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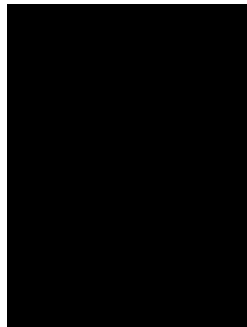
Traffic Incident Operating Guidelines



Endorsed by:

- **I-76 / I-476 Crossroads Incident Management Task Force**
- **US 422 Corridor Coalition**
- **PA 309 Corridor Coalition**

- **Pennsylvania State Police**
- **Montgomery County Department of Public Safety**
- **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation**



- **Montgomery County Fire Chief's Association**
- **Montgomery County Police Chief's Association**
- **Montgomery County Ambulance Association**
- **Montgomery County EMS Advisory Council**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide incident responders in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania region with uniform operational guidelines for safe operations at the scene of a highway incident. These operational guidelines are the result of the solicitation of input from all stakeholders that may operate at one of these incidents. It is intended that this document serve as a guideline for decision-making and can be modified by the incident responders as necessary to address existing conditions.

Managing a highway incident and any related problem is a TEAM effort. Incidents range from minor to major with many agencies involved. Each responding agency has an important role to play in the management of an effective incident operation. It is not a question of “who is in charge” but “who is in charge of what”. Each agency present has a part to play with the goals of: responder safety; safe, quick clearance; and, to restore the highway to its pre-incident condition.

1.1 Incident Definition

An incident is defined as any non-recurring event that causes a reduction of roadway capacity such as traffic crashes, brush fires, or vehicle fires. Improving the overall incident management process will improve the safety of responding agency personnel, reduce the chance of a secondary traffic accident and minimize the amount of apparatus and number of personnel responding onto the highway.

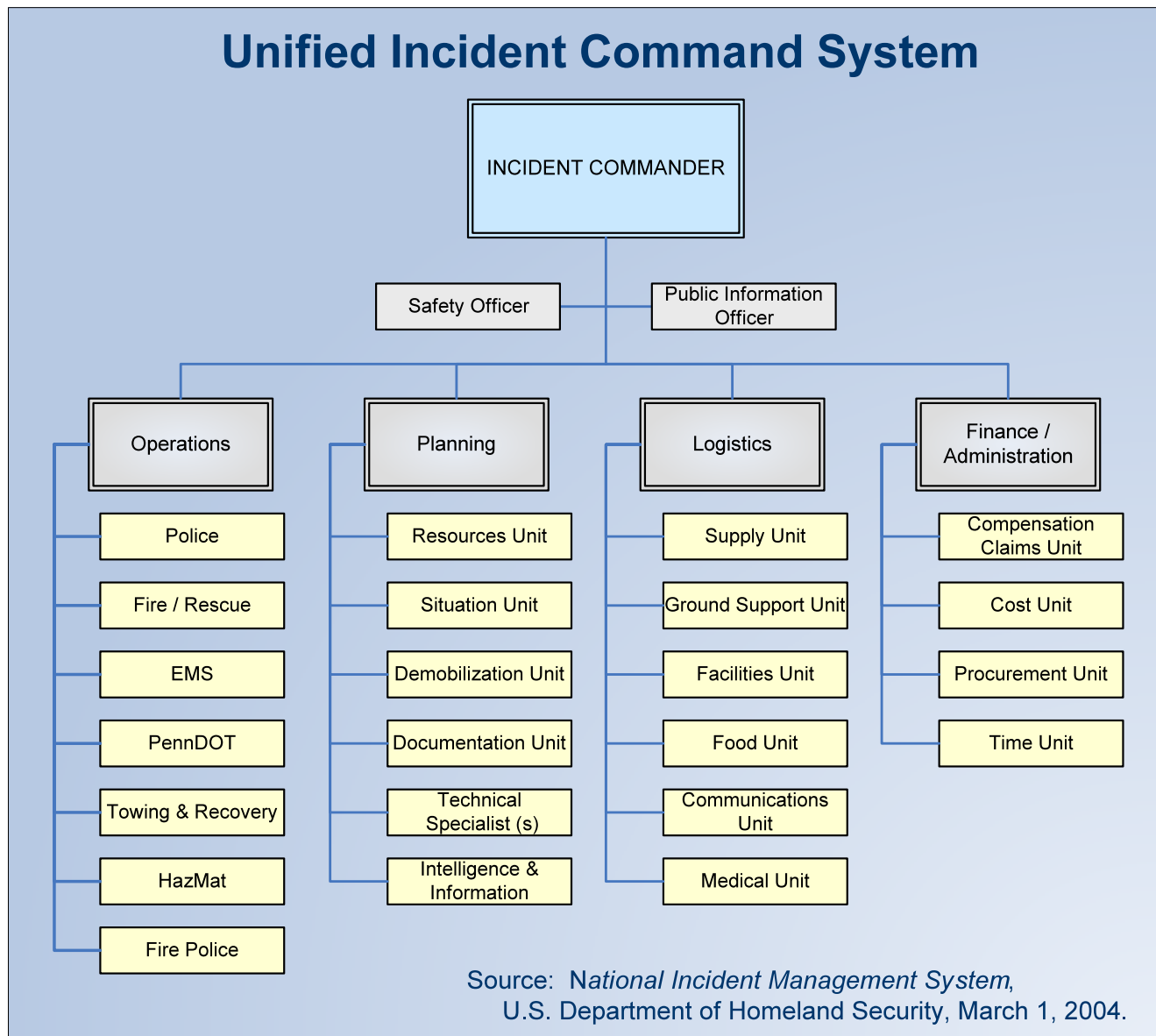
1.2 National Incident Management System

SPECIAL NOTE: The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) have jurisdiction over all incidents that occur on the highways referred to within this document, with the exception of those portions of the highways that traverse Lower Pottsgrove Township, West Pottsgrove Township and North Coventry Township. In these portions of the highway, the local police departments have jurisdiction. In those areas in which PSP has primary jurisdiction the senior responding trooper on the scene is the incident commander (IC); in those areas in which a municipal police officer has primary jurisdiction, the senior responding officer on the scene is the incident commander. As an incident evolves and additional senior ranking personnel arrive on scene, the transitioning of the role of incident commander should be accomplished in a seamless manner.

In conformance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), each branch will be identified as follows: Fire branch (FB) consisting of Fire Suppression, Extrication/Rescue and Hazard-Material groups; Emergency Medical Services branch (EMS); Police Branch (PB), consisting of PSP and municipal police; and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). These designations will be used throughout this document to define responsibilities of each discipline.

Communications shall be coordinated between Montgomery County Department of Public Safety-Dispatch (MCDPSD) and the Pennsylvania State Police Consolidated Dispatch Center (CDC).

Agencies responding to incidents in the response area covered by this document will utilize the National Incident Management System in a Unified Incident Command. The first arriving emergency responder will establish command, identify a command post location, and don a reflective vest for identification. All other responding agencies will send a representative to the command post. The agencies will cooperate and work together for the safe and efficient mitigation of the emergency. Fire, EMS, police and DOT representatives will be expected to make decisions based on their experience and expertise in their respective fields to contribute to the successful conclusion of the incident. Any decisions made will be communicated to other agency representatives to ensure coordination of efforts. The Pennsylvania State Police or the senior police official on scene will make the final determination with respect to any disputes that may arise.



2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following outlines the primary roles and responsibilities of the various agencies that respond to highway incidents.

The roles and responsibilities described below are not intended to be recommendations, but merely illustrate how these agencies and emergency services providers are typically involved in the incident management process. It is understood that roles and responsibilities of those involved with incident management activities will vary. In conjunction with this section, Appendix B illustrates the typical sequencing of response measures taken by responders as they arrive to an incident scene.

2.1 Police Branch

The Pennsylvania State Police has jurisdiction over all incidents that occur on the highways referred to within this document, with the exception of those portions of the highways that traverse Lower Pottsgrove Township, West Pottsgrove Township and North Coventry Township.

Typical highway incident management responsibilities include:

- ☐ Serves as Incident Commander
- ☐ Secures incident scene
- ☐ Protect the incident scene
- ☐ Performs first responder duties
- ☐ Assists responders in accessing the incident scene
- ☐ Establishes emergency access routes
- ☐ Controls arrival and departure of incident responders
- ☐ Polices perimeter of incident scene and impact area
- ☐ Conducts crash investigation
- ☐ Performs traffic control

2.2 Fire and Rescue Branch

Fire and rescue services are provided by local fire departments, surrounding fire departments and HazMat Agencies.

Typical highway incident management responsibilities include:

- ☐ Protects the incident scene
- ☐ Rescues / extricates victims
- ☐ Extinguishes Fires
- ☐ Responds to and assesses incidents involving a hazardous materials release
- ☐ Contains or mitigates a hazardous materials release
- ☐ Assumes role of Incident Commander, if appropriate
- ☐ Supports unified command, as necessary

2.3 Emergency Medical Services

Their primary responsibilities of EMS are the triage, treatment and transport of crash victims.

Typical highway incident management responsibilities include:

- ☐ Provides medical treatment to those injured at the incident scene
- ☐ Determine destination and transportation requirements for injured victims
- ☐ Coordinate evacuation with fire, police and ambulance or airlift
- ☐ Transports victims for additional medical treatment
- ☐ Supports unified command, as necessary

2.4 Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is responsible for running the Traffic Management Center (TMC), Expressway Service Patrol (ESP) program and District/County Maintenance Units.

Their typical incident management responsibilities include:

- ☐ Monitors Traffic Operations
- ☐ Performs incident detection and verification (TMC/service patrol)
- ☐ Protects incident scene
- ☐ May perform first responder duties (service patrol)
- ☐ Clears minor incident (service patrol)
- ☐ Implements traffic control strategies and provides supporting resources
- ☐ Disseminates motorist information
- ☐ Assesses and directs incident clearance activities
- ☐ Mitigates incident vehicle fluid spills confined to the roadway (PennDOT's involvement is to be limited as PennDOT maintenance personnel are not trained in containment and cleanup of hazardous materials spills and may not have all safety equipment and materials necessary for this work)
- ☐ Develops and operates alternate routes
- ☐ Assesses and performs emergency roadwork and infrastructure repair
- ☐ Supports unified command, as necessary

2.5 Towing and Recovery

Towing and recovery services are responsible for the safe and efficient removal of wrecked or disabled vehicles, and debris from the incident scene. Appendix C includes the Towing & Recovery Association of America (TRAA) Vehicle Identification Guide to assist in providing information needed to correctly dispatch towing and recovery units.

Their typical responsibilities include:

- ☐ Recovers vehicles and cargos
- ☐ Remove disabled or wrecked vehicles and debris from incident scene debris from roadway
- ☐ Mitigates non-hazardous material (cargo) spills
- ☐ Supports unified command, as necessary

3. RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

Agencies responsible for responding to incidents on limited access highways should consider the following safety related equipment for their vehicles as appropriate:

- 3.1 A sufficient number of high visibility ANSI Safety Vests for responding personnel;
- 3.2 A minimum of five (5) DOT approved reflective traffic cones (10 cones are preferable);
- 3.3 A minimum of one (1) case of traffic flares;
- 3.4 A lighted arrow stick or sign board, mounted as high as possible on the vehicle, for maximum visibility;
- 3.5 Addition of DOT approved reflective striping to the rear and sides of the vehicle;
- 3.6 Minimum compliment of Basic First Aid equipment will be part of the vehicle inventory.

4. INCIDENT RESPONSE

- 4.1 A minimum crew of four firefighters is recommended for fire apparatus responding to incidents on the highway.
- 4.2 Responding members shall be properly seated in the vehicle and secured with supplied seatbelts.
- 4.3 Only official emergency vehicles as defined under the Vehicle Code should respond on the highway. Use of personal vehicles should be discouraged unless specifically requested by the IC.
- 4.4 Fire companies will be assigned responsibility for a specific area of the highway, and will be directed to enter the highway via a designated ramp. Absent extenuating circumstances, or specific orders to the contrary, companies will utilize their assigned entry ramp whenever responding to incidents on the highway.
- 4.5 Responding vehicles will transmit their response via radio on the designated radio channel.
- 4.6 All vehicles will communicate via radio when entering the highway or arriving at the staging point.

- 4.7 As a general rule, vehicles should utilize normal entrances and exits to reverse their direction of travel. Use of the median or paved U-Turns should be reserved for life threatening emergencies and extenuating circumstances. Additional arriving equipment and apparatus should stage at a predetermined location off of the highway to await further instruction from command personnel. This protocol shall be utilized in situations involving construction zones on limited access highways.
- 4.8 At times, it is necessary for emergency vehicles to travel against the normal traffic flow to access an incident scene. **NO** apparatus or vehicles will employ this maneuver unless and until they receive specific approval from the incident commander or his designee. All responders must ensure that no traffic is flowing on the roadway to be utilized and shall communicate their intentions to the senior police official on the scene prior to authorizing the emergency vehicle to enter the roadway in the opposite direction. Once approval is received, the emergency vehicle shall proceed with extreme caution, utilizing the shoulder portion of the roadway if possible.
- 4.9 Communicate with the PennDOT Traffic Management Center to assist in detection and verification of incident location. The Police branch should report any lane or road closure to TMC and advise TMC when lane or road has been re-opened.

5. ARRIVING ON SCENE

- 5.1 Operators of emergency response vehicles shall position their vehicles in a manner that best protects the incident scene, the patients and the work area.
- 5.2 First responder on location shall advise their respective dispatch center of the exact location (mile marker, waterway, or landmark) of the incident. This information should be relayed to other dispatch centers of responding units.
- 5.3 Consideration should be given to traffic flow and to providing an avenue for additional resources to access the scene.
- 5.4 Upon arrival apparatus operators shall cancel any warning lights, which impair the vision of approaching traffic (i.e. headlights, spotlights, clear warning lights).
- 5.5 When possible, responders should exit their vehicle on the side opposite the traffic flow. Personnel should always check for approaching traffic before exiting.
- 5.6 A sufficient safety zone should be employed around the apparatus to allow crew members to remove necessary equipment from the vehicle without being exposed to passing traffic.

6. TRAFFIC CONTROL

- 6.1 For complex or long term incidents the Incident Commander shall provide for traffic control measures as a part of the Incident Action Plan. This may include the use of the MCDPS trailer with traffic control resources and other resources from PennDOT, municipal, county public works departments.
- 6.2 If the above agencies are not present, it is the responsibility of initial responders to establish measures to safely guide traffic around an incident scene or, if necessary, to stop the flow of traffic.
- 6.3 The closing of additional lanes not affected by the accident, to include on and off ramps, shall require the approval of the Pennsylvania State Police or the municipal Police Department.
- 6.4 Personnel should face traffic at all times when placing and retrieving traffic control devices.
- 6.5 Traffic cones, flares, signs and/or emergency vehicles are commonly used for traffic control.
- 6.6 Traffic should never be allowed to pass an incident scene on both sides of emergency workers. The traffic should be diverted to the left or the right of the scene.
- 6.7 For incidents which occur during light traffic conditions, when vehicles are approaching the scene at a higher rate of speed, at least one "buffer lane" should be provided between operating personnel and passing traffic.
- 6.8 The FB should consider, in coordination with the IC, designating a full size fire apparatus to act as a blocker vehicle, thereby providing a physical barrier between emergency workers and passing traffic. This is especially important during times of low traffic volume, when vehicles are traveling at higher speeds. A cone taper of a sufficient distance to adequately warn approaching traffic should be deployed upstream of the blocking apparatus.
- 6.9 The IC is responsible for appointing a safety officer. The safety officer is responsible for ensuring the safety of all personnel operating on the scene and should assume primary responsibility for ensuring that proper traffic controls have been established.
- 6.10 Consider the availability or use of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Emergency Service Patrols for traffic control and vehicle removal to safer location during their operational hours.

- 6.11 For extended operations, (expected duration of more than 2 hours), a temporary traffic control plan shall be implemented by the Police and PennDOT. The primary functions of temporary traffic control at a traffic incident management area are to move road users reasonably safely and expeditiously past or around the traffic incident, to reduce the likelihood of secondary traffic crashes, and to preclude unnecessary use of the surrounding local road system.
- 6.12 For complex or long term incidents the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety (MCDPS) maintains a trailer with traffic control resources. Other resources from PennDOT and municipal and county public works departments should also be considered.

7. OPERATING ON SCENE

Special Note: If recalled by Pennsylvania State Police or the municipal Police Department while enroute to any highway assignment, ALL fire companies and EMS shall go available and return.

7.1 Lane Identification

- 7.1.1 For purposes of uniformity, the following will standardize travel lane identification.

Three lanes in each direction: Left Lane, Center Lane, Right Lane.

Four lanes in each direction: Left Lane, Left Center Lane, Right Center Lane, Right Lane.

Five lanes in each direction: Left Lane, Left Center Lane, Center Lane, Right Center Lane, Right Lane.

- 7.1.2 Shoulders will be designated as Left Shoulder or Right Shoulder.

- 7.1.3 Exits:

The term “Off-Ramp” will be used to describe a lane(s) which leads from the highway to another roadway.

The term “On-Ramp” will be used to describe a lane(s) which leads from another roadway onto the highway.

7.2 Vehicle Fires

Special Note: The term *primary engine* refers to the engine responding in the reported direction of travel. The term *secondary engine* refers to the engine responding opposite the reported direction of travel.

- 7.2.1 The first engine company in each direction will enter the highway and announce the same via radio. A second full size apparatus may enter the highway in the reported direction of travel. This apparatus will stage on the shoulder prior to the incident scene and prepare to act as a blocker if needed. The remainder of responding apparatus shall stage off the highway in the area of their assigned entry ramp.
- 7.2.2. The secondary engine should avoid passing the fire until verification is received that the primary engine is able to access the scene. If a center median is available, the secondary engine may stop on the median if necessary, with consideration given to the condition of the median and every effort being made to avoid positioning the apparatus in the travel lanes of the highway. If the primary engine is able to access the scene, the secondary engine will exit the highway via the next available exit and stage, unless directed onto the highway by the FB officer in command (OIC). Recalled companies should avoid utilizing the highway to return to their station if traffic is congested.
- 7.2.3 The first arriving engine will position in accordance with Section 4 of this document. The first arriving officer will establish command, perform a size-up, and determine the necessary resources to safely mitigate the incident. Any unneeded resources will be directed to stage off the highway and/or be recalled.
- 7.2.4 The OIC from all responding branches should determine if a command post has been established and report in to ensure a unified incident command system.
- 7.2.5 Additional responding apparatus will position in accordance with Section 5. The company officer will proceed to the command post for orders unless conditions dictate otherwise.
- 7.2.6 Unless conditions dictate otherwise, hoselines used for fire attack should be stretched from the first arriving engine only.
- 7.2.7 Apparatus positioned in the travel lanes of the highway should be moved to the shoulder as soon as practical. If possible, apparatus should be moved prior to restoring hoselines and other equipment.

7.3 Motor Vehicle Crashes

- 7.3.1 The first engine and rescue company in each direction will enter the highway and announce same via radio. An additional full size apparatus may enter the highway in the reported direction of travel. This apparatus will stage on the shoulder prior to the incident scene and prepare to act as a blocker if needed allowing for sufficient warning distance. The remainder of responding apparatus shall stage off the highway in the area of their assigned entry ramp.
- 7.3.2 Apparatus will position in accordance with Section 3, allowing a route of travel for arriving and departing EMS vehicles. Only necessary apparatus will be positioned close to the scene.
- 7.3.3 The first arriving officer will establish command, perform a size-up and determine the necessary resources to safely mitigate the incident. Any unneeded resources will be directed to stage off the highway and/or recalled.
- 7.3.4 The OIC from all responding branches should determine if a command post has been established and report in to ensure a unified management system.
- 7.3.5 Additional responsibilities of all responders:
 - a. Establish command and assign division/group officers
 - b. Don an approved incident management vest for identification purposes.
 - c. Establish a command post staffed by representatives of operating units / agencies (Police, Fire, PennDOT, EMS, etc.)
 - d. Establish an “action circle” (20’ radius if possible) by use of traffic cones or other appropriate barrier, around each vehicle involved in the incident.
 - e. Designate an equipment staging area and a personnel pool at the edge of each action circle. Personnel will return to the personnel pool upon completion of assigned tasks.

Special Note: Only assigned personnel should be inside the action circle.

- 7.3.6 Extrication / Rescue Group responsibilities:
 - a. Coordinate with EMS personnel to establish an action plan for patient extrication.
 - b. Ensure ALL vehicles are properly stabilized prior to entry and extrication.
 - c. Supervise extrication efforts utilizing the seven phases below:
 - 1. Size up and hazard control
 - 2. Access to patient for EMS
 - 3. Patient assessment and immediate medical care
 - 4. Disentanglement
 - 5. Patient packaging and treatment

6. Removal and treatment
7. Post-rescue equipment servicing

Special Note: Ensure patient protection throughout extrication, taking whatever steps necessary to protect against further injury through breaking glass, forcibly removed vehicle components and flying objects.

7.3.7 The Fire Suppression Group is responsible for mitigating any hazards which may result in a fire, including spilled fluids, vehicle power systems, electrical wires and/or the actions of rescue personnel, through any of the following methods, as dictated by conditions:

- a. Stretch and charge a minimum of a 1.5" hose line, staffed by a minimum of two personnel in full turnout gear and SCBA (line should be placed at the edge of each action circle). Crew should also have a dry chemical extinguisher at the ready.
- b. Ensure vehicle(s) is de-energized, with an effort to minimize the potential for evidence destruction.
- c. Inspect vehicle(s) for leaking fuel or fluids, and secure same. Apply sand or oil dry to any spilled fluids causing slippery ground surfaces in work area.

7.3.8 Safety Officer Responsibilities

- a. Monitor scene for any hazards that may arise during incident, and report to IC.
- b. Ensure all personnel on location are wearing the proper safety equipment and adhering to safe work practices.
- c. Detail unassigned personnel to personnel pool.
- d. Stop any act that may endanger the patient and/or rescuer.

7.4 Brush and Grass Fires

*Adhere to Section 7.1 (Vehicle Fires)

8. HIGHWAY HAZARD

*Adhere to Section 7.1 (Vehicle Fires)

8.1 Apparatus will respond at reduced speed unless otherwise instructed.