



Traffic incidents are unplanned roadway events that affect, impede, or shut down the normal flow of traffic. Traffic incidents increase the likelihood of secondary crashes and pose a threat to first responders and the traveling public. The goal of public safety and other responding departments is to safely clear incidents as quickly as is reasonable. Local government employees who respond to traffic incidents should stay R.O.A.D. Ready by continuously: (1) recognizing the hazards; (2) observing people, processes, and equipment; (3) assessing the risk level; and (4) determining the safest course of action. Doing so while following this step-bystep guide will allow them to execute their responsibilities effectively, while minimizing the risks associated with incident response.

1. **Training and Simulation:** Regular training and simulation exercises are essential to ensure that responders are well-prepared for various incident scenarios. Conduct joint training sessions with all involved agencies to enhance coordination and communication.
2. **Collaborate with Partner Agencies:** Build strong partnerships with various agencies involved in incident management. Collaborate with law enforcement, emergency services, transportation departments, and other relevant entities to ensure a unified and efficient response. Regularly engage in joint exercises, meetings, and information-sharing initiatives to strengthen collaboration.
3. **Immediate Scene Safety:** The safety of all personnel in incident response is paramount. Upon arriving at the scene, ensure that the area is secure for both responders and those involved in the incident. Deploy appropriate safety measures, such as cones, flares, or warning signs, trucks, and/or traffic attenuators to create a buffer zone and protect the incident scene. Establish a unified command structure to enhance coordination among different entities involved in the response, including law enforcement, emergency medical services, and towing services.
4. **Prioritize Emergency Medical Services:** Prioritize the provision of emergency medical services to those involved in the incident
5. **Clear Incident Scene Quickly:** Work to clear the incident as quickly as possible without compromising safety, including environmental hazard protection. Collaborate with towing services to remove damaged vehicles promptly and clear debris from the roadway. Swift clearance reduces the risk of secondary incidents and minimizes disruptions to traffic flow.
6. **Public Information and Education:** Communicate effectively with the public to manage expectations and provide real-time information about incidents. Use various communication channels, including social media, to disseminate updates on road closures, expected delays, and alternative routes.
7. **Post-Incident Evaluation and Improvement:** Conduct thorough post-incident evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the response. Identify strengths and areas for improvement and implement changes to enhance future incident management. Encourage open communication among responders to gather insights and feedback for continuous improvement.

## Resources

- [Respondersafety.com](https://respondersafety.com) has online training and lesson plans categorized by topic and role.
- Federal Highway Administration Traffic Incident Management <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/tim/>
- TxDOT Traffic Incident Management <https://www.txdot.gov/safety/traffic-incident-management.html>
- TMLIRP Online Learning Center: Traffic Incident Management (1 hour) [www.localgovu.com/tmlirp/](http://www.localgovu.com/tmlirp/)