CHAPTER 6O. CONTROL OF TRAFFIC THROUGH TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AREAS

Section 6O.01 General

Support:

01 The National Incident Management System (NIMS) requires the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) at traffic incident management scenes.

02 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.

03 A traffic incident management area is an area of a highway where temporary traffic controls are installed, as authorized by a public authority or the official having jurisdiction of the roadway, in response to a road user incident, natural disaster, hazardous material spill, or other unplanned incident. It is a type of TTC zone and extends from the first warning device (such as a sign, light, or cone) to the last TTC device or to a point where vehicles return to the original lane alignment and are clear of the incident.

04 Traffic incidents can be divided into three general classes of duration, each of which has unique traffic control characteristics and needs. These classes are:

A. Major—expected duration of more than 2 hours,
B. Intermediate—expected duration of 30 minutes to 2 hours, and
C. Minor—expected duration under 30 minutes.

05 The primary functions of TTC at a traffic incident management area are to inform road users of the incident and to provide guidance information on the path to follow through the incident area. Alerting road users and establishing a well-defined path to guide road users through the incident area will serve to protect the incident responders and those involved in working at the incident scene and will aid in moving road users expeditiously past or around the traffic incident, will reduce the likelihood of secondary traffic crashes, and will preclude unnecessary use of the surrounding local road system. Examples include a stalled vehicle blocking a lane, a traffic crash blocking the traveled way, a hazardous material spill along a highway, and natural disasters such as floods and severe storm damage.

Guidance:

06 *In order to reduce response time for traffic incidents, highway agencies, appropriate public safety agencies (law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency communications, emergency medical, and other emergency management), and private sector responders (towing and recovery and hazardous materials contractors) should mutually plan for occurrences of traffic incidents along the major and heavily traveled highway and street system.*

07 *On-scene responder organizations should train their personnel in TTC practices for accomplishing their tasks in and near traffic and in the requirements for traffic incident management contained in this Manual. On-scene responders should take measures to move the incident off the traveled roadway or to provide for appropriate warning. All on-scene responders and news media personnel should constantly be aware of their visibility to oncoming traffic and wear high-visibility apparel. See Section 6B.05 for details on high-visibility apparel requirements. Planning and training should include incorporation of estimated time durations to clear the event as part of their initial incident estimate. When events are deemed as probable Major Traffic Incidents that could generate prolonged lane or road closures, notification of all affected agencies should be initiated as part of the initial incident report that is provided to the emergency communications center who would then be responsible for making notifications to appropriate state, regional, and local agencies and resources for the purpose of ramping up and responding as quickly as possible thus facilitating a more rapid transition from emergency TTC to an MUTCD-compliant TTC zone when warranted.*

08 *Emergency vehicles arriving at an incident should be positioned in a manner that attempts to protect both the responders performing their duties and road users traveling through the incident scene, while minimizing, to the extent practical, disruption of the adjacent traffic flow. Emergency vehicle positions should optimize traffic flow through the incident scene. All emergency vehicles that subsequently arrive should be positioned in a manner that does not interfere with the established temporary traffic flow.*

09 *Responders arriving at a traffic incident should estimate the magnitude of the traffic incident, the expected time duration of the traffic incident, and the expected vehicle queue length, and then should set up the appropriate temporary traffic controls for these estimates.*

Option:

10 *Warning and guide signs used for TTC traffic incident management situations may have a black legend and border on a fluorescent pink background (see Figure 6O-1).*

Support:

10a Signs used for regular TTC (black legend and border on orange or fluorescent orange background) are also acceptable. Truck or trailer mounted Portable Changeable Message (PCMS) signs are effective tools for traffic incident management.

11 While some traffic incidents might be anticipated and planned for, emergencies and disasters might pose more severe and unpredictable problems. The ability to quickly install proper temporary traffic controls might greatly reduce the effects of an incident, such as secondary crashes or excessive traffic delays. An essential part of fire, rescue, spill clean-up, highway agency, and enforcement activities is the proper control of road users through the traffic incident management area in order to protect responders, victims, and other personnel at the site. These operations might need corroborating legislative authority for the implementation and enforcement of appropriate road user regulations, parking controls, and speed zoning. It is desirable for these statutes to provide sufficient flexibility in the authority for, and implementation of, TTC to respond to the needs of changing conditions found in traffic incident management areas.

Option:

12 For traffic incidents, particularly those of an emergency nature, TTC devices on hand may be used for the initial response as long as they do not themselves create unnecessary additional hazards.

Support:

13 The establishment, maintenance, and prompt removal of lane diversions can be effectively managed by interagency planning that includes representatives of highway and public safety agencies.

Guidance:

14 *All traffic control devices needed to set up the TTC at a traffic incident should be available so that they can be readily deployed for all major traffic incidents. The TTC should include the proper traffic diversions, tapered lane closures, and upstream warning devices to alert traffic approaching the queue and to encourage early diversion to an appropriate alternative route.*

15 *Attention should be paid to the upstream end of the traffic queue such that warning is given to road users approaching the back of the queue.*

16 *If manual traffic control is needed, it should be provided by qualified flaggers or uniformed law enforcement officers.*

Option:

17 If flaggers are used to provide traffic control for an incident management situation, the flaggers may use appropriate traffic control devices that are readily available or that can be brought to the traffic incident scene on short notice.

Guidance:

18 *When light sticks or flares are used to establish the initial traffic control at incident scenes, channelizing devices (see Section 6K.01) should be installed as soon thereafter as practical.*

Option:

19 The light sticks or flares may remain in place if they are being used to supplement the channelizing devices.

Guidance:

20 *The light sticks, flares, and channelizing devices should be removed after the incident is terminated.*

Section 6O.02 Major Traffic Incidents

Support:

01 Major traffic incidents are typically traffic incidents involving hazardous materials, fatal traffic crashes involving numerous vehicles, and other natural or man-made disasters. These traffic incidents typically involve closing all or part of a roadway facility for a period exceeding 2 hours.

Guidance:

02 *If the traffic incident is anticipated to last more than 24 hours, applicable procedures and devices set forth in other Chapters of Part 6 should be used.*

Support:

03 A road closure can be caused by a traffic incident such as a road user crash that blocks the traveled way. Road users are usually diverted through lane shifts or detoured around the traffic incident and back to the original roadway. A combination of traffic engineering and enforcement preparations is needed to determine the detour route, and to install,

maintain, or operate, and then to remove the necessary traffic control devices when the detour is terminated. Large trucks are a significant concern in such a detour, especially when detouring them from a controlled-access roadway onto local or arterial streets.

04 During traffic incidents, large trucks might need to follow a route separate from that of automobiles because of bridge, weight, clearance, or geometric restrictions. Also, vehicles carrying hazardous material might need to follow a different route from other vehicles.

05 Some traffic incidents such as hazardous material spills might require closure of an entire highway. Through road users must have adequate guidance around the traffic incident. Maintaining good public relations is desirable. The cooperation of the news media in publicizing the existence of, and reasons for, traffic incident management areas and their TTC can be of great assistance in keeping road users and the general public well informed.

Section 6O.03 Intermediate Traffic Incidents

Support:

01 Intermediate traffic incidents typically affect travel lanes for a time period of 30 minutes to 2 hours, and usually require traffic control on the scene to divert road users past the blockage. Full roadway closures might be needed for short periods during traffic incident clearance to allow traffic incident responders to accomplish their tasks.

Section 6O.04 Minor Traffic Incidents

Support:

01 Minor traffic incidents are typically disabled vehicles and minor crashes that result in lane closures of less than 30 minutes. On-scene responders are typically law enforcement and towing companies, and occasionally highway agency service patrol vehicles.

02 Diversion of traffic into other lanes is often not needed or is needed only briefly. It is not generally possible or practical to set up a lane closure with traffic control devices for a minor traffic incident. Traffic control is the responsibility of on-scene responders.

Guidance:

03 *When a minor traffic incident blocks a travel lane, the vehicles involved in the incident should be moved from the blocked lane to the shoulder as quickly as possible.*

Section 6O.05 Use of Emergency-Vehicle Lighting

Support:

01 The use of emergency-vehicle lighting (such as high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights) is essential, especially in the initial stages of a traffic incident, for the safety of emergency responders and persons involved in the traffic incident, as well as road users approaching the traffic incident. Emergency- vehicle lighting, however, provides warning only and provides no effective traffic control. The use of too many lights at an incident scene can be distracting and can create confusion for approaching road users, especially at night. Road users approaching the traffic incident from the opposite direction on a divided facility are often distracted by emergency-vehicle lighting and slow their vehicles to look at the traffic incident posing a hazard to themselves and others traveling in their direction.

02 The use of emergency-vehicle lighting can be reduced if good traffic control has been established at a traffic incident scene. This is especially true for major traffic incidents that might involve a number of emergency vehicles. If good traffic control is established through placement of advance warning signs and traffic control devices to divert or detour traffic, then public safety agencies can perform their tasks on scene with minimal emergency-vehicle lighting.

Guidance:

03 *Public safety agencies should examine their policies on the use of emergency-vehicle lighting, especially after a traffic incident scene is secured, with the intent of reducing the use of this lighting as much as possible while not endangering those at the scene. Special consideration should be given to reducing or extinguishing forward facing emergency-vehicle lighting, especially on divided roadways, to reduce distractions to oncoming road users.*

04 *Because the glare from floodlights or vehicle headlights can impair the nighttime vision of approaching road users, any floodlights or vehicle headlights that are not needed for illumination, or to provide notice to other road users of an incident response vehicle being in an unexpected location, should be turned off at night.*

Section 6O.101(CA) FLOODING AHEAD TURN AROUND DON'T DROWN W86(CA) Sign

Support:

01 The Federal Highway Administration has encouraged use of the phrase FLOODING AHEAD TURN AROUND DON'T DROWN as an official incident management sign.

Option:

02 The FLOODING AHEAD TURN AROUND DON'T DROWN (W86(CA)) sign (see Figure 6O-1(CA)) may be deployed to warn during times when low-water crossings, bridges, or culverts cannot pass high flood flows.

Standard:

03 **When used, W86(CA) sign shall be mounted on temporary sign holders, not on barricades.**

Guidance:

04 *The W86(CA) sign should be deployed at locations where stream waters flooding across a road have made passage unsafe.*

05 *The FLOODED (W55(CA)) sign (see Figure 6O-1(CA)) should be used in advance of locations where the highway is flooded.*

Standard:

06 **The W55(CA) signs shall be removed or covered when the condition no longer exists.**

Section 6O.102(CA) EMERGENCY SCENE AHEAD W90(CA) Sign

Support:

01 The Federal Highway Administration has encouraged use of the phrase EMERGENCY SCENE AHEAD as an official incident management sign.

Option:

02 The EMERGENCY SCENE AHEAD (W90(CA)) sign (see Figure 6O-1(CA)) may be deployed to warn of an incident management scene ahead.

Standard:

03 **If used, W90(CA) sign shall be mounted on temporary sign holders, not on barricades.**

Guidance:

04 *The W90(CA) sign should be deployed at locations upstream of the traffic queue that has formed due to incident management.*