



FHWA, IAFC, and Crash Responder Safety Week

October 2021 Fire Chief Norris W. Croom III



In 2012, the IAFC was asked by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to serve as a member on their Executive Leadership Group (ELG) as it related to responder safety while operating on roadways. The IAFC willingly accepted the offer and continues to have representation on the ELG today. Since roadway incidents involve many agencies, other partners on the ELG include the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), American Public Works Association (APWA), International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), IAFF, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO), National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA), National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), and the Towing and Recovery Association of America (TRAA).

One of the results of this effort was the development of the Traffic Incident Management (TIM) program. Since its inception, over 540,000 members of law enforcement, fire/rescue, EMS, towing and recovery, transportation/public works, and others have been trained on this program. The goal was to have 45% of responders trained by the end of 2020 (which was met), and as of September 13, 2021, 47.4% of responders have completed this training.

Another goal of the ELG was to develop a recognition week for responders. This came to fruition in 2015, and for the last five years, it has been called National Traffic Incident Responders Awareness Week (NTIRAW). Typically

held in early November of each year, this week allows for the opportunity to educate the motoring public while recognizing responders for their efforts on the Nation's roadways. Many states participate in the week's events, even going as far as getting Governors' Proclamations. Ultimately, "the FHWA sponsored initiative communicates the simple steps everyone can take in keeping our roadway responders and the public safe around traffic incidents."

While NTIRAW has served us well, the steering committee for this effort found that this name was not as effective as we had hoped in helping us achieve the needed recognition. After several discussions and meetings, the decision was made to change the name to Crash Responder Safety Week (CRSW) effective this year. (A quick sidebar. FHWA [specifically Jim Austrich and staff] has worked hard to eliminate the term "accident" and replace it with "crash." The word "accident" generally implies that no one was at fault, whereas "crash" implies that someone is usually at fault.) CRSW will be held from November 8-14 this year, and each day has a specific theme.

Monday's goal is to have federal, state, and association executive leadership issue messaging on the importance of responder safety with the hope of getting a proclamation from as many governors as possible.

Tuesday focuses on the Slow Down, Move Over laws in each state, again with messaging to the public about the importance of following these laws. Wednesday is geared towards the responder by highlighting the availability of the FREE training on Traffic Incident Management. Thursday (Veterans Day) recognizes and honors our Nation's veterans, of which many are responders. Friday recognizes all the responders on traffic incidents. Saturday's intent is to educate the public on traffic incidents and to watch out and remain alert when approaching roadway incidents. The week closes out on Sunday, focusing on driver education programs teaching Move Over laws to their students.

The FHWA will use its official accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to promote CRSW, and they have asked all of the members of the ELG and all of the state representatives to do the same.

So, what does this mean to you as a member of the IAFC?

Since we are an integral part of roadway responses, the IAFC encourages each member and department to review the events for CRSW and work to promote these at the local level. Whether this is done independently or if you choose to partner with your local law enforcement, public works/DOT, towing agencies, etc., the goal is to educate as many people as possible on these messages.

If your department hasn't been trained in traffic incident management, take this opportunity to become familiar with the FREE training that is available. The National Highway Institute (www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov) and ResponderSafety.com are two excellent resources to find both train-the-trainer and TIM training courses.

Additionally, take some time to review your policies on roadway responses. If you don't have one, consider developing one. Numerous resources are available on KnowledgeNet and ResponderSafety.com to help you design a policy that works for your agency.

Finally, TIM is not just about interstate or highway response.

The principles of TIM apply to every roadway, including those in urban and suburban areas and regardless of the speed limit. While the risk is undoubtedly increased on higher-speed roadways, we've seen incidents occur in low-speed areas and parking lots. FHWA and the ELG are currently looking at the next steps needed to push TIM down to an even lower, more local level, but that will be the topic of another article at a later time.

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