

STATE OF GEORGIA  
“OPEN ROADS POLICY”  
AND  
AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY  
GEORGIA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
GEORGIA SHERIFF’S ASSOCIATION  
GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION  
GEORGIA CORONERS’ ASSOCIATION  
TOWING AND RECOVERY ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA  
ASSOCIATION COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF GEORGIA  
GEORGIA STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION  
GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE AND THE  
GEORGIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER ASSOCIATION

Relative to

**TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

This agreement by and between the parties named above is to provide guidance for personnel representing these state and local agencies in traffic incident management in the Metro Atlanta area. This agreement seeks to ensure that quick and safe clearance of freeway traffic incidents, including disabled vehicles, vehicle crashes, and debris or spills in the roadway, is given the highest priority. Agencies are to work collaboratively to ensure that traffic incidents are cleared as quickly as possible in order to minimize their disruption to normal traffic flow, thereby reducing congestion and delay, while not compromising the safety of victims, emergency workers on the scene, and the traveling public.

WHEREAS The metropolitan Atlanta area is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States; and

WHEREAS This growth is based in part on the Atlanta region being a major transportation hub; and

WHEREAS While this growth has many positive benefits, it has also brought with it increased traffic volumes and delays on our roadways from incidents, including crashes, spills and disabled vehicles; and

- WHEREAS Transportation professionals have estimated that as much as 52 percent of the daily congestion and delays on freeways are due to crashes, spills and disabled vehicles; and
- WHEREAS Traffic backup from incidents poses a threat to the public in terms of secondary crashes, and to public safety workers who respond to the incidents; and
- WHEREAS Traffic congestion from incidents also results in environmental hazards such as diminished air quality and increased fuel consumption, as well as lost productivity; and is a major concern to citizens in the region; and
- WHEREAS The purpose of this “Open Roads Policy” is to facilitate joint efforts for improved traffic incident management and decrease incident response and clearance times in order to improve the safety of motorists and traffic incident responders, reduce congestion and delay on our roadways, and improve the quality of life in our community by lessening the overall impacts of traffic incidents.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**

The following shall be the responsibilities of the below enumerated agencies to ensure effective traffic incident management.

- 1) All of the signatory agencies will actively promote the idea of “quick clearance” and will seek the cooperation of other law enforcement and emergency response agencies, trucking companies, towing operators, local transportation agencies, the news media, and the traveling public throughout metropolitan Atlanta.
- 2) Agencies will work together to implement initiatives from the Metro Atlanta Traffic Incident Management Strategic Vision. The high priority initiatives are:
  - a) Require formal training and certification for towing and recovery operators that respond to incidents on the highways. Coordination with TRAG (Towing and Recovery Association of Georgia) will be necessary.
  - b) Provide monetary incentives for heavy duty towing and recovery operators who provide clearance within 90 minutes at incidents with significant impacts on roadways.
  - c) Establish local TIM (traffic incident management) teams throughout metropolitan Atlanta. The TIM teams will consist of emergency service agencies that work together on a daily basis within a local jurisdiction. TIM teams will share ideas and information on the local level and develop best practices for their local.
- 3) Additional initiatives from the Metro Atlanta Traffic Incident Management Strategic Vision are:
  - a) Implement stricter policies involving abandoned vehicles and enforce a prompt removal of the vehicles.

- b) Improve accident investigations by adopting new technologies which allow for faster crash investigations and quicker clearing of travel lanes.
  - c) Establish policies regarding the clearing of motor vehicle fluid spills in order to open lanes more quickly.
  - d) Identify necessary traffic incident management training, and incorporate this standardized training into agency-specific training programs. Cross-agency training shall be available where feasible.
- 4) Coroners and Medical Examiners shall agree that clearing the travel portion of a roadway is a high priority. Once death is established at any incident, the Coroner / Medical Examiner's Office which has jurisdiction over the death must be notified immediately. The Coroner / Medical Examiner's personnel so notified, if responding to the scene, will make every effort to respond to the scene in a timely manner. If the delayed arrival of the Coroner / Medical Examiner's personnel hinders the travel portion of the roadway from being cleared in an amount of time consistent with those set out within this document, the police officer in charge or his/her designee may contact the Coroner / Medical Examiner's Office which has jurisdiction over the death involved. The police officer in charge or his/her designee shall relay the facts surrounding the incident and the necessity to open the travel portion to the Coroner / Medical Examiner. The Coroner / Medical Examiner may permit the police officer in charge to remove the decedent's body from the roadway to facilitate the roadway being cleared. Otherwise, Official Code of 45-16-29 will be applied.
- 5) All agencies will ensure active participation by its appropriate representatives on the Metro Atlanta Traffic Incident Management Enhancement (TIME) Task Force, which has been formed to improve traffic incident management among all agencies and jurisdictions involved in responding to traffic incidents in the metropolitan Atlanta region through enhanced multi-agency communication, coordination, and cooperation.
- 6) The Executive Leadership of the named state agencies will serve on the Steering Committee of the TIME Task Force. The TIME Steering Committee will act in an advisory capacity for the regional incident management program, providing guidance to ensure that its goals, objectives, and priorities are aligned, on target, and effective in improving traffic incident management in the Metro Atlanta Region
- 7) The Executive Leadership of the named agencies will meet periodically to discuss experiences with incident management and to work toward improvements. Working sessions will be held at least annually with other state and local agencies to discuss incident management and related issues.
- 8) The appropriate agencies will meet for a de-briefing within ten (10) working days following any incident that requires complete closure of an Interstate highway (in one or both directions of travel) for more than three (3) hours and following any incident that requires closure of one or more lanes for more than six (6) hours. The purpose of the meeting will not be to find fault or to assign blame but to identify opportunities

for improvements in procedures, training or allocation of resources. A one-page report will be prepared jointly by the representatives of the agencies involved and will be forwarded through the chain-of-command to the Executive Leadership.

- 9) All responding agencies will position emergency equipment at incident scenes so as to minimize the impacts of traffic flow and to avoid blocking or restricting lanes unnecessarily. Further, the parties will limit the use of emergency lights if practical at incident scenes to minimize distractions to motorists. The parties will also encourage other emergency responders to position their equipment and use emergency lights in the same manner.
- 10) All agencies will notify GDOT through its Transportation Management Center of any situation that calls for closing any lane(s) of an Interstate highway for more than thirty (30) minutes and will consult with GDOT in advance about alternatives to minimize the impact of traffic.
- 11) It is understood that damage to vehicles or cargo may occur as the result of clearing the roadway on an urgent basis. Reasonable efforts should be made to avoid such damage, but the priority will be to restore full roadway capacity in an expedient manner.
- 12) Although 50% of the vehicle miles traveled and 75% of the traffic congestion in the state occurs in the Metro Atlanta region, and thus traffic incidents and the congestion they cause are critically important here, effective traffic incident management is not limited to this region. All areas of the state can benefit from improved programs. The agencies will work together to identify which traffic incident management strategies and programs are appropriate for statewide implementation, and ensure that the appropriate personnel within their organizations are involved.
- 13) All of the parties will advise their personnel of this Agreement and promote implementation at every level of their organization.

AGREED AND EXECUTED THIS \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 2007.

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**Governor, State of Georgia**

Commissioner, Department of Public Safety	Date	Commissioner, Department of Transportation	Date
Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources	Date	Director, Governor's Office of Highway Safety	Date
Executive Director, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority	Date	Commissioner, Department of Agriculture	Date
Executive Director, Georgia Sheriffs' Association	Date	Executive Director, Georgia Municipal Association	Date
Executive Director, Georgia Coroners' Association	Date	President, Towing and Recovery Association of Georgia	Date
Executive Director, Association County Commissioners of Georgia	Date	Chief Executive Officer, Georgia State Firefighter's Association	Date
Executive Director, Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police	Date	President, Georgia Regional Development Center Association	Date