

Success Story- Terre Haute, IN 2013

Traffic Incident Management Responder Training is making a difference in Terre Haute Indiana

A recent crash on I-70 demonstrated the benefits of the formation of a regional traffic incident management (TIM) group in the Terre Haute Indiana. The Terre Haute Tribune Star highlights published a news article (<http://tribstar.com/local/x1999356164/Planning-eased-aftermath-of-I-70-accident>) and an editorial (<http://tribstar.com/editorials/x1999356936/Embrace-the-value-of-traffic-planning>) that outline the benefits realized.

The group was patterned after the statewide Indiana Traffic Incident Management Effort (IN-TIME) that includes federal and state agencies and statewide responder associations. The formation of the group was facilitated by the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and is chaired by Major Jeff Fox of the Vigo County Sheriff's Department. Members of the Wabash Valley Traffic Incident Management Group have received the FHWA SHRP2 national Traffic Incident Management Responder training. The new relationships built through the formation of the group and the training has enabled responders to work in a coordinated manner with a philosophy of quick clearance to reduce the likelihood of secondary crashes and reduce delay.

June 12, 2013

EDITORIAL: Embrace the value of traffic planning

Proper preparations make bad situations more manageable

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — Never underestimate the value of a good plan to deal with a crisis, large or small, even if the final analysis of the management of a specific crisis is, "It could have been worse."

Of course, how well law-enforcement and emergency-management personnel handled last week's traffic-debilitating crash on Interstate 70 depends on an individual's point of view. If you got caught in the middle of the resulting gridlock, you're probably not too impressed. From a distance, however, a more reasonable assessment might be relief that the mess didn't create even more problems along area streets and highways.

The people of west-central Indiana are well aware of the good, the bad and the ugly that go along with the presence of an interstate highway. Last week's crash of a semi truck a mile west of the Indiana 46 interchange in Terre Haute triggered several hours of traffic congestion and extreme inconvenience for thousands of local people and for motorists trying to pass through the area. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured, there were no serious secondary crashes, and the hazardous waste spill from the crashed semi truck was contained with minimal property or environmental damage.

What the public learned from this most recent episode of interstate-induced mayhem is that local agencies have been collaborating to anticipate various scenarios that may arise from crashes and their impact on the transportation grid.

Coincidentally, the new Wabash Valley Traffic Incident Management Group had met just hours before last week's I-70 mishap. The group's goal when such incidents occur is to *prevent secondary crashes* and *manage traffic flow by diverting vehicles to pre-set routes*. While it's impossible to wave a magic wand and make a traffic fiasco disappear, proper planning can help minimize the potential for something really bad happening as a result.

It's good to know that emergency responder agencies have been working on this issue. It classifies as one of

those exercises that we hope rarely has to be put into actual use. Being prepared, however, is often more than half the battle.

In the works now is creation of a “playbook” for emergency response agencies to use when incidents occur that require traffic management. When complete, it will be shared among agencies so each can do the appropriate planning for its roles.

We would also encourage the group to make the basic principles of the plan available to the public for review, even to the point of inviting feedback. Those who have endured being stuck in one of these traffic debacles may well have valuable insights on managing them better.

Last week’s I-70 incident certainly qualifies for the “could have been worse” category. But valuable lessons were learned that will be applied the next time the community encounters such a situation. You can thank the traffic incident group for that.

The cooperation of multiple disciplines is a direct result of the National TIM First Responder Training Course that this local group has offered in the Vigo-Clay County area!