

TRAFFIC INCIDENT RESPONSE LANE DESIGNATION TERMINOLOGY

Objective

State, regional, and local responders often use distinct terminology when communicating the location of crashes or response vehicles on roadways. Disparate terminology in communications could potentially lead to confusion on the scene, impact responder and victim safety, and adversely affect emergency response and traffic clearance times. The goal of this document is to provide a common terminology for adoption as needed by responding agencies during traffic incidents to identify incident location and the preferred position for arriving response vehicles and equipment. The National Traffic Incident Management Coalition and the TIM Network support adoption of this terminology to coordinate multidisciplinary response to incidents.

Terminology¹:

- Traffic incident responders use plain English where possible to identify incident location and lane designations. On roadways with 3 or less lanes, they are named left, center, and right when facing in the direction of traffic flow.
- When roadways have more than 3 lanes in any one direction, the lanes shall be identified and labeled with numbers, starting with the far left lane.
- When using lane numbers, the far left lane shall be called "Lane 1". Each lane to the right is numbered sequentially 2 through n.
- Shoulders should be identified using "right/left" and/or "inside/outside" and the term "shoulder"; The left shoulder is the inside shoulder and the right shoulder is the outside shoulder. i.e. inside (or left) shoulder, southbound interstate 75.
- Responders should also indicate the relative direction of travel (e.g. northbound or southbound) along with other incident location detail and any specific position assignments. For example an incoming unit might be told to safe park or "block upstream of the incident in Northbound (NB) Highway 75 Lane 3 and right shoulder".
- Separated, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) or high occupancy toll (HOT), car pool, or bus only lanes that are physically separated shall be designated as HOV1 northbound (NB), HOV2, HOT1, HOT2, etc. as appropriate.
- If the incident is located before the merge point it shall be considered a separate roadway and identified as such, i.e. left hand exit ramp.
- The term "upstream" is defined as before the incident point or area. The term "downstream" is defined as past or beyond the incident point or area when facing in the direction of traffic flow.

¹ Terminology is adapted from The California Highway Patrol system to communicate regarding incidents on roadways was used as the primary source during terminology and recommendation of this system.

Related National Unified Goal Strategies

Objective 1: Responder Safety

Strategy 7. Recommended Practices for Responder Safety.

Recommended Practices for Traffic Incident Management Responder Safety and for traffic control at incident scenes should be developed, and widely published, distributed and adopted.

Objective 2: Safe, Quick Clearance

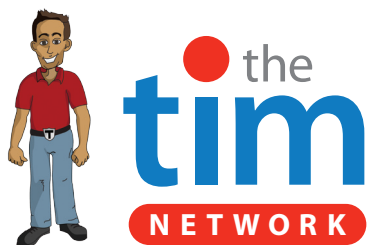
Strategy 10. Multidisciplinary TIM Procedures.

Traffic Incident Management partners at the state, regional and local levels should develop and adopt multidisciplinary procedures for coordination of Traffic Incident Management operations, based on national recommended practices and procedures.

Objective 3: Prompt, Reliable Incident Communications

Strategy 13. Multidisciplinary Communications Practices and Procedures.

Traffic incident responders should develop and implement standardized multidisciplinary traffic incident communications practices and procedures.



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TERMINOLOGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Lane Designation Terminology was developed with input from and coordination with the TIM Network and the National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC). Initially the California Highway Patrol system to communicate regarding incidents on roadways was used as the primary source during terminology and recommendation of this system; many other locations also use a similar system to communicate. Members of the NTIMC Practices and Procedures assembled and refined the initial version of the terminology; with input from the responder practitioners on the TIM Network and the NTIMC providing further comments and suggestions. A draft final version of the terminology was vetted among NTIMC member representatives for approval in September 2010; the group recommended publication of the terminology as a resource for multidisciplinary responders looking to adopt a common terminology for lane designation during response to traffic incidents

Jack Sullivan

*Practices and Procedures
Working Group Chair*
jsullivan@LCInnovations.com
804-344-0009

John Corbin

Coalition Chair
Wisconsin Department
of Transportation
john.corbin@dot.wi.gov
608-266-0459

