Incident Management (TIM) program through Safe Quick Clearance practices via the information exchange.

The information exchange included responders from the Vermont State Police, Department of Motor Vehicle Police (DMV Police), VTrans, Towing and Recovery, and a representative for the Vermont Truck and Bus Association, all of whom shared with one another what their duties and responsibilities entailed, the challenges they face with performing their duties, communication/coordination issues, suggestions for improvements and what is currently working well. Secondly to add to the experience, responders from neighboring states and Canada were in attendance to share their experiences, challenges and lessons learned. These agency representatives included the New York State Police, Connecticut State Police, New York DOT, the Quebec Canada Association des Professionnels du Dépannage du Québec, the I-95CC's Director of Transportation Systems Maintenance and Operations (TSM&O) and the I 95 CC's Director of Freight. The final component of this information exchange included presentations on Safe Quick Clearance and Towing Practices from Todd Leiss of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and Alvin Marquess of Jacobs engineering, formally the Deputy Director of Operations for Maryland DOT's Incident Management program.

Denise Markow explained how towing has been an issue that has been brought up over the last three years by other states in the Coalition. She advised the group that as a result, the Coalition has held two other information exchange sessions with one held in Pennsylvania and the other in Maine. These sessions were very well received and as a result there were action items that were identified by the groups to better their quick clearance and towing practices.

Colonel William "Jake" Elovirta, Director of the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles Enforcement and Safety Division provided opening remarks acknowledging the agency's commitment to public safety and in particular to addressing commercial vehicle safety. He affirmed the continued commitment of his agency to work closely with their partners at VTrans and Vermont State Police to address motor carrier safety and to insure efficient and timely response and clearance of events. He emphasized the importance of relationships among the Vermont agencies, and with key industry partners in the trucking community, including the representative associations. He noted that requesting the I-95 Corridor Coalition to assist with developing this meeting for information exchange and sharing of best practices within Vermont and across borders was the result of the importance they placed on mutual collaboration and shared goals of public safety.



Background

Vermont is for the most part a rural state which has some challenging Winter operations. VTrans partnered with Maine and New Hampshire to deploy an Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS). The Vermont State Police oversee the Traffic Incident Management training program and investigate crashes and incidents along Vermont's roadways. If a commercial vehicle is involved, and it meets certain criteria, then the Department of Motor Vehicle Police, who are charged with investigating all serious commercial vehicle crashes which involve injury, death, or the vehicle needs to be towed, are tasked with the investigation. This differs from a number of other states where the State Police typically investigate all aspects of crashes within their jurisdiction. If the initial report of the crash is not verifiable and a trooper responds to the scene only to find that a commercial vehicle is involved which meets the criteria for a DMV investigation, this can delay the clearance of the crash as this now warrants a second dispatch for a commercial vehicle safety investigation by the DMV investigator. Vermont typically has from three to nine fatal crashes involving trucks along their interstate system annually and they are currently at seven for this year (2019). Both the Vermont State Police and the DMV Police currently use towing rotation lists for truck crashes.

Towing Association Perspective

The president of the Vermont Towing Association, Michael Kollman, owner of Hillside Towing attended the event to represent the Association. It should be noted that there were no non-association tow companies present. Mr. Kollman stressed that Vermont tow operators have unique challenges when it comes to towing. Some of the challenges he spoke about include:



- The state is very spread out and is mainly a rural state
- Truck crashes happen everywhere and not just on the interstates. Some of the roads these crashes occur on, are very narrow roadways with the crashes occurring during all types of weather conditions. This makes it difficult for the tow operators to even get some of their heavy-duty equipment to the scene.
- Tow companies must make sure they outfit their equipment for both summer and winter operations and try and maintain a labor pool for when they have jobs that require extra laborers.
- Tow company service areas may be 30 to 40 miles away and it may take an hour, for a tow company to arrive on scene, depending on weather conditions.
- Truck crashes do not happen every day, and it may be quite a while between calls so keeping towing skills sharp can be challenging.
- There are times when the tow companies must call in labor forces from other businesses such as landscapers and it may take time to get enough people together to help perform the tasks at hand. This includes flagging operations.



- The tow operators are the only self-funded response partners and as a result they sometimes must absorb the tow bill or the cost of some of the services provided for various reasons. Part of this problem is some insurance companies put caps on the payout to tow operators for towing services, which can lead to the tow operator not being compensated properly or at all.
- This compensation challenge is compounded by some trucking companies not being properly insured.
- The heavy-duty equipment required for heavy duty towing is very expensive to purchase and maintain.
- There is sometimes a significant variance in tow bills from one company to the next, which can sometimes be explained by overhead costs.

Kollman went on to explain that he would like to improve communications with VSP and DMV Police. He provided some background on the Vermont Towing Association, including: they have just recently hired a lobbyist, there are 50 members in the association, and they educate their tow truck operators two to three times a year.

Kollman further explained to the group that he believes there can be improvements made in the area of quick clearance and that communications are the key. One area mentioned was the passing of key and accurate information from the field, to the dispatcher and then to the tow operator. In some cases, the information is not always complete or is lacking in detail and this can hamper response and recovery time. He advised that providing accurate and key information – such as a commercial vehicle is involved, the type of commercial vehicle it is (as all are not the same) - helps the tow operator to bring the right equipment to the right location the first time. When this type of information is missing, the tow operator needs to contact the dispatchers to ask for more information about the crash. He noted these issues have gotten somewhat better but still could use some improvement.

Kollman concluded by adding that Vermont is using light and heavy-duty towing rotation and that some companies who can meet the current requirements to be on the heavy-duty rotation list do not have the equipment to handle some of the crashes. He would like to see a heavy-duty rotation by zone program implemented and the current heavy-duty requirements revised.

Vermont State Police (VSP) Perspective

Sergeant Owen Ballinger with the Vermont State Police is involved with the Towing, Traffic Incident Management (TIM) and Quick Clearance programs as well as being a member of the crash investigation team. Sgt. Ballinger explained that part of his duties includes coordinating the TIM training program which utilizes the national Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) four-hour training program. This training has been added to the



Vermont Police and Fire academies training curriculum. Tow operators are required to take the four-hour training course as a requirement to be on the tow list. Vermont now leads the country in percentage of TIM trained responders with 67%.



The VSP currently investigate serious crash scenes using the baseline tape method as well as total station technology. Recently VSP received four drones to use for crash investigations. This will shorten the time it currently takes to perform a crash investigation and allow for a quicker clearance of the incident. Sgt. Ballinger advised the group that VSP recently had an opportunity to use the drone for a crash investigation and was able to capture the whole scene in seven minutes realizing a huge time savings over the traditional investigation methods.

Sgt. Ballinger went on to explain that when dispatch receives a call for a crash along the interstate, they call out the state police. Once the state police arrive and determine there is a CV involved, and it meets the criteria for a CV investigation, they notify dispatch who in turn notifies the DMV police. This process works best when dispatchers ask the agency on the scene the right questions to obtain the information the investigators need in determining the appropriate response but sometimes this information exchange does not occur as efficiently as it could.

There was some open discussion following Sgt. Ballinger's presentation. It was brought up that sending pictures or video from the scene to the responding tow company may help the tow company to better understand what is involved and what equipment they should respond with. Owen responded that there may be some issues with this process as the pictures or videos would be discoverable and could be used in court cases. Another question was asked about how information from the scene to the tow operator could be improved upon. Owen responded by advising that all troopers are trained to describe the scene in as much detail as possible to the state police dispatch so that dispatch can relay that information to the tow operator. The troopers are taught to let the tow company know what is involved and let them make the decision on what equipment to bring to the scene. Karen Songhurst of VTrans representing the Secretary's Office asked the group if there are any technologies available to help with information exchange, to possibly include pictures and video, from the scene. These could be exchanged among the responders to include the tow operator for better situational awareness. If there was a technology or process the responders wanted to test/evaluate, she recommended that they contact her as there may be funding available to implement solutions for improving the information exchange process.

Vermont DMV Police Perspective

Lieutenant Gene Cote with the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicle Police, who oversees the northeast patrol sector, provided a perspective from the DMV Police. Lt. Cote discussed the challenges that the DMV police have in responding to serious CV crashes to investigate them. He advised they have limited manpower and the investigation division could use some additional





employees. Vermont is unique as their DMV police are charged with investigating commercial vehicle crashes whereas in many other states the state police handle these types of investigations. The crashes they are charged with investigating are CV crashes in which the vehicle needs to be towed from the scene, or there are any injuries or fatalities. Even if a passenger vehicle is at fault striking a parked CV and there are injuries, they still must investigate the event.

Lt. Cote gave an overview of how the process works. When dispatch receives a call for a crash along the interstate, they send the state police. Once the state police arrive and determine there is a CV involved, and it meets the criteria for a CV investigation, they notify dispatch who in turn notifies the DMV police. In order to speed up this process they need the dispatchers asking the right questions to get the information they need in determining the appropriate response. He suggested it would be beneficial if the DMV police could talk directly to the state police or other responders on the scene to get the first-hand information of what the incident scene looks like and answers to any questions they may have.

Lt. Cote's presentation spurred a lot of open discussion among the group. Some of the discussion highlights are included below:

- Communications are one of the biggest issues with getting the right information to the right agencies in a timely manner.
- There are instances near the borders with other states where the 911 calls for crashes in Vermont are routed to other states call centers.
- Karen Songhurst of VTrans advised that they have been talking about revising the crash reporting forms which may in the future be able to help with capturing needed information.
- Responders and dispatchers have less in person contact and therefore don't know each other. This could be in part due to the combining of communications centers where the dispatchers may not even be located in the same region as the incident. At times the dispatchers, not being familiar with some of the other regions, do not understand the characteristics of the location which can lead to errors in dispatching. Lt. Cote attributed responders and dispatchers being familiar with each other in the past was helpful as events were communicated. In particular, this was the case when dispatchers were familiar with the region they were working in. As things have become physically centralized it is more difficult for dispatchers to envision remote locations. The group agreed that finding ways to have dispatchers and responders be familiar with each other and their roles, as well as the diverse geography of regions could enhance event management.
- Checklists created for dispatchers to ask the right questions of the person reporting the event and/or getting information from the first responders when they arrive on the scene would be a big help.



Vermont Truck and Bus Association Perspective

Bill Smith, representing the Vermont Truck and Bus Association, explained that Vermont Truck and Bus Association is concerned about the rates that the various tow companies are charging their members (truck and bus companies) when they are involved in a commercial vehicle crash. Some rates appear to be much higher than others for what it appears are the same types of services rendered. They would be interested to see what rate schedules from surrounding jurisdictions look like in comparison to the rates that some tow operator in Vermont are charging. One recommendation that may help the truck and bus companies to better understand the bills they receive from the tow companies would be better documentation of what the charges are for that make up the tow bill. This might help the industry to understand why some bills are higher than others and all parties would have a better understanding of the practice. Smith also suggested that it may help to organize a meeting to include the tow companies, truck/bus companies and insurance companies in order to begin a dialog, to better understand todays towing costs/expenses and the rates the tow companies charge. This could help the truck and bus companies, working with the insurance companies, to determine the insurance coverage needed so these companies can be adequately covered. He also explained that the association expressed concern over the cargo that the trucks involved in the crashes are carrying as that cargo belongs to the clients of the trucking company and not the trucking company itself in most cases. It was brought to their attention that the legislature is looking into liens on the cargo of the trucks involved in crashes when the trucking or insurance company has not adequately settled the bill.



Presentations

The first presentation “TIM & Safe Quick Clearance Lessons Learned” was provided by **Todd Leiss**, the TIM Program Manager for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC). The PTC utilizes contractual towing by zone. Their TMC dispatches both responders and tow operators at the same time. This expedites a complete response and allows for quicker clearance of the travel lanes. If the tow company arrives and it is not needed, they are paid a dry run fee of \$24 from the turnpike for their efforts. The turnpike also has contracts with other responders such as the state police and fire departments to ensure a level of response for which they are striving. Along the turnpike, commercial vehicle crashes and pedestrians struck events have increased from previous years. Todd showed a video titled “2019 Responder Struck-By-LODD” (<https://www.magisto.com/video/N14VMEUKQDBrVhtiCzE?l=vsm&o=w&c=c>) that he created to remind

Why the Need For TIM?

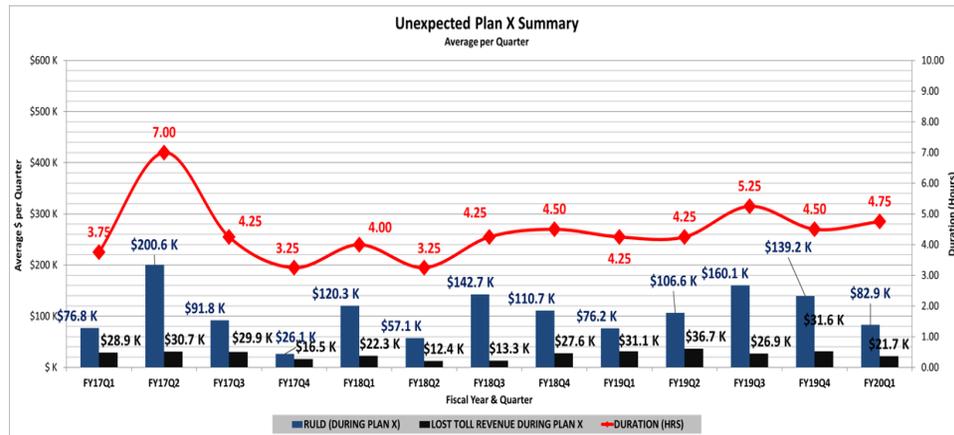
Effective TIM saves the lives of emergency responders who are often killed or injured at incident scenes by passing vehicles:

- Over 36,500 Americans are killed in highway crashes each year.
- "Struck-By's" are the 2nd leading cause of accidental law enforcement officer death and account for 20% of on-duty firefighter deaths per year.
- The likelihood of a secondary crash increases by 2.8% for each minute the primary incident stays active.
- Every minute of lane closure can cause up to 4 miles of backlog.



responders of the reality of what can happen along the roadway and why safe quick clearance is important.

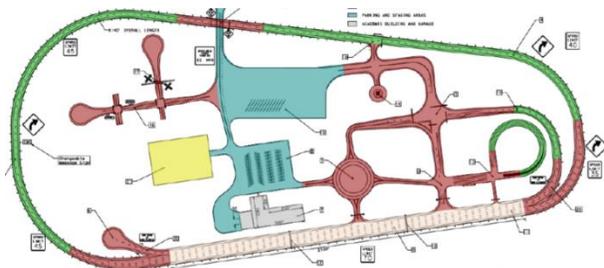
Leiss explained why safe quick clearance was important by referencing the TIM timeline and associated costs per event as noted in the graphic featured here. He also explained that



the PTC had conducted an Incentive Towing pilot which was successful in realizing a reduction in clearance times for truck crashes and a significant cost savings to the travelling public.

Other issues covered in the presentation related to the Pennsylvania Turnpike’s program included:

- The PTC requires TIM training every two years for turnpike staff and tow companies.
- Class three safety garments are required while working along the turnpike. These do not have to be safety vests, but the garments worn must meet the class three standard.
- The PTC staff are required to have WreckMaster training.
- Municipal Planning organizations can be very helpful in spreading the word about safe quick clearance and helping to establish training classes in different regions.
- The PTC does After Action Reviews on a regular basis to constantly learn and improve the TIM program from past experiences.
- Pennsylvania has a statewide TIM Team spearheaded by the PTC called PennTIME (Pennsylvania Statewide Traffic Incident Management Enhancement Program) which includes everyone who responds to incidents along the highway to promote Safe Quick Clearance and Responder Safety.
- Pennsylvania is in the beginning stages of the process of constructing a state-of-the-art training facility for emergency responders. This project is known as PennSTART (Pennsylvania Safety Transportation and Research Track) and once complete in the Fall of 2022 the training facility will be available to responders from other states as well free of charge. Additional information can be found at <https://www.pennstart.org/>.





- The PTC does encourage taking pictures and video for situational awareness of the incident scene. These pictures are sent to the turnpike operations center using a data capable mobile app.
- HAAS Alerts are devices installed in the response vehicles which, when the emergency lights are activated, an icon representing the vehicles location shows up in WAZE. This helps to alert the travelling public that there are responders up ahead and hopefully add a layer of safety for the responder.

Leiss finished by talking about their Incentive Towing project. The incentives the tow companies receive if they meet the set goals of the program range from \$1,000 to \$2,500 depending on the goal reached. There are also disincentives if the company does not meet the set goals. The definition of clearing all travel lanes meant that the commercial vehicle is relocated to a wide area off the roadway. The program realized a reduction in clearance time for these types of incidents from an average of three hours and 18 minutes to 91 minutes during the pilot phase.

The second presenter, **Alvin Marquess** of Jacobs Engineering, formally with the Maryland DOT's Incident Management Program, as the Deputy Director of Operations, focused on the various types of towing programs implemented throughout the country as well as inter-agency coordination and how both subjects can improve safe quick clearance of incidents especially those involving commercial vehicles.

Various examples of towing practices used by agencies around the country, how they operate; along with the pros and cons of each are noted below.

Rotation List towing which is commonly used throughout the country and requires tow companies to enlist in the program and meet minimum qualifications that have been established by the agency that is responsible for overseeing the towing program (typically law enforcement). There are usually two to three categories for tow operators to apply, such as light duty, sometimes medium duty and heavy duty. When a need for a tow arises, law enforcement will dispatch the next available tow operator on the rotation list for the category of need. This practice strives to ensure that work is spread evenly among all the companies. The downside can be that the closest tow company may not be the one called which can result in a delay in the resources arriving at the scene and slowing down the quick clearance process.

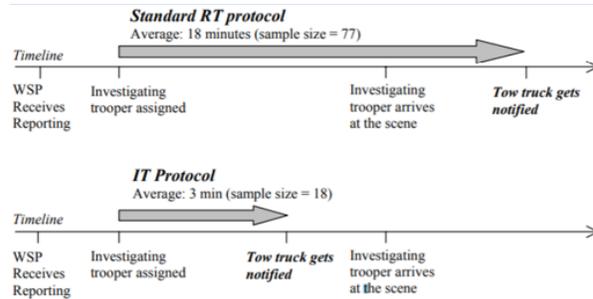
Towing **Rotation by Zone** is another form of the rotation list and operates in relatively the same manner except the rotation takes place within a response zone that is given to the companies which apply. This helps to limit the response and clearance time as the companies are typically located near their assigned zones. This process also requires a clear demarcation line between zones and mutual aid contingencies for neighboring zones to be able to assist if the companies in one zone get overwhelmed.



Contract Towing, usually implemented by Tolling Agencies or Municipalities can be developed for an entire facility, municipality, or divided into response zones. These contracts are usually put out for bid and are awarded to companies who agree to and meet the contract requirements. Contract towing agreements for the most part require stricter qualifications/certifications of the tow company employees as well as requirements for minimum equipment standards in order to ensure a higher level of response than the typical rotation tow lists. Many of these contracts have negotiated rate schedules. The benefits can include a quicker response time with a higher level of service provided. There must however be clear demarcation lines between zones to limit conflicts between companies and mutual aid arrangements should also be included in the contract language

Instant Dispatch Towing allows for a quicker towing response as the tow company is notified at the same time as law enforcement when an incident or crash can be confirmed to be blocking travel lanes by either CCTV images or a credible reporting entity.

Tow companies must be willing to participate and meet qualifications that are set forth in the agreement, response zones are given out, companies stage trucks during peak hours in or near their assigned zones and have a minimum response time during non-peak hours. Law enforcement is dispatched immediately followed by the dispatch for the tow company. If the tow company arrives and does not get a vehicle to tow, they are given a dry run fee for the response effort. The graphic notes how Washington State, upon assessing the process, found they were saving 15 minutes in dispatch times which led to a 15-minute reduction in response time which equated to annual benefits of 6.5 to 11.1 million annually at a cost of less than \$1,000/Year for Dry Run payments.



Towing and Recovery Incentive Programs (TRIP) have been implemented in some states with other states in the process of implementing incentive programs in one form or another. These programs basically set a recovery classification for companies and require that any company that wishes to participate has the specialized equipment and training to be able to efficiently deal with the most serious of major commercial vehicle crashes. TRIP is activated when incidents meet a pre-determined set of criteria. These are mostly complicated or extended incidents where large vehicles or spilled loads cannot be easily towed from the scene or are creating a hazard to traffic. The activation in most cases is requested by the incident commander with the concurrence of the DOT. These incentive programs are designed to reduce the impact of major traffic incidents by establishing lane clearance goals of 90 minutes or less. If the tow company meets the goals of the program, they receive a monetary bonus.





Marquess talked about Winter operations and some of the best practices being used by other states which included:

- Winter Storm heavy duty wrecker contracts where these vehicles are contracted to stage near areas where trucks or large vehicles get stuck to assist them in getting back under way and keeping the roads open,
- Mandatory chain restrictions where large commercial vehicles are required to install chains to their drive wheels at the provided chain up locations or face fines; and.
- The closing or restricting of roadways to commercial vehicles during extreme Winter weather conditions.

Other tips for safe quick clearance included:

- Hold harmless laws and quick clearance liability
- The importance of clear and concise communications to include detailed description of incidents, the use of pictures and video, knowledgeable agency and tow company dispatchers, and the importance of notifying the tow companies as soon as it is recognized they are needed.
- The importance of multi-agency training and exercises to include dispatchers.
- Training and certification requirements for tow operators
- Dispatcher training
- TIM team coordination

Benefits which can be realized by enhancing the operations of the TIM program include:

- Improved relationships among incident responders through more coordination, communication, cooperation and commitment
- Improved efficiency of response to incidents
- Enhanced safety of responders
- Reduction in incident clearance time
- Reduced congestion
- Reduction of secondary crashes
- Reduction of emissions, and economic impacts

State Agency Discussion

Following the presentations there was an open discussion that led to the identification of existing issues and challenges that responders are faced with in trying to realize enhancements to the TIM program, safe quick clearance practices, as well as how some of the surrounding states and Canada are operating to overcome some of these challenges. Much of the conversations focused on communications, information exchange, situational awareness and training. Some of the open discussion topics included:

- Sending pictures or video from the scene to the responding tow company or other agencies may help to better understand what is involved and how agencies should respond and with what equipment they should respond with. APDQ (The towing association of Quebec) offered that in Ontario there are many CCTV cameras where tow operator can view the crashes via the video



before responding which helps them to determine what equipment they need and a good location of where the incident is located. The Law Enforcement personnel did caution the group that there may be some issues with this process as the pictures or videos would be discoverable and could be used in court cases.

- The DMV Police offered that they have checklists developed for their dispatchers explaining what information their investigators need prior to responding to a serious truck crash. Maybe this same process could be used in developing other checklists for dispatchers to ask questions and capture the needed information from the scene and pass that information along to other responders as well as tow companies. There would need to be some conversations between VSP and DMV police on what information would be needed for investigators and tow operator from the scene.
- It was also mentioned that it would prove helpful if the responding disciplines could talk directly to the state police or other responders on the scene to get the first-hand information of what the incident scene looks like and answers to any questions they may have.
- All troopers are trained to describe the scene in as much detail as possible to the state police dispatch so that dispatch can relay that information to the tow operator. The troopers are taught to let the tow company know what is involved and let them make the decision on what equipment to bring to the scene.

Identified Issues/ Challenges

Throughout the information exchange process and open discussions, the issues and challenges listed below were identified as having an impact on current TIM operations.

- A major issue is that there is limited to no cell phone coverage in some areas in Vermont and sending pictures or video to/from a cell phone or other source is impossible in some areas.
- The DMV Police investigation division have very limited manpower which at times can lead to a less than desired response time. It was mentioned that they could use some additional employees.
- Receiving an accurate depiction of the incident scene to include all needed information and details to respond accordingly to major crashes or incidents.
- Canadian commercial vehicles which need to be towed back to Canada can only be towed by a Canadian tow company, which emphasizes the need for border states to work closely with their Canadian partners.
- There are issues with trucks using navigation tools such as WAZE, Google Maps and others that do not supply truck specific routing information. As a result, commercial vehicles will reroute, to avoid delays, to other routes that trucks are prohibited from using.
 - There is one such problem area along State Route 9 between the Stowe and Smuggler's Notch ski resorts which is very narrow, and trucks get stuck. This route is very well signed with the prohibition information and when trucks use this route and get caught there is a first offense fine of \$1,000.00. This fine can be doubled for repeat offenders.
 - Vermont State Route 9 is a commercial vehicle corridor and during heavy snowfalls trucks get stuck in certain areas. As a result, Vermont has installed truck chain up locations along a section of State Route 9 with signage advising drivers of the regulations for chaining up



their vehicles before proceeding. Even though this area is well signed, and fines can be imposed, there are still violations and issues experienced.

- The requirements to be on the heavy-duty towing rotation list may need to be revised as some companies who can meet the current requirements do not have the equipment to handle some of the crashes.
- Since the consolidation of some of the Public Safety Answering Points there seems to be some dispatchers that are not familiar with some of their new dispatch areas. This may just be a learning curve or require additional training for the dispatchers.

Potential Action Items

Most of the action items focused around communications and coordination. It was not immediately identified who or which agency would be responsible for taking on the action items but input from all the entities which respond to incidents along the roadway could help to craft the solutions to any issues which were brought up. Some of the potential action items included:

- Develop ways that responding agencies can get direct communications to the other agencies at the scene of an incident
- Towing companies would like to improve communications with Vermont State Police and DMV
- Consider looking for a way to send pictures or video from the scene to responding tow companies to help the tow company to better understand what is involved and what is the appropriate equipment response.
- Find ways to have dispatchers and responders be familiar with each other and their roles, as well as the diverse geography of regions to enhance event management.
- Have the towing association along with non-association tow companies meet and develop a checklist for Public Safety Dispatchers of key information they need to properly respond to crashes. This would help the dispatchers to know what questions to ask the on-scene commander when an event occurs and puts the onus on the tow operator to work together to develop the criteria before coming back to the table to discuss with state police.
- Tow companies provide a better description or justification of charges that make up the tow bill.
- Review the revised crash reporting forms from Vermont Agency of Transportation to better understand incidents and response.
- Annually or semi-annually, convene a meeting to include TMC personnel, Public Safety Dispatchers, VSP and DMV Police to discuss any issues and possible solutions.
- Establish a meeting to include the tow companies, truck/bus companies and insurance companies in order to begin a dialog to improve upon current communications and coordination for each entity to better understand the needs of the other.
- Holding joint classes between DMV CV Investigators and VSP for training young troopers relative to information that is needed to assess an event.
- Research and collect best practice information from other states regarding tow rate schedules, certification, and equipment requirements to help in developing new procedures for Vermont.



- Bring all public agency stakeholders together to develop and agree to a plan to bring the towing response in Vermont to the next level. Simplify the plan and present it to the Executive Team as a multi-agency approach for possible legislative action.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall the information exchange seemed to be very well received by all. There were some great discussions regarding current operations and responses to incidents along Vermont roadways along with some suggestions for improvements. The representatives from the Vermont agencies, the Connecticut State Police, New York State Police, New York DOT, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and the towing association from Quebec Canada provided a good overview of their TIM operations as well as lessons learned in their attempts to enhance their TIM programs. Continued meetings between VTrans, VSP, DMV Police and other response agencies should continue on a regular basis to continually refine their inter-agency communications and coordination efforts. Training of responders, of which Vermont leads the country on percentage of responders trained, should also remain a high priority.

The Vermont agencies – VTrans, Vermont DMV and Vermont SP – agreed that a next step would be to meet together in follow up. Such a meeting could provide an opportunity for the agencies to identify which action items to advance and a timeline for them, as well as determining agencies/staff for leadership and/or collaboration to move them forward.



Appendix A Attendee List

Agency	Attendee	Email Address
Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec	Mike Burstall	mike@burstallconrad.com
Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec	Serge Landry	s.landry@remorquagemeteor.ca
Connecticut State Police	Sgt. Rob Derry	robert.derry@ct.gov
I-95 Corridor Coalition	Denise Markow	dmarkow@i95coalition.org
I-95 Corridor Coalition	Marygrace Parker	mgparker@i95coalition.org
Jacobs Engineering	Alvin Marquess	Alvin.Marquess@jacobs.com
New York State DOT	Rebecca Gibson-Schott	rebecca.gibson-schott@dot.ny.gov
New York State DOT	Matthew Vasilow	matthew.vasilow@dot.ny.gov
New York State Police	Timothy Morris	TIMOTHY.MORRIS@troopers.ny.gov
Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission	Todd Leiss	tleiss@paturndpike.com
Sabil & Sons Towing	Doug Josler	service@sabilandsons.com
Smith Government Relations/ Vermont Truck & Bus Assn.	Bill Smith	bill@smithlawvt.com
Vermont AOT	Ian Degutis	ian.degutis@vermont.gov
Vermont AOT	Karen Songhurst	karen.songhurst@vermont.gov
Vermont AOT	Joshua Taylor	Joshua.E.Taylor@vermont.gov
Vermont DMV - CMV Unit	Derek Fenby	derek.fenby@vermont.gov
Vermont DMV - Enforcement & Safety Division	Lt. Gene Cote	gene.cote@Vermont.gov
Vermont DMV - Enforcement & Safety Division	Col. William (Jake) Elovirta	william.elovirta@vermont.gov
Vermont State Police	Sgt. Owen Ballinger	owen.ballinger@vermont.gov
Vermont State Police	Lt. Tara Thomas	Tara.L.Thomas@vermont.gov
Vermont State Police	Lt. David White	david.white@vermont.gov
Vermont Towing Association/ Hillside Auto	Michael Kollman	TCTOW1@aol.com



Appendix B Handouts



PENNSYLVANIA SHRP2 TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Proudly brought to you by:



Effective traffic incident clearance is an important means of improving responder and motorist safety while simultaneously reducing congestion delays. This online training is designed to educate multidisciplinary groups of emergency responders across Pennsylvania in Traffic Incident Management (TIM) best practices and represents the Commonwealth’s adaptation of the Federal Highway Administration’s SHRP2 TIM Training program.

Learn AT YOUR OWN PACE online! This course has been optimized for presentation on multiple platforms including desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and phones.

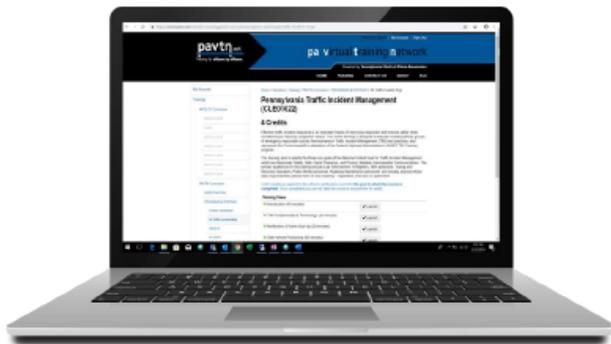
Continuing Education:

This course has been approved for the following credit types:

- Federal Highway Administration Professional Development Hours: 4 hours
- Continuing Law Enforcement Education: 4 hours
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS):
Total Hours: 4.00 for all levels
Other Hours: 4.00
EMSVO Hours: 4.00



To access the training, simply go to the TRAIN PA website at <https://www.train.org/pa/welcome>. If you have an existing user account, you can simply log in and use the word “TIM” in the search bar to find the blended learning course. If you don’t have an account, please create one to access the course.



Municipal Police Officers can log on to the **Pennsylvania Virtual Training Network (PAVTN)** and find the training under “Programs & Systems” in the PAVTN Curriculum section of the site.

And don’t forget....to keep up with Traffic Incident Management efforts in Pennsylvania, please join the PennTIME Facebook page at facebook.com/groups/PennTIME

Need more information? Contact Todd Leiss at tleiss@paturndpike.com, or Dave Wolfe at dave@driveengineering.com



RESPONDERSAFETY.com

Learning Network



The Emergency Responder Safety Institute of the Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association provides the Responder Safety Learning Network to further the National Unified Goal for Traffic Incident Management by providing **FREE**, vetted, multidisciplinary training and resources to all roadway emergency responders — fire, police, EMS, Fire Police Units, DOT, and towing and recovery.

The Responder Safety Learning Network uses text, audio, video, graphics, and animation to deliver the practical training content that all responders can use to stay safe when operating on the roadways.

<p><u>Training Modules</u></p> <p><u>Autonomous Vehicles</u> <u>Advance Warning</u> <u>Blocking Procedures at Roadway Incidents</u> <u>Connected Vehicles</u> <u>Fire Service Collaboration with Towing & Recovery Operations</u> <u>High Visibility Innovations</u> <u>Intro to Fire Service Traffic Control Professional</u> <u>Law Enforcement and High Visibility PPE</u> <u>Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)</u> <u>Move It or Work It</u> <u>National Unified Goal for Traffic Incident Management</u> <u>Planning for the Long-Term Event</u> <u>Recommended Practices for TIM SOPs</u> <u>Roadway Incident Operational Safety for EMS Providers</u> <u>Roadway Incident Safety Training Guidance for Fire Officers</u> <u>Safe Fire Service Traffic Control Practices</u> <u>Safety Service Patrols: An Underutilized Partner</u> <u>Scene Control</u> <u>See and Be Seen: Emergency Lighting Awareness</u> <u>Setting Up a Traffic Incident Management Unit</u> <u>Sobriety Checkpoint Safety</u> <u>Special Circumstances: Safe Operations for Vehicle Fires</u> <u>Special Hazards</u> <u>Starting and Sustaining a TIM Committee</u> <u>Termination</u> <u>The First 15 Minutes at Roadway Incidents</u> <u>TIM For The Next Generation</u> <u>Traffic Incident Management on Rural Roads</u> <u>Traffic Incident Management Requirements in NFPA 1500</u> <u>Traffic Incident Management: Incident Command & Management</u> <u>Traffic Incident Management: Model Practices & Procedures</u> <u>Traffic Incident Management: Strategies for Public Outreach</u> <u>Understanding NFPA 1091</u> <u>Who's In Charge at Roadway Incident Scenes?</u> <u>Upcoming Programs</u> <u>The Public Safety Telecommunicator's Role in Roadway Safety</u></p>	<p><u>Resource Categories</u></p> <p><u>Advance Warning</u> <u>Blocking / Safe Positioning</u> <u>High Visibility PPE</u> <u>Highway Lane Designations</u> <u>Incident Command System (ICS) / NIMS</u> <u>Line of Duty Deaths -LODD</u> <u>National Unified Goal – NUG</u> <u>Professional Qualifications/Performance Standards</u> <u>Public Education</u> <u>Reports</u> <u>Safety Education Material</u> <u>Slow Down Move Over Laws</u> <u>SOP's/SOG's</u> <u>Struck By Incidents</u> <u>Traffic Incident Management</u> <u>Training</u> <u>Vehicle Emergency Lighting and Marking</u> <u>White Papers</u></p> <p><u>Video Segments/Public Service</u></p> <p><u>Announcements</u></p> <p><u>Move It</u> <u>Slow Down Move Over</u> <u>It's No Picnic Out Here</u> <u>Best Practices for Backing Fire Apparatus and Ambulances</u> <u>Manage To Survive</u> <u>Accepting the Challenge to be Visible</u> <u>Be Right, Be Bright</u> <u>Marked and Seen</u></p>
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