Highway Safety Plan: Driving Bulletin #7

This plan identifies operational guidelines that provide maximum protection and safety for personnel operating on highways and roadways. The plan is intended to protect responders from the secondary risk from moving traffic while operating on a roadway.

Remember: **Situational Awareness** helps to promote safety.

The primary goals of managing a roadway and highway safety incident are as follows:

- Protect the public from additional harm.
- Significantly reduce the potential for responders to be injured while responding and operating at roadway incidents.
- Safely mitigate the incident.
- Return the roadway to service when safe.

The goals of this plan are achieved by:

- Creating a safe working environment.
- Extinguishing fires from a safe position.
- Rendering care to the injured in a safe and controlled environment.
- Protecting bystanders and responders.
- Protecting crime scenes evidence.
- Re-establishing normal or as close to normal traffic flow

Managing a highway or roadway incident is a joint effort between several agencies, mainly the Fire and EMS Department and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) may also respond to assist with traffic control traffic flow and public information. Each responding agency will perform their intended functions to mitigate the incident.

The safety and welfare of all responders, patients and bystanders is the primary mission of all responding agencies.

Policy

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 traffic. It also identifies practices to keep personnel safe while exposed to the hazardous environment created by moving traffic.

It shall be the policy of the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department to position apparatus and other emergency vehicles at an incident on any street, road, or highway 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.

All personnel should understand and appreciate the high risk that personnel are exposed to when operating in or near moving vehicle traffic. Responders should always operate within a protected environment at any vehicle-related roadway incident.

Always consider moving vehicles as a threat to your safety. At every vehicle-related emergency scene, personnel are exposed to passing motorists of varying driving abilities. Approaching vehicles may be driven at speeds from a creeping pace to well beyond the posted speed limit. Some of these vehicle operators may be vision impaired, under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, or have a medical condition that affects their judgment or abilities. In addition, motorists may be completely oblivious to your presence due to distractions caused by cell phone use, loud music, conversation, inclement weather, and terrain or building obstructions. Approaching motorists will often be looking at the scene and not the roadway in front of them. Assume that all approaching traffic is out to get you until proven otherwise.

Nighttime incidents requiring personnel to work in or near moving near traffic are particularly hazardous. Visibility is reduced and driver reaction time to hazards in the roadway is slowed.

Definitions

Highway – Any roadway that has limited access and utilizes ramps for entry and exit and sustains a speed limit of 40 miles per hour or more.

Roadway – Any arterial road that has unlimited access and utilizes traffic control devices at intersections as necessary. In the District of Columbia, the speed limit will be between 25 – 35 miles per hour.

Highway Response

Emergency responses to incidents on limited access highways will include at least one unit traveling in each direction of the highway. As soon as a unit arrives on the scene of the incident in the same direction of travel as the incident, they will report the exact location of the incident and direction of travel to the responding BFC, other responding units, or the Office of Unified Communications (OUC).

The units responding in the opposite direction of travel from the incident will then be guided by the Incident Commander after determination if their services are needed.

When responding together in queue, units will respond in single file. This will reduce the confusion to the motorists already on the highway and allow them to yield to the emergency apparatus responding to the incident.

Units should avoid the shoulder of the highway, allowing motorists who were trained to pull to the right or to a curb lane the opportunity to do so. Units should pass on the left side of stopped or slower motorists. If units cannot avoid driving on the shoulder, apparatus must reduce speed and use caution to avoid possible hazards on the shoulder.

Apparatus drivers will use normal paths of travel to change direction of travel on a highway response. The designated median strip crossovers marked "Authorized Vehicles Only" or any unmarked traditionally utilized crossover will not be used to change the direction of travel unless the opposing traffic is stopped and/or it is known that the highway is closed to motorists prior to this crossover.

No unit will stop in the opposing traffic lanes from an incident and cross over the median or Jersey barrier to either extinguish a vehicle fire or render care to accident victims. All responding apparatus will remain on the side of the highway where the incident has occurred.

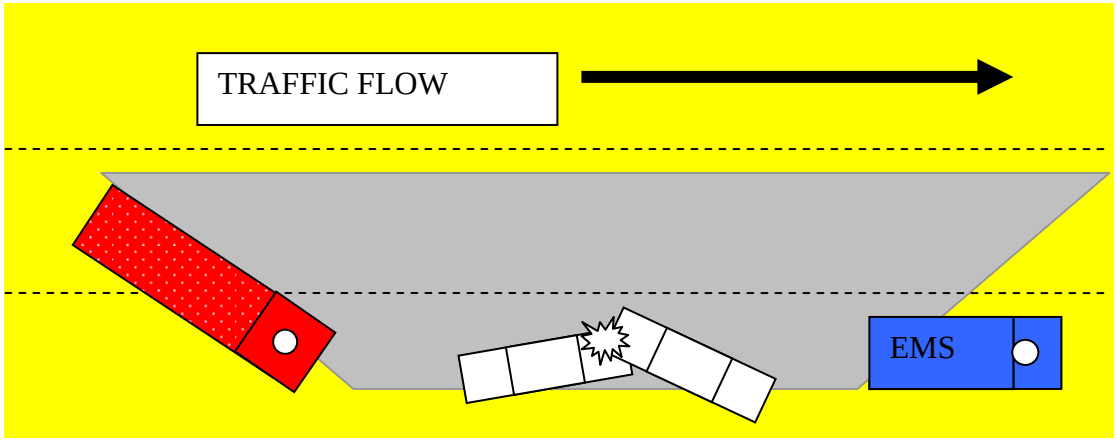
Roadway Response

Units will not be dispatched from opposite directions of travel when responding to an roadway incident. Units should not respond on the shoulder of a roadway incident. All other guidelines for responding to a highway/roadway incident will be adhered to when responding to a roadway incident.

When responding to a road or highway incident all Department Guidelines, Orders, and Regulations must be adhered to with regards to speed and method of proceeding or responding through a controlled intersection.

Positioning of the Apparatus on the Scene

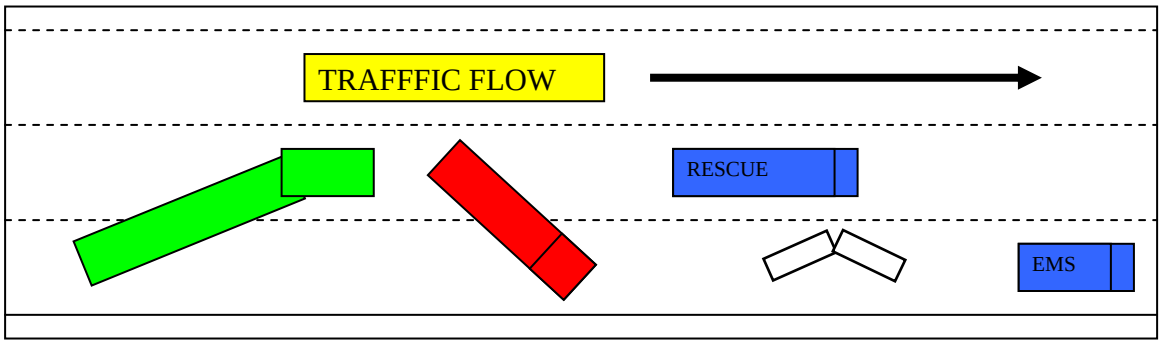
When responding to a highway incident the first and foremost concern of the responder is safe placement of the apparatus and creating a barrier with the apparatus to protect the responders and victims from the continual flow of traffic. The first arriving piece of apparatus will take a position to create a barrier prior to the incident. The apparatus will be placed at an angle, closing the lane the incident is in and one adjacent lane to allow for adequate workspace. If this unit is an Engine Company they will position themselves at an angle to place the pump panel toward the incident to protect the Wagon Driver. The Engine Company will park close enough to utilize hose lines if necessary but they will leave enough room for a Rescue Squad to position closer to the incident to perform extrication if necessary.



EMS Units will position themselves beyond the incident as it relates to the direction of travel of the roadway, to allow for rapid egress and unhampered access to their unit. If an EMS unit is the first arriving unit they will initially assume the duties of creating the barrier with their apparatus. If possible, EMS units will be placed beyond the incident once a larger piece of apparatus arrives on the scene and creates a better barrier to block the scene.

If a Truck Company is utilized at the incident they will park behind the Engine Company creating an additional level of protection.

Chief Officers and support vehicles will position themselves in the same area as the EMS Units, insuring they have not blocked the EMS Units.

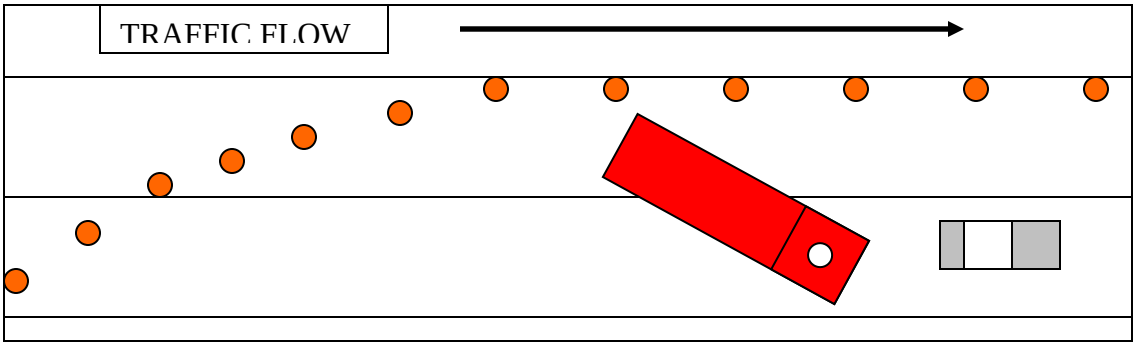


When responding to a roadway incident, the same procedures for a highway incident will be employed but some adaptation may be necessary. The EMS Unit will attempt to park beyond the incident in the same direction of travel. Consideration will be given as to not place the unit in an area where cross traffic could strike the unit. Larger apparatus such as an Engine or Truck Company will park prior to the incident in the same direction of travel to create a barrier. If it is impossible for the EMS Unit to park on the opposite side of the incident safely then the Engine or Truck Company will park behind the EMS Unit, leaving enough room to load the patient. This will also provide a barrier for personnel and victims from oncoming traffic.

When responding to a highway or roadway when only a single resource is dispatched, use the apparatus to create a barrier for your work area. If this is not adequate protection, notify the OUC that MPD or additional Fire/EMS resources are needed. Larger apparatus creates a better barrier.

Before placing units on scene back in service (Engines, Rescue Squad or Truck Company) consider the traffic lanes that may open up. The apparatus being utilized as a barrier must not depart the incident if doing so leaves other units unprotected. Keep in mind that personnel may not be performing a service, but that the apparatus is providing a barrier. DDOT units have cones on aboard that can be used to control traffic lanes, and MPD vehicles may be used to establish safety zones. Request resources as needed.

Lane Closures



After creating a protective barrier with the apparatus, additional traffic lanes involved must now be closed. This can be accomplished by placing traffic cones or flares around the entire work area and where apparatus is parked. On highway incidents, the lanes should be closed with traffic cones or flares, creating a diagonally tapered barrier 100 feet prior to the first piece of apparatus. For a roadway incident, the lane should be closed 25 feet prior to the location of the apparatus. Keep in mind MPD and DDot can assist you with these tasks utilizing vehicles, flares, and portable directional arrow signs.

Apparatus Illumination

Apparatus will utilized all warning lights (including four way flashers) if parked in a travel lane of a roadway during daylight hours. At night, the warning lights will remain on but the apparatus headlights should be turned off to avoid blinding other drivers. This will only be done if the headlights are not being utilized for scene illumination.

Considerations:

1. Once EMS units are loaded with a patient, consideration should be given to moving off the highway to perform further evaluation and patient care.

2. Always look at the roadway in the direction of travel before exiting the apparatus to insure it is safe to do so. Do not assume other drivers will automatically yield or stop for you.

3. Remember to also to look down at the roadway when exiting the apparatus to make sure there are no trip hazards.

4. The faster you move from the roadway, the chances decrease for a secondary collision to occur.

5. While responding, keep in mind the closest water supply to the incident. Access to a water supply may require additional resources.

6. If you arrive on the scene and find your collision has expanded to a hazardous materials incident with product release, follow hazardous materials incident guidelines: DO NOT DRIVE THROUGH A CLOUD OR SPILL.

7. Always position the steering wheels of apparatus so they are turned away from the accident scene. This will help prevent the apparatus from striking personnel on the scene if it is struck from behind.

8. If possible, the Incident Commander should appoint a Spotter to watch for potential rear end collisions when the apparatus being utilized as a barrier. The spotter should notify personnel operating at the incident of the potential problem.

Traffic Safety Vest Policy:

It shall be the policy of the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department that the issued traffic safety vest shall be worn while operating at incidents involving highways and roadways. Personnel responding to a fire, hazardous material, vehicle collision or EMS incident on a roadway or highway shall don their full PPE with the vest worn as the outer layer. Personnel wearing SCBA while directly involved in fire suppression or hazardous material mitigation shall not wear the vest. The vest shall be donned immediately after SCBA use is discontinued.

Traffic safety vests are carried on all response vehicles for each riding position. One extra vest shall be maintained for supplemental personnel. Contaminated vests shall be removed from service and reported to the on-duty Safety officer.