

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
DEPARTMENTS OF SAFETY and TRANSPORTATION**

**STATEWIDE TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

**QUICK CLEARANCE FOR SAFETY AND MOBILITY**

This Memorandum of Understanding between the undersigned agencies is a further expansion of the agreement dated May 15, 2003 to improve traffic incident management on the state highway system of the State of New Hampshire.

1. Policy Statement: The undersigned agencies acknowledge a joint responsibility, consistent with their underlying legal duties and limitations, to do on an urgent basis whatever is reasonable to: reduce the risk to public safety responders and roadway users at the site of the incident, prevent secondary crashes and delays associated with incidents, protect the environment, and protect the public health.

Therefore, the agencies agree that the policy of their agencies for management of planned events, and unplanned incidents such as vehicle crashes shall be:

- A. Roadways will not be restricted to traffic any more than, or longer than, or closed any longer than, is absolutely necessary; and
- B. Roadways will be cleared of damaged vehicles, spilled cargo, debris or other hindrances to the flow of traffic as quickly and soon as it is safe to do so.

2. Incident Command System: Nothing herein is intended to diminish the authority of the incident commander at the scene acting in accordance with the incident command system, or to encourage any practice that would result in an unacceptable risk of personal injury to any person, injury to the public health, or a release of hazardous material to the environment, provided that:

- A. As part of the assessment phase, the incident commander shall be encouraged to request the response of any other agency or vendor whose assistance or expertise may be required as early as possible in the response to the incident.
- B. The incident commander shall be encouraged to consider the potential of secondary impacts away from the incident scene as well as the primary impacts arising at the scene.
- C. The incident commander shall be encouraged to direct the responders at the scene to deploy equipment, personnel, and emergency lighting in a manner that will result in the least restriction of traffic movement consistent with the safety of the responders, the nature of the emergency, and the impact upon the ability of approaching road users to safely approach and pass through the scene. Such deployment should be evaluated throughout the duration of the response and changes made as necessary and prudent to meet these goals.

3. Law Enforcement Investigations: Nothing herein is intended to diminish the authority of the police officer in charge of any investigation upon the scene to direct the investigation or take steps to preserve evidence, provided that:
- A. At the scene of non-injury collisions, State Police and Highway Patrol shall be encouraged to act to quickly relocate the vehicle(s) from the travel lanes and conduct investigations as far from the roadway as practical.
  - B. Investigations shall be conducted as quickly as possible considering the severity of the incident. Non-critical portions of the investigation may be delayed until lighter traffic conditions allow completion of those tasks.
  - C. State Police and Highway Patrol personnel shall encourage and assist other emergency responders in clearing incident scenes as soon as possible after their respective duties have been performed.
  - D. State Police and Highway Patrol personnel shall close only the minimum number of lanes necessary for the conduct of the investigation, and

4. Avoidance of Lane Blockage:

- A. When one or more lanes of a roadway is blocked, State Police and Highway Patrol on the scene shall be encouraged call for the dispatch of a towing and recovery vendor capable of removing the vehicle and/or cargo as quickly as possible.
- B. If there is a question regarding the capabilities required of the vendor, or the capabilities of a particular vendor, law enforcement shall be encouraged to seek the assistance of DOT or DES representatives, or both, to determine if a different vendor should be used.
- C. If the owner of a vehicle or the cargo blocking the highway requests that a specific vendor be used for removal or recovery, such request shall be approved only if the requested vendor has the required capability, and can respond as fully and quickly as an alternate vendor known to the responders.
- D. If no vendor with the required capability is able to immediately or fully respond to the incident, DOT shall be contacted to dispatch such heavy equipment and personnel as may be required to complete the reopening of the roadway to normal traffic conditions.
- E. Whenever practical, vehicles on access controlled roadways shall be removed as soon as possible from the traveled way a minimum distance to a safe area for the completion of the investigation.

F. It is understood that damage to vehicles or cargo may occur as a result of clearing the roadway on an urgent basis. While reasonable actions will be taken to avoid such damage, the highest priority is returning the roadway to normal operating condition.

G. Responders shall be encouraged to not allow a lane to be blocked for the sole purpose of transferring non-hazardous cargo from one vehicle to another unless no other reasonable alternative is available.

#### 5. Additional Incident Management Guidelines:

A. State Police and Highway Patrol shall be encouraged to coordinate with DOT representatives to set up appropriate traffic control, establish alternative routes, expedite the safe movement of traffic at the scene, and restore the roadway to normal conditions as soon as possible.

B. When required, all agencies shall cooperate to present accurate, timely, and complete information to media outlets to advise potential road users of serious incidents, and strategies to avoid delay and congestion arising from the incidents.

C. All temporary traffic control measures shall be removed as soon as practical after the completion of the incident response and the reopening of the roadway to normal traffic.

D. All parties will document their response to planned and unplanned incidents, in order to measure their performance, and to assist in recovering response costs from the responsible parties.

E. The State Police shall be the primary agency for the initial entry of incidents into the CARS/511 system.

#### 6. Post Incident Reviews and Continuous Improvement:

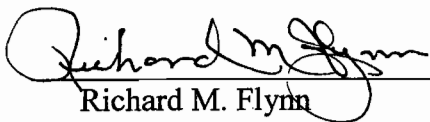
A. The parties agree to meet periodically to discuss experiences with incident management and to work toward improvements.

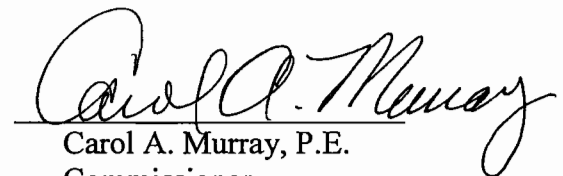
B. The parties will meet for a debriefing within ten (10) working days of the response to any incident that requires the complete closure of a controlled access highway for more than three (3) hours, or of any lane thereon for more than six (6) hours. The purpose of the meeting is to identify opportunities for improvement in procedures, training, or the allocation of resources.

C. The parties agree to actively promote the policy of “quick clearance” and will seek the cooperation of the agencies with whom they partner, the trucking industry, the towing and recovery industry, law enforcement, fire services, the emergency medical community and the news media throughout New Hampshire.

- D. The parties pledge to work together to identify, acquire, and deploy new technologies and new operating procedures that might reduce the time required to identify and respond to incidents, and restore roadways to normal operating conditions.
- E. All of the parties will advise affected personnel of this agreement, and promote its implementation within of their organizations.

SIGNATURE BLOCKS

  
Richard M. Flynn  
Commissioner  
Department of Safety  
5/24/05  
Date

  
Carol A. Murray, P.E.  
Commissioner  
Department of Transportation  
6/20/05  
Date

Sources:

1. NCHRP Synthesis #318, "Safe and Quick Clearance of Traffic Incidents" (TRB 2003)
2. I-95 Corridor Coalition, "Quick Clearance and "Move-It" Best Practices Final Report" (September 2003)
3. From the appendices of the above materials, Interagency Agreements, Tennessee and Florida.