Traffic incidents occur anytime, every day, everywhere. As defined by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Chapter 6-I, a traffic incident is an emergency road user occurrence, a natural disaster, or other unplanned event that affects or impedes the normal flow of traffic. Causes include but are not limited to: accidents; breakdowns; fires; haz-mat spills; debris, ice or snow on the roadway; pavement failures; medical emergencies; and law enforcement activities. Routine maintenance and construction activities and planned events such as parades, fairs, and sports events are not considered traffic incidents.

Traffic incidents are classified by the MUTCD as:
- Minor, duration of 30 minutes or less
- Intermediate, duration from 30 minutes to 2 hours
- Major, duration longer than 2 hours.

Many traffic incidents are minor and resolved in a short time. Others can be more complex, involving a number of responders from different agencies, disciplines and jurisdictions and not be cleared for hours. Though the various responders expertly perform their specific functions there is still a lack of good communication, cooperation and coordination. This increases risks to responders, persons involved in the incident, and to passing motorists. Furthermore, the inability or unwillingness of responders to work together in concert causes unnecessary traffic delays, frustrated drivers and millions of dollars in lost productivity. The following is from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) website, (http://www.iafc.org/MemberCenter/OnSceneArticle.cfm?ItemNumber=6123):

Traffic incident management (TIM) consists of a planned and coordinated multidisciplinary process to detect, respond to and clear traffic incidents so traffic flow may be restored as safely and quickly as possible. Effective TIM reduces the duration and impacts of traffic incidents and improves the safety of motorists, crash victims and emergency responders. In the past, the fire service responding to and operating at incidents on or around roadways never had vigorous policies regarding scene control and safety. This was usually left up to law enforcement, transportation or public works personnel. This has changed.

The National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC), established in 2004, is comprised of organizations from the different sectors that have a significant involvement or interest in improving the safety of responders and the public at traffic incidents. This includes law enforcement, fire, paramedical, public works and transportation, towing, emergency dispatch, and the commercial trucking industry. NTIMC, from a series of workshops with stakeholders, developed the National Unified Goal with three main objectives:
- Responder safety
- Safe and quick clearance
- Prompt, reliable, interoperable communications

IMSA was invited to join in 2007 as its membership represents the technicians who maintain traffic signals, signs, and roadway lighting and respond to repair or restore these devices damaged in collisions. Furthermore, as most of these technicians work for a local Public Works agency or state Department of Transportation (PW/DOT) they often assist with temporary traffic control (TTC) at the Traffic Incident Management Area (TIMA). Because these technicians routinely use Work Zone Traffic Control (WZTC) for normal operations, they have the training, experience and equipment to provide safe and effective advance warning, lane closures and detour guidance to traffic approaching a TIMA. After all, the fundamentals of WZTC are the same as used for TIM. The other disciplines, in contrast, lack the knowledge and resources for TTC. To address this deficiency, the Federal Highway Administration developed a new Traffic Incident Management Responder course. It is now in the initial Train-the-Trainer phase; it will be several years, at least, before many responders will receive the four-hour training.

Even after other disciplines obtain TIM training, PW/DOT will still be needed. Police, fire, EMS and towing will continue to focus on their particular tasks at collisions such as immediate traffic control, extrication, medical care, fire suppression, haz-mat cleanup, investigation, and wreckage clearance. That aside, they do not have the capability to provide the wide array and quantity of needed TTC devices; PW/DOTs can deploy cones, signs, arrow boards, changeable message signs (fixed and portable), drums and barricades. In fact, many agencies have special trailers or trucks equipped just for such occurrences and PW/DOT Maintenance personnel are often deployed as flaggers in the TIMA. Providing comprehensive TTC, including traffic signal adjustments when needed, is clearly a role and responsibility for PW/DOT. Also, at some point, fire and police will realize that putting a PW/DOT heavy vehicle in a blocking position at the incident site is a better option than using a fire truck or police car.

Increasingly, the other disciplines are recognizing the valuable assistance public works/transportation contributes to TIM. Thus PW/DOT agencies must be included in planning, training and exercises with other key responder disciplines for TIM and all-hazards emergencies. The following are excellent sources for free on-line training and information:
- ERSI (Emergency Responder Safety Institute), https://learning.respondersafety.com

Other current TIM initiatives include: the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is developing a multi-

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disciplinary course, Professional Qualifications for Traffic Incident Control Management; the American Public Works Association’s (APWA) Emergency Management committee is revising the Highway Incident Manual for the National Incident Management Systems Consortium; the Transportation Research Board has several committees working on TIM issues; and the Institute of Transportation Engineers has a TIM committee. IMSA is represented in all of these initiatives.

Several states and other organizations have also established or are currently developing TIM programs:
- The TIM Network online newsletter contains informative links: [http://timnetwork.org/](http://timnetwork.org/)

Lastly, as TIM is based on the Incident Command System (ICS), it is vital that PW/DOT personnel at all levels complete the following FEMA on-line courses:
- IS 100PW - Introduction to Incident Command System
- IS 200.b - Incident Command System for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents
- IS 700.a - Introduction to National Incident Management System
- IS 552 - Public Works Role in Emergency Management

Furthermore, supervisors, division managers and department directors should also take ICS 300, Intermediate Incident Command System and ICS 400, Advanced Incident Command System. Altogether, these courses will help PW/DOT personnel better understand how the different disciplines should work together not only for traffic incidents but all types of emergencies and planned events. Our role and responsibilities are clearly defined; we must now demonstrate to the other disciplines that we are ready, willing and capable of being full partners.

Everything you need to know about solar-powered flashers is at [www.solar-traffic-controls.com](http://www.solar-traffic-controls.com)

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