



## TRAFFIC CONTROLS AT ROADWAY INCIDENTS

Emergency responders and apparatus being struck by civilian vehicles while operating on roadways is a growing problem in the police, fire, and EMS communities. Driver distraction and driver impairment, increased traffic volume, and emergency vehicle lighting all play a role in causing struck-by incidents.

Knowing road operations following an incident is one of the most dangerous tasks your workers will conduct, and agency leaders must take action to safeguard them. The following action plan will assist your agency to better prepare for an emergency roadway incident.

1. Planning and policies must start with the minimum standards for roadway operations in New Jersey.
  - a. [New Jersey Highway Incident Traffic Safety Guidelines for Emergency Responders, Version 2](#) (NJTIMS). Visit [njtims.org](http://njtims.org) for more information and a [Quick Reference Guide](#).
  - b. [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Chapter 6](#). Control of Traffic Through Traffic Incident Management Areas (MUTCD).
2. Both documents acknowledge their limitations for directing actions at the myriad of incidents on the endless types of roadways and conditions. Law enforcement, fire, and EMS agency leaders must provide additional guidance on good decision-making on applying the guidance under the NJTIMS and MUTCD. The [National Unified Goal for Traffic Incident Management](#) defines three objectives to achieve safer roadway operations:
  - a. Implement responder and driver safety programs.
  - b. Coordinated response and quick scene clearance.
  - c. Reliable multidisciplinary incident communications.
3. Minimum standards and agency-specific actions must be captured in a [Roadway Safety Policy](#).
4. Train every level of responder with the knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) for their actions and decision-making authority at road incidents. New Jersey offers a 4-hour [Traffic Incident Management \(TIM\) Responder Training](#) for police, firefighters, DOT, towing, medical personnel, and other incident responders.

However, a single 4-hour class will not adequately prepare front-line responders and officers with the KSA needed. Agency leaders must adopt adult learning strategies such as

- a. [Microlearning](#) – Microlearning resets the forgetting curve. Microlearning is a 5 to 10-minute informal conversation with a crew just before a scheduled or anticipated event. An example would be an officer commenting that it is a holiday weekend and traffic will be heavier than usual, and discussing how that could affect blocking vehicle positioning.
- b. Frequent [After-Action Reviews](#) (AAR) – Officers should get in the habit of reviewing the actions and decisions after returning equipment back to service. AAR are not about attributing good or bad actions or decisions to an individual but discussing the processes and decision-making factors that led to them. It is strictly a learning process for both the individual and the organization.
- c. [Tabletop Drills](#) – Tabletop drills or exercises are coordinated discussions for team members to review their roles during an emergency and how they might react in various scenarios. A facilitator guides the conversation and captures lessons learned.

5. Stay abreast of emerging technology, equipment, and research to augment the safety of responders. Finally, researchers and industry leaders are paying attention to this hazard. FEMA and the US Fire Administration produced an [Emergency Vehicle Visibility and Conspicuity Study](#) with findings on the patterns and colors to better identify vehicles on roadways. The [Responder Safety](#) organization produces periodic [research reports](#) on vehicle positioning, lighting, and visibility. Agency leaders and trainers should [subscribe](#) to their updates and resources.
  
6. Document your Temporary Traffic Controls (TTC) at the scene. Your traffic control through the scene will be scrutinized if a secondary incident occurs. When a second crash occurs, your TTC will be disturbed to handle the new scene. When both the initial and secondary scenes are wrapped up, the investigation will begin and photographs of the disturbed TTC will be taken and shown to the jury, not your TTC at the time of the vehicle intrusion.