



# Public Works Included in National Traffic Incident Management Responder Program



By Harry Weed, former Superintendent of Public Works, Village of Rockville Centre (American Public Works Association Chapter Delegate) | email: hlwadpw@aol.com | 2018 NYCOM Public Works School Speaker

**Ninty-five percent of FEMA-declared events are public works events. Public works is a first responder as much as police and fire and are many times the first to arrive at a scene and the last to leave. Without public works clearing the roads from downed trees or plowing the snow, police and fire would not be able to travel down a road to an emergency.**

The National Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Responder Training Program was created as part of Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2). This program was created by Congress in 2005 to investigate the underlying causes of highway crashes and congestion in a short-term program of focused research. The TIM training program was designed to establish the foundation for and to promote consistent training of responders to achieve the three objectives of the TIM National Unified Goal (NUG):

- Responder Safety,
- Safe, Quick Clearance, and
- Prompt, Reliable, Interoperative Communications.

TIM responder training helps recognize the dangers encountered by emergency responders working in or near traffic. Responder Struck-by Fatalities shows an average of 10 law enforcement officers are killed in a typical year. The National Fire Protection Association states that an average of four firefighters are struck and killed each year and it is estimated that between 40 to 60 towing and recovery professionals are also struck and killed each year. Public works and Department of Transportation (DOT) professionals including safety service (help trucks) are also facing the same dangers.

At the core of many responder deaths and injuries are drivers who are inattentive, impaired, or make poor driving decisions. According to the National Safety Council, using a mobile phone while driving is equivalent to driving impaired and texting while driving is equivalent to driving blindfolded. Technology is not the only challenge responders face. Responders have to be watchful for the “D” drivers – Distracted, Drunk, Drugged, Drowsy, or just plain Dangerous.

TIM fundamentals and terminology define safe, quick clearance as using the practice of rapidly, safely, and aggressively removing temporary obstructions from the road-

way to get personnel off the road and out of danger. This practice aids first responders in recognizing the dangers, notification and scene size-up, safe vehicle positioning, scene safety, command responsibilities, traffic management and special circumstances, clearance and termination.

This training and terminology are what led to the Move Over Law. This Law aids police, fire, public works, DOT’s safety service patrols and tow and recovery operators to work safely as vehicles are to move over a lane.

All municipalities, no matter how big or how small, should have all employees TIM trained. Having your employees trained can minimize potential injury or death claims. The training for our responders, learning to be aware, along with the best and safest vehicle placement is the right start for all to come home safely. In New York we are behind many of the states in training, we need to step it up and train all of our public works personnel, as well as fire department and police department staff. This training should also include dispatchers and even elected officials. The Move Over Law needs to be publicized more to educate motorist to move over when approaching red, blue or yellow lights.

Officials need to realize that training, although it may take time away from employees doing their job, down the road will save lives. Organizations like NYCOM, American Public Works Association (APWA), and Police and Fire academies are the perfect organizations to take on this responsibility. A properly trained employee is a better, safer, educated and more productive employee. It is advantageous for officials both elected and administrative to also be trained to better understand what their employees may encounter while performing their everyday duties. I urge all officials and their employees to attend NYCOM’s Public Works School as well as join APWA.