



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Area Emergency Responders Celebrate Formalized Safety Partnerships

Sept. 26, 2024 (Gering, Neb.) — Today, the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), together with the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP), held a ceremony to celebrate the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between first responders in Banner, Cheyenne, Deuel, Kimball and Scotts Bluff Counties.

Formalized Traffic Incident Management (TIM) partnerships in the Nebraska Panhandle support NDOT and its safety partners progress in moving TIM initiatives forward to improve safety for all, reliability and efficiency on the roadway. This marks a major milestone in the NDOT program, which has been working for over a decade to advance TIM in targeted areas.

“The signing of this MOU is a significant achievement for our TIM Program and a testament to the dedication of our first responders in the Nebraska Panhandle. By formalizing our partnerships, we’re strengthening our collective response, reducing incident clearance times and, most importantly, protecting the lives of first responders and the traveling public. We are proud to stand with our partners today to celebrate this milestone and reaffirm our shared commitment to keeping Nebraska’s roadways moving safely,” shared Mick Syslo, NDOT Deputy Director of Operations.

At the ceremony, NDOT, NSP and local first responders spoke about the critical work our responders do to keep roadways safe in Nebraska and raise awareness to travelers about the dangerous work responders take on every day.

“By formalizing our efforts with NDOT and local responders, we’re taking a significant step forward in road safety. Our partnership is crucial for improving road safety and ensuring our responders are better supported. This collaboration will help us respond more effectively and keep everyone on the road safer,” expressed Captain Art Frerichs, Nebraska State Patrol Troop E.

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NDOT's TIM Program is focused on the safety of roadway users and the professionals who respond to traffic incidents. Incident responders' risk of injury or death is constant. According to the National Traffic Incident Management Coalition (NTIMC), traffic crashes and "struck-by" incidents continue to be a leading cause of on-duty injuries and deaths for law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, and towing and recovery professionals. Since 2020, over [207 incident responders](#) have been fatality struck, with an additional 26 as of August 2024. NDOT's TIM Program brings emergency professionals together and promotes best practices so incidents like crashes can be cleared as quickly and safely as possible.

"Ensuring safety is our top priority as first responders—whether it's for our team, those affected by incidents, or the traveling public," stated Scottsbluff Fire Department Chief Thomas Schingle. "The TIM program has brought our safety partners together to promote safe practices and educate the public on moving over and slowing down when approaching emergency scenes."

This group of responders in the Nebraska Panhandle has met regularly over the last four years to advance TIM and has built and fostered relationships resulting in an MOU, which pledges that TIM partners across the area will continue to work cooperatively towards safe and quick incident clearance. Participants include federal, state and local transportation agencies, law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency communications, tow operators, emergency managers and others. The MOU was signed by more than 50 agency representatives from the five counties, including 44 local agencies and seven state and federal agencies.

"Traffic Incident Management is essential for our swift and effective response," said Heidi Gillespie, Director, Cheyenne County Emergency Communications Center. "At our dispatch center, we serve as the hub for coordinating information between various agencies. Our efforts to streamline communication and address key needs, such as towing and inter-agency support, have greatly improved the way we manage incidents in the Panhandle area."

Takeaway TIM Tips:

Crash Responder Safety Week (CRSW) is November 18–22, 2024 [#CRSW], and NDOT will be highlighting how they are working throughout Nebraska to keep our roadway users and crash responders safe. When traffic incidents like crashes occur, TIM training helps first responders clear the scene safely and quickly to keep traffic moving. We're all in this together, let's work together to keep our highways safe and flowing.

Traffic incidents are the leading cause of death for emergency responders. For every minute a primary crash continues to be a hazard, the risk of a secondary crash goes up nearly 3% - increasing risk to drivers' lives and our first responders' safety.

If you're in a minor crash where no one is seriously injured, you should stay in your vehicle and move it to the side of the road to a safe location. This helps keep you, other drivers, and emergency personnel assisting you safe.

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Every minute a lane is blocked causes four extra minutes of delay. Traffic incidents are a key cause of unexpected congestion. Americans burn more than 2.8 billion gallons of gas each year due to incident-related traffic congestion.

Public messaging is a critical component in keeping roadway users and crash responders safe. NDOT, public information officers and the media provide important messages to the traveling public, including detours, Move Over Slow Down laws and distracted driving campaigns.

For Nebraska's Move Over, Slow Down laws, if you see emergency or road assistance vehicles stopped on the side of the road, move over and/or slow down as you pass. This keeps our roadside responders safe.

NDOT encourages drivers to buckle their seatbelts and put down their phones while driving. Wearing a seatbelt and not using a phone while driving are two of the most important decisions a driver can make. Buckle up, phone down – every time.

For more information, visit dot.nebraska.gov/safety/tim.

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