Incident Management News

Highway incident management news for the Hartford, New Britain, & Middletown areas

Incident Management Planning Team

January 1998

WHAT IS INCIDENT MANAGEMENT?

Nonrecurring highway incidents, such as accidents, vehicle break-downs, and dropped debris are responsible for 50 to 60% of all highway congestion. An incident blocking one lane on a three-lane highway can reduce highway capacity by as much as 50%. A vehicle stalled on the side of the highway can reduce highway capacity by as much as 20%, due to “rubber necking.” An incident of any duration can increase the risk of a secondary accident, further impeding the flow of traffic.

Preplanned incident management can result in:

- more rapid verification of the incident,
- a quicker response to the incident,
- better and safer management of traffic at the incident,
- coordinated and smoother diversion of traffic around the incident,
- more rapid clearance of the incident, and
- dissemination of accurate information to motorists inconvenienced by the incident.

Personnel responding to an incident in a preplanned manner also operate in a safer environment, knowing exactly what is expected of them as well as what is expected of other responders. Time spent on scene can be significantly reduced.

Coordinated incident management efforts support the goal of the Connecticut Incident Management Policy which is “to provide a safer, more environmentally sensitive and time-saving trip for highway travelers.”

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING TEAM BEING FORMED

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) and the regional planning agencies in the Hartford, New Britain, and Middletown areas are establishing an incident management planning team. It will be composed of all agencies that typically respond to incidents on freeways. The purpose of the team is to do the advance planning necessary to improve multi-agency responses to highway incidents.

To help guide the formation of a full incident management planning team, a special steering committee was created. This working group, known as the Incident Management Steering Committee, is composed of one or two representatives of each of the following groups: State and local police, local fire services, emergency medical services, towing companies, State agencies (Transportation and Environmental Protection), and regional planning agencies. Individual members of the Steering committee are listed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

DOT and the regional planning agencies are involved in the formation of an incident management team because they recognize that building new roads is no longer the only solution to addressing congestion on our highways. Better management techniques and technologies must be used to improve the efficiency of the existing highway system. The need for better management of highway incidents is recognized in each region’s transportation plan. The formation of an incident management planning team was specifically recommended in the Intelligent Transportation System Plan for the Capitol Region.
CURRENT ACTIVITIES

While the establishment of an Incident Management Planning Team for the Hartford area is a relatively new idea, some issues, or more appropriately “gaps”, in current incident management practices have already been identified. Two projects proposed to fill these “gaps” are now underway.

TRAFFIC DIVERSION PLANS

One of the first steps in efficient management of an incident is establishing control of traffic at the scene. For major incidents, this will often involve the diversion of traffic off the highway and onto local streets. Alternative routes should be preplanned where possible so as to reduce the number of decisions required at the time of the incident.

At this time, Jim Mona, ConnDOT Highway Operations, has been meeting with local police departments to discuss potential diversion routes for major incidents on highways in the greater Hartford area. Preliminary plans of the diversion routes are being reviewed and modified where necessary. Important considerations, such as traffic signal control, diversion signal timing plans, truck routing, and necessary police manpower are all being discussed.

Final plans will be made available for distribution to each town and to the State Police within the Region.

REGIONAL RADIO PROGRAM

Communication among all parties responding to an incident is essential for effective coordination. It is important that the many agencies (police, fire, EMS, DOT, DEP, etc.) responding to an incident be able to communicate on a common radio frequency. The Steering Committee is currently developing a proposal for a regional radio system for incident management. The proposal makes use of some of the regional radio systems already in place.

The greater Hartford area is fortunate in the fact that much of the necessary substructure for coordinated communication is already in place. Police and emergency medical personnel are already linked by dedicated radio frequencies that cover our area.

The Capitol Region Chiefs of Police Association (CRCOPA) holds the license for a radio frequency known as the Hartford County Hotline. This radio frequency allows for police station to police station communication among the CRCOPA towns. This administrative frequency also links local police departments with the State Police barracks serving the CRCOPA area.

CRCOPA also holds the licenses for two radio frequencies known as RAFS (Regional Access Frequency System). These frequencies allow a police officer in one CRCOPA town to speak directly from the police car (or portable radio) with a police officer in any other town in the CRCOPA area. In addition, CRCOPA administers and maintains the radio towers and antenna sites required to operate these radio communications.

North Central Connecticut Emergency Medical Services holds the license for 14 emergency radio frequencies.

CRCOG and ConnDOT are presently exploring the feasibility of incorporating one NCC/EMS radio frequency, one RAF frequency and the Hartford County Hotline into a regional incident management communication system. These frequencies can be particularly useful during the management of a highway incident both at the site and along diversion routes.

Gaps in radio coverage along Route 2 in Glastonbury and nearby towns are being addressed as is the need for additional portable radios. A proposal for State and Federal funding is being developed.
INCIDENT MANAGEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of the Steering Committee are listed below. CRCOG is acting as secretariat for the committee, but feel free to contact any member.

State Police
Lt. Louis LaCapuccia, Troop C, 870-9500
Lt. Gregory Senick, Troop H, 534-1000

Local Police
Lt. Anthony Camilleri, Hartford, 722-6138
Chief Daniel Coppinger, Plainville, 747-1616
Chief James Strillacci, West Hartford, 523-5260

Local Fire Departments
Chief Edward Richards, Enfield, 745-1878
Chief David Dagon, East Hartford, 528-4171

Emergency Medical Services
North Central Connecticut EMS Council, Inc.
Hugo S. Costa, Jr., 769-6055

Towing Services
Towing & Recovery Professionals of CT
Tim Vibert, 677-9074

Regional Planning Agencies
Capitol Region Council of Governments
Karen Olson, Tom Ganley, Tom Maziarz, 522-2217

Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
James Stack, 589-7820

Midstate Regional Planning Agency
Michael Chong, 347-7214

State Agencies
Department of Environmental Protection
Don Burton, 424-3377

Department of Transportation
Bill Stoeckert, 594-2630; Mike Healy, 594-2634
Sue Reynolds, 594-3062; Vic LaBarre, 258-4501

WHAT NEXT?

The most important role of the steering committee is to identify problems encountered when responding to and clearing a highway incident. Problems which might be resolved through better coordination, cooperation, and communication among responders are of particular concern.

The steering committee has begun a discussion of these many issues. Identification of problems will be a permanent part of our agenda. If you have identified a problem of coordination, cooperation, or communication among responders at the scene of a highway incident, we want to know about it. Please feel free to call any of the committee members to discuss your issues. You can also write or call

Questions or Comments?
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Incident Management:

- Coordination
- Cooperation
- Communication

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Prepared by:
Capitol Region Council of Governments
CT Department of Transportation

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