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# Roadway Incident Response

**PROCEDURE**

**S.O.G. : Roadway Response**

**Effective:** 05/01/05    **Revised:**

Page 1 of 8

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**Scope:**

This policy shall apply to all personnel involved in fire department operations occurring on any roadway including but not limited to fires, medical emergencies, crashes, or any other call for fire department/EMS assistance.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for establishing a safe response and safe work zone actions when responding to emergencies on roadways, including highways, and interstates.

**CONTENTS**

**LAST REVISION**

Scope and Purpose	05/01/05
Terminology	05/01/05
Procedures	05/01/05
General Safety	05/01/05
Response and Apparatus Placement	05/01/05
Unified Command	05/01/05

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**S.O.G. :** Roadway Response

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Page 2 of 8

### **Terminology:**

The following terms shall be used during incident operations, post-incident analysis, and training activities related to working in or near moving traffic and on all roadways.

1. **Advance Warning-** notification procedures that advises approaching motorists to transition from normal driving status to that required by the temporary emergency traffic control measures ahead of them.
2. **Block-** positioning a fire department apparatus on an angle to the lanes of traffic creating a physical barrier between upstream traffic and the work area. Includes 'block to the right' or 'block to the left'.
3. **Buffer Zone-** the distance or space between personnel and vehicles in the protected work zone and nearby moving traffic.
4. **Downstream-** the direction that traffic is moving as it travels away from the incident scene.
5. **Flagger-** Personnel assigned to monitor approaching traffic and activate an emergency signal if the actions of a motorist do not conform to established traffic control measures in place at the roadway incident
6. **Shadow-** the protected work area at a vehicle-related roadway incident that is shielded by the block from apparatus and other emergency vehicles.
7. **Taper-** the action of merging several lanes of moving traffic into fewer moving lanes.
8. **Temporary Work Zone-** the physical area of a roadway within which emergency personnel perform their fire, EMS and rescue tasks at a vehicle-related incident.
9. **Transition Zone-** the lanes of a roadway within which approaching motorists change their speed and position to comply with the traffic control measures established at an incident scene.
10. **Upstream-** the direction that traffic is traveling from as the vehicles approach the incident scene.
11. **Lane Numbers** – A number designated to a lane of traffic to aid in the clear communication of assignments. Lanes are numbered left to right (like how we read) as one faces the direction of travel. [median |1|2|3| shoulder]
12. **Types of Traffic Accident Categories:**
  - a. Minor – expected duration is less than 30 minutes.
  - b. Intermediate - expected duration of 30 minutes to 2 hours.

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Page 3 of 8

c. Major – Expected Duration of more than 2 hours.

**Procedure:**

- A. This policy shall apply to all roadway responses.
- B. As stated elsewhere in our SOG and Policy and Procedures, all responders **shall** wear their seatbelts when responding on any apparatus and shall have the appropriate safety gear including safety vest (or turn-outs as appropriate) **and** accountability tags. It shall be the responsibility of the member riding in the Officer seat of all apparatus to assure that this procedure is followed at all times.
- C. This procedure identifies parking practices for Fire Department apparatus and vehicles that will provide maximum protection and safety for personnel operating in or near moving vehicle traffic. It also identifies several approaches for individual practices to keep firefighters safe while exposed to the hazardous environment created by moving traffic.
- D. It shall be the policy of the Urbandale Fire Department to position apparatus and other emergency vehicles at a vehicle-related incident on any street, road, highway or expressway in a manner that best protects the incident scene and the work area. Such positioning shall afford protection to fire department personnel law enforcement officers, tow service operators and the motoring public from the hazards of working in or near moving traffic.
- E. It shall be the policy of Urbandale Fire Department to reduce the number of response vehicles responding to roadway incidents to the minimum number needed to safely perform fire/EMS activities.
  - 1. When responding to reported incidents on the interstate, it is important that the absolute minimum number of response vehicles actually enter the interstate system to “look” for reported incidents. This is especially true when adverse weather conditions exist such as snow, ice or other inclement weather. As part of our risk management efforts, it is vital to keep our exposure as limited as possible as the risk of having our people involved in an incident increases with the increased number of units responding.

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### PROCEDURE

**S.O.G. :** Roadway Response

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**Revised:**

Page 4 of 8

- a. If law enforcement units are on the interstate and are unable to locate an incident, all fire department units shall stage in a location that allows access to the closest on ramp to the reported location while not impeding traffic flow and shall not enter the interstate system unless requested by law enforcement. In the event FD is requested for assistance in locating the roadway incident, only two vehicles shall enter the interstate system, all others shall remain staged.
  - b. If law enforcement units are not on the interstate searching for a reported incident, only two vehicles shall enter the interstate system, all others shall remain staged.
  - c. Once an incident has been confirmed, the Incident Commander shall limit the number of responding units to only those units needed to mitigate the incident.
2. Once a roadway incident is confirmed, the Incident Commander shall disregard all units that are not needed. Our goal is to have the fewest units possible on the scene of a roadway incident and responding vehicles shall be kept to the minimum number to safely mitigate the incident.
  3. If it is unclear that additional units will be needed, responding units who have not arrived should be staged where practical to maintain the least amount of congestion of the emergency scene.
  4. If units are responding to a fire call on the Interstate, the IC shall cancel or downgrade responding units that are not needed to mitigate the incident as soon as possible to reduce the number of apparatus responding.

### **General Safety**

- A. Never trust approaching traffic. Always keep an eye on moving traffic.
- B. A Safety Officer is needed and shall be assigned at the roadway incident. The IC may function as the Safety Officer during the initial response, but shall assign a Safety Officer as soon as possible.

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**Revised:**

Page 5 of 8

- a. The Safety Officer wears "Safety Officer" vest and takes a position where they can view the entire scene while facing oncoming traffic.
  - b. The Safety Officer shall assure that the scene is secure and that personnel remain in the Safety Zone
  - c. The Safety Officer shall assure that all personnel are wearing Reflective Vests or appropriate turnout gear.
  - d. The Safety Officer shall use the Roadway Incident "Cue Card" on all incidents where the Safety Officer is assigned.
  - e. The Safety Officer shall notify the IC immediately of any safety problems.
- C. Personnel arriving in crew seat cabs of fire apparatus should exit and enter the apparatus from the protected "shadow" side, away from moving vehicles.
- D. Officers, apparatus operators, crew members in apparatus with individual seat configurations including ambulance personnel must exit and enter their units with extreme caution remaining alert to moving traffic at all times.
- E. Always look before opening doors and stepping out of apparatus or emergency vehicle into any moving traffic areas. When walking around apparatus and emergency vehicles, be alert to your proximity to moving traffic. Stop at the corner of the unit, check for traffic, and then proceed along the unit remaining as close to the emergency vehicle/apparatus as possible.
- F. All personnel shall be aware of the Safety Zone and shall work therein.
- G. Protective/reflective clothing shall be worn on the scene. Coats may be removed with permission of the IC or Safety Officer. Reflective Vests shall be worn at all times when turnout gear is not worn. If not wearing both turnout pants and coats, a vest shall be worn





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Page 8 of 8

- E. Engine and Rescue initially staged at the intersection or entrance ramp prior to the emergency and moved up to the scene upon Command's orders.
- F. When on scene, consideration should be given to the sight distance of on-coming traffic. If sight distance is limited (hills, curves, etc.) notification (cones, flaggers, etc.) should be placed in a position to allow early warning of on-coming traffic.

### **Unified Command**

- A. Traffic Incidents will likely involve potential crime scenes and mass casualty incidents. Every effort should be established to develop a Unified Command setting, emphasizing scene safety, patient care and evidence preservation. The decision on road closure and reopening should also be a unified decision, as soon as practical.
- B. The use of a public Safety Operations channel should be coordinated through dispatch so that law enforcement and Fire/EMS can communicate effectively.
- C. Incident Management Coordination – If a fire or hazardous substance is present, at a vehicle accident, based on Iowa Code 102.2, the appropriate fire officer should assume Command.
- D. When adequate law enforcement personnel are present, and fire or hazardous substances are not present, law enforcement personnel should assume Command. State Code 102.4
- E. State Code 102.4 provides for law enforcement personnel to be in charge of traffic control at all of these incidents.
- F. **Traffic Issues** - Work in a coordinated manner with the area law enforcement officials and possibly the Department of Transportation to establish proper traffic flow.
- G. **Patient Care** – Allow sufficient apparatus staging for EMS vehicle(s) to access the scene for patient care (staged near the Rescue Truck protocols, if possible. Also, consider the possible need for a Landing Zone for EMS Helicopter Operations.