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## Report of the Week

"Roadway Safety –The Road to Protection"  
2/2/2012

**Report Number:** 11-0000245

Report Date: 06/30/2011 15:47

### Synopsis

Traffic control saves lives.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Lieutenant

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 21 - 23

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Urban

### Event Information

Event type: Non-fire emergency event: auto extrication, technical rescue, emergency medical call, service calls, etc.

Event date and time: 06/30/2011 14:13

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Witnessed event but not directly involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Individual Action

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage

### Event Description

While crews were working on the scene of a motor vehicle accident, a small compact car came into contact with a semi-truck causing the driver of the compact car to lose control. The car skidded sideways and almost struck the first due engine on the scene. The first due engine had parked at an angle to protect the vehicles and crews working on the patients in a vehicle just off the roadway. Reflective cones had been set up about 75-100 feet behind the engine and all warning lights were on. Had the vehicle lost control and struck the engine, the crews and patients would have been protected from the impact. This drives home the point that traffic should be well controlled and apparatus used to protect the crews.

### Lessons Learned

Ensure that the first arriving unit is placed in a position to protect the other crews and patients on scene.

Ensure that all warning devices are on and functional.

Place cones well behind the vehicles to warn oncoming traffic.

Ensure that command is in place and that command is actively watching for safety issues and the need to shut down lanes of traffic or call for additional units to assist with traffic control.

### **Report of the Week**

February's topic in the 2012 Near-Miss calendar spotlights Roadway Safety. We constantly read and hear of secondary accidents affecting first responders operating at roadway incidents. Many times, a traffic incident management system is not in place or one of its components has not been properly executed. This has resulted in compounding the difficulty of the original emergency incident when another accident occurs that injures or kills the first responder. The lack of policies and procedures addressing incidents on roadways further jeopardizes first responders and intensifies the hazardous working environment. Although we can never totally eliminate a secondary accident, we can minimize its effects. Although many near-miss reports focus on the failures of not having a traffic incident management plan in place, many highlight the successes of having effective safety practices in place and implementing them. Report [11-245](#) is one such event.

*"While crews were working on the scene of a motor vehicle accident, a small compact car came into contact with a semi-truck causing the driver of the compact car to lose control. The car skidded sideways and almost struck the first due engine on the scene. The first due engine had parked at an angle to protect the vehicles and crews working on the patients in a vehicle just off the roadway. Reflective cones had been set up about 75-100 feet behind the engine and all warning lights were on. Had the vehicle lost control and struck the engine, the crews and patients would have been protected from the impact. This drives home the point that traffic should be well controlled and apparatus used to protect the crews."*

The lessons learned in Report [11-245](#) reinforce the importance of the basic tenets of a traffic incident management plan. With roadways occupied by unpredictable drivers, distracted drivers, inexperienced drivers, diminished capacity drivers, and impaired drivers, each and every traffic incident should be perceived as a life threatening event for emergency responders. Part of the scene size-up for the traffic incident should include establishing a safety zone first to protect emergency responders. The safety zone is created through the use of correct blocking and apparatus positioning. Simple actions, like leaving visual warning devices on and having all scene personnel in high visibility safety vests further support making the scene safe. Finally, ensuring a dynamic incident management system is established and maintained throughout the incident ensures all responders know their role, perform their assigned duties and maintain scene discipline. Once you have reviewed Report [11-245](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Do you have procedures that apply to roadway incidents?
2. Do you use apparatus to block traffic at incidents? If so, are there specifics on how to do it?
3. What equipment do you have that supports the safety of firefighters/EMTs working on a roadway?
4. If law enforcement is not on scene yet, how do you set up your safety zone?
5. How often do you train or review your traffic incident management plan?

February's Near-Miss Calendar training module was provided by Jack Sullivan of the [Emergency Responder Safety Institute](#). The training information can be downloaded on the Resources page of [www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com). Special thanks to Jack for this invaluable training document. To receive free copies of the 2012 Near-Miss Calendar, please email your request to [info@firefighternearmiss.com](mailto:info@firefighternearmiss.com) with the quantity and mailing address.

### **Related Reports – Topical Relation: Vehicle Collisions/Vehicle Fires**

[11-143](#)

[10-514](#)

[11-036](#)

[10-249](#)

Have you implemented a traffic incident management plan for your department? Was it successful in protecting your firefighters operating at a roadway event? Submit your report to [www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com) today and be part of the team that provides vital information to protect your fellow firefighters.

*Note: The questions posed by the reviewers are designed to generate discussion and thought in the name of promoting firefighter safety. They are not intended to pass judgment on the actions and performance of individuals in the reports.*

*If you would like to subscribe to the ROTW please e-mail [ROTW@firefighternearmiss.com](mailto:ROTW@firefighternearmiss.com) with "Subscribe" in the subject line.*

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